



We Intend to Be and Must Be Different

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Companies all around us are facing more and more upheaval today, while market predictability of yesteryear and the capacity to identify and triumph over competitors have vanished. Increasingly, we are witnessing new and emerging markets, new ways of competing in long-established target markets, and new competitors. Many of these new competitors are originally from industries and countries with no tradition in our sector, which impels our organizations toward more creative management systems and business models.

Good entrepreneurs are currently immersed in a fascinating world where the rules of the game are constantly changing, challenged by “irreverent” actors who show no regard for the status quo of industry leaders, and by “explorers” who intend to be pioneers in a new product or service. Challenges also come in the form of the growing importance of emerging markets and economies committed to competing globally, overflowing with technology and knowledge, resulting in new lifestyles and new ways of competing. Naturally, the most creative managers find this environment ideal for developing their business.

The key to competitiveness of leading innovative organizations is centred squarely on the search for business models that differentiate them from the rest of participating agents in the system. This is, however, not a time for reengineering, although it remains a necessary complement to new business models. Neither is it the time to be solely concerned by cost cutting, although it is always an exercise in hygiene which enables organizations to compete on a sure footing, and since the playing field has varied considerably, it is certainly not the time to replay outdated success formulae.

Now is the ideal time to search for more creative horizons. From the perspective of a developed economy, such as the Basque economy, it is practically impossible to compete by focusing exclusively on cost cutting. The only course open to us, therefore, is the design of business models where both our talent and knowledge, and that of our allies', take precedence. In our day-to-day pursuits, these models would also incorporate intelligence into products and services, innovate how we deal with the network of agents and identify the needs of dissatisfied clients, to name but a few.

I personally believe that the road to increased competitiveness for most of our companies is none other than an original and innovative strategic model. Such a model would systematically question the established order of things and would explore new ways of reaching new and existing clients. Such a model would also systemize our effort within a well-structured network, keep us close to our sector's knowledge centres and, of course, keep a constant and watchful eye on other industries and technologies which can round off our capabilities.

Rather than strategic plans, companies need strategic maps which would enable them to maintain a sense of direction, while allowing sufficient flexibility in trying out new ways of differentiation. In keeping with the words of Herbert Marcuse: “The life we have remaining is in the future, let us forget the past”, I believe that, as managers, we must relinquish the old managerial archetypes, and make permanent exploration a constant in our organizations.