

November 2015 Newsletter

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RITA GUNTHER | **MCGRATH**

Author. Speaker. Consultant.

Dear Colleagues,

Discovery Driven Planning, and the ideas that have followed after it, have definitely reached the mainstream. Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur, who use the concept in their work at **Strategyzer**, made the **Thinkers50** list and received the Strategy award in fabulous Draper's Hall in London last week. We celebrated their success with – what else – a selfie!

Steve Blank, Eric Ries, Hal Gregersen and, of course, Clayton Christensen are also on the list of top-ranked thinkers; definitely shifting the center of gravity in management to the more entrepreneurial, business-model challenging and, yes, discovery driven mindset.



The Innovation Roundtable - Copenhagen

3M's Robert D. Anderson, Vice President of R&D, gave a keynote in which he offered a unique comparison of Research and Innovation. "Research," he said, "is the transformation of money into knowledge. Innovation is the transformation of knowledge back into money." 3M has been a long-time user of Discovery Driven Planning (DDP) techniques. I also attended a cool presentation by Olivier Delabroy, who is VP of R&D and founder of the **i-Lab** at Air Liquide. Most unusual for an old, traditional gases company, Delabroy has launched a hip incubator staffed with a diverse team, looking for unorthodox opportunities. He shared with me that a cornerstone of their approach is DDP-style thinking.



Over 500 innovation leaders were attracted to the **Innovation Roundtable's** annual conference in Copenhagen. A theme running throughout the conference was how one can overcome the inherent anti-innovation DNA of a traditional company.

The Recipe for Innovation Proficiency

Building an innovation proficiency was my own keynote topic at the Innovation Roundtable event, in contrast with what Steve Blank calls "innovation theater" in which there's a lot of talking about innovation but not very much commitment to actually making it happen.

Here is a list of the ingredients needed for the recipe:

- An appropriate governance and funding mechanism.
- A balanced portfolio across different levels of uncertainty.
- A mechanism to identify and test assumptions, at the absolute lowest cost.
- The ability to stop or redirect ventures (the 'pivots' made famous by the Lean Startup).
- The ability to learn from intelligent failures.



And, essentially, these three competences:

1. Ideation (getting good ideas)
2. Incubation (nurturing them into an actual business concept) and

3. Acceleration (bringing them to market with the mainstream business)

If anyone would like to see a copy of the presentation, let Marion Reinson know – marion@ritamcgrath.com.

Talking Tech at the Drucker Forum

A different group of thinkers and innovators was gathered at the 2015 **Drucker Forum**. A majority of the discussions revolved around the question of how technology is going to affect people in the future. Some views were rather dystopian. On a panel I was part of, moderated by Harvard Business Review's Adi Ignatius, both Henry Mintzberg and J.C. Spender expressed anxiety over the impact of technologies on people's lives at work and on their sense of community. I was a little more upbeat, explaining that I thought technology could be used to liberate our sense of empathy.

Thankfully, the younger generation and the entrepreneurs at the event were more optimistic. Robin Chase, the founder of **Zipcar**, for instance, observed that an entirely new set of growth markets have been unleashed by the combination of assets held in excess capacity (cars, homes, you name it) which can now be sold in micro-markets specifically for the times people want to use those assets. Today, everyone thinks of Uber as having come up with this idea, but the original breakthrough in this business model was probably Zipcar. You can see the Forum Program [here](#).



The Thinkers50: Day and Night

"Davos by day and the Oscar's by night" is how Thinkers50 co-founders Des Dearlove and Stu Crainer like to describe this event.

The daytime program focused on a series of diverse panel discussions. I was partnered with the dynamic **Nilofer Merchant** on a panel facilitated by **Julia Kirby** of the Harvard Business Review on the topic of "Power." For this discussion, my definition of power was having control over scarce and valuable resources, not all of which have to be owned or expensive. Indeed, part of one's political skill is being able to actually create scarcity and desirability. Nilofer had a slightly different take, arguing that each person has a unique set of experiences, talents and interests, which are a fundamental source of creativity and, by extension,



power. She calls the concept ‘onlyness’ and argues that it requires a reconceptualization of how we leverage human talent in organizations. She has a [TED talk](#) on the topic that’s well worth watching.



The mood at Drapers' hall changes in the evening, as the event takes on a black tie gala atmosphere. The atmosphere also becomes a bit tense (the list is kept under wraps and no one knows if they’ve won any of the awards categories). I was pleased to have landed in the top 10, and also pleased to see so many of my friends and colleagues well-represented on the [list](#).

In the News

The miseries of jet lag. Joan Raymond of the New York Times and I had a great time commiserating on the agonies of jet lag – that nemesis of all who have to cross international time zones. This [fun piece](#) made the front of the business section – a departure from the usual coverage I get in that space. It was also picked up by the [Boston Globe](#).

Naps, treating every flight as downtime, scheduling a bit of slack for rest and not fighting inevitable jet lag work best for me. Of course, I joke, if you travel enough your body loses its moorings completely and adapts to whatever time you are in.

Why testing assumptions is so critical. This [article](#) recalls and expands on the importance of testing assumptions when entering into an uncertain environment. It also provides a brief history of how the concept of assumption testing has become more central to strategy.

On disclosure: When does a CEO need to disclose a serious illness? Read the article [here](#).

Overview of my research in an Australian magazine.

On Amazon and its people: Amazon getting their finger on the pulse of their employees. Read [here](#).

More links to recent press mentions can be found on the [Press section](#) of my website.

On Corporate Entrepreneurship and New Tools

For me, the next generation of discovery driven planning implementation lies in helping companies appreciate the idea, but more importantly, put it to systematic use. We're working on a couple of initiatives that we are finding really exciting.

The first is the launch of Columbia's first on-line course on corporate venturing, entitled Mastering Corporate Entrepreneurship. The ambition is to offer a scalable experience that is tools-based which companies can use to help their people apply the concepts to real innovation projects.

The second is the development of technological solutions to help people manage portfolios of opportunity and link the economics of new ventures to their larger strategy commitments.

We'll keep you posted as we make progress.

I am, ironically, heading to Turkey on the eve of Thanksgiving week. Hope you all have warm, safe and pleasant holidays.

All the best,

Rita

Password for the "Tools" Section of My Website

To access the tools part of the web site (downloadable diagnostics, quizzes, spreadsheets and other cool stuff) go to the [RitaMcGrath.com website](http://RitaMcGrath.com) and use the password - **mcgr8th!** *(the exclamation point is part of the password).*





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Rita Gunther McGrath
2880 Broadway
Armstrong Hall, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10025

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