

Business + Design: Exploring a Competitive Edge for Business Thinking 4

Business students are usually urged to “think outside the box,” but do traditional MBA programs teach outside the box? Most do not. To explore the efficacy of an interdisciplinary course synthesizing “design thinking” and business thinking, graduate business students were paired with art-design students to form teams in an action-learning program to address a real corporate problem. Faculty for the project also came from the business and design areas. The course was structured to maximize and track not only results but also changes in ways of thinking and approaching problems. From a qualitative perspective, the approach was successful for students and the corporate client.

Toni Ungaretti, Peter Chomowicz, Bernard J. Canniffe, Blair Johnson, Edward Weiss, Kaitlin Dunn, and Claire Cropper

Implications of Intuition for Strategic Thinking: Practical Recommendations for Gut Thinkers 12

Are good managers intuitive? Do they follow their gut feelings in the process of strategic thinking and decision-making? In fact, even managers who stress analytical processes for strategic thinking actually mix intuition into most decisions—whether they know it or not. Their decisions will be better if they acknowledge the role of intuition, which is valuable but can reflect biases. Following certain steps can enhance the likelihood of successful decision making: define criteria for success or failure; remain focused on the problem at hand; remember that good information is gathered from many different sources; balance calculated risks with intuitive judgment; and change the question to test an analysis.

Ida Kutschera and Mike H. Ryan

When Does Trust Influence Cooperation Effects in Public-Private Partnerships? 21

Contractual alliances between private organizations and governmental bodies face unique challenges: completely different structures, interests, and motivations. The product or service they produce is always a public good or service. How can these “PPPs” develop trust, and how does trust affect cooperation? A study of 244 PPPs in the pharmaceutical industry in China suggests that prior ties between partners play a major role in developing trust and ensuring positive results. However, uncertainties arising from partner behavior or the economic environment can affect trust and outcomes.

Zhe Zhang and Ming Jia

Communicating Sustainability Initiatives in Corporate Reports: Linking Implications to Organizational Change 33

The latest buzz-word in “today’s green-sensitive society” is “sustainability,” defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It is allied to corporate social responsibility (CSR). Today’s businesses try to rank high in sustainability and CSR—in stakeholder perception if not in fact. Therefore, communications are important. A study of such communications by 12 large companies (six in energy and six in consumer products) shows how very hard it is to measure these concepts. There are no standardized metrics, no data requirements in standard financial reporting, language is often technical, and communications are organizationally fragmented. All this complicates efforts of corporations to achieve revolutionary, not incremental, sustainability goals.

Ann H. Reilly

The Relationship Between Social Capital, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Performance Outcomes: An Empirical Study from China

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In a society that places a high value on guanxi (personal ties between individuals based on sentiment and mutual obligation), you might expect the various aspects of social capital and the effects of citizenship behavior to have positive effects on organizational performance and life satisfaction. A study based on responses from 121 full-time employees in an executive development program in Beijing produced some expected and unexpected correlations. For example, the structural and relational aspects of social capital did not affect performance, and a high level of organizational citizenship behavior appeared to reduce life satisfaction, but enhances performance.

Irene Hau-Siu Chow