REMOVING BARRIERS TO INNOVATION IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract
Inertia, fear of change, avoidance of risk and the challenge of constantly creating something new are the factors most often cited for why innovation is so difficult to sustain in any organization. Fostering innovation requires not only overcoming these barriers, but establishing a culture where its members are able to take risks without punishment; where the focus is on the future and where innovation is rewarded. In today's dynamic journalism environment, more and more industry leaders are looking to journalism schools for new ways to tell stories and to disseminate those stories to the public.

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In today's dynamic journalism environment, more and more industry leaders are looking to journalism schools for new ways to tell stories and to disseminate those stories to the public. This paper provides a case study of how one institution, the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University in Phoenix has broken down barriers and created a place where innovation flourishes.

Literature Review
Innovation traditionally has been defined as an "idea, practice or object that is perceived by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 1983 p. 251.) More recently, it has been described as "the art of getting people to adopt change" (Denning and Dunham 2010, p. xiii.) In either case, change is at the heart of innovation and getting people to adopt change is not easy. In addition to a fear of change, to be innovative an organization must overcome inertia, the tendency to avoid risk and the seemingly insurmountable challenge of constantly creating something new (Phillips, 2008). And in higher education, the barriers to innovation are even higher. They include tradition, a continued reliance on federal and state dollars, oversight by accreditors and the federal government, shared governance and higher-education associations (Selingo, 2011.) And perhaps more than any other factor, it is organizational culture that determines whether an organization will be a pioneer. In fact, "its import exceeds that of all other factors proposed in the literature"—factors that include religion, country culture, the pool of scientific talent and intellectual property (Tellis, Prabhu and Chandy, 2007b, p. 2.)

Further, the presence of a group of creative and productive employees does not automatically enhance the innovativeness of a firm (Tellis, Prabhu and Chandy, 2007b.) Anderson would argue innovation requires three ingredients—a crowd, light and desire. The members of the crowd have to be aware of the others and their work and be willing to recognize one another's contributions.

Anderson also identifies a series of players that are key to an organization's success as an innovator: the trend spotter who finds a promising innovation early; the evangelist who passionately makes the case for idea X or person Y; the superspreader who broadcasts innovations to a larger group; the skeptic who keeps the conversation honest; and knowledge brokers or general participants who show up, comment honestly and learn. To ensure an organization has a critical mass of these key players it is critical that it hire people with varied skills, interests and backgrounds (Anderson 2011, p. 115, Hargadon and Sutton, 2001, Schnaars, 1994.) An organization's members must also have the ability to cannibalize or stretch the enterprise beyond its usual scope and to take ideas from inside and outside of the company and to be product champions (Hargadon and Sutton, 2001, Phillips, 2008, Prabhu and Chandy, 2007.)

Businesses that routinely innovate continuously engage in four intertwined practices. They recognize and capture good ideas, they keep those ideas alive, they are expert at imagining new uses for old ideas and they put promising concepts to the test (Hargadon and Sutton, 2001.) These knowledge brokers develop creative answers to hard problems because people within the organization talk a lot about their work and about who might help them do better. Within these organizations, ideas are commodities. They are inexpensive, malleable and easily replaced. Members of the organization are encouraged to push the ideas to the limit, to bend and change them in ways their originators never imagined (Hargadon and Sutton, 2001.) When it's clear to the brokers the idea, the innovation isn't working, they move on.

However, many innovations get stuck in a lengthy useless stage (Schnaars, 1994.) As a result, many companies, especially large ones, opt to be imitators rather than innovators, entering the market when demand explodes. "Smaller firms may be more entrepreneurial, faster-moving, and more insightful. . .but it is the large industry leaders who possess the power to muscle their way into emerging markets, which they then quickly dominate (Schnaars, 2002, p. 209.)

Disruptive Change and Innovation
The "gale of creative destruction" that has blown through media industries over the past twenty years has presented unprecedented challenges to the ways they do business, not the least of which is the temptation to upend the organization and the way it functions. Three key factors impact what an organization can and cannot do: its resources, its processes and its values. Its processes are the patterns of interaction, the coordination of communication and decision making employees use to determine where to invest resources and to transform those resources into products and services of greater worth. An organization's values are the standards by which employees set priorities that enable them to judge whether an order is attractive, whether a customer is more or less important and whether an idea is worth pursuing. With respect to innovation, one value relates to how big a business opportunity has to be before it can be interesting. The factors that define an organization's capabilities and disabilities evolve over time. They start in resources, move to visible, articulated processes and values and migrate fully to culture.

When an organization needs new processes and values because it needs new capabilities, managers must create a new organizational space where those capabilities can be developed. Managers can create new organizational structures within corporate boundaries. They can create a spinoff of the existing operation and develop within the new arm new processes and values or they can acquire a different organization whose processes and values closely match the requirements of the new task. No matter which route it takes, for an organization to be successful in addressing a disruptive change, the CEO must be willing to provide personal, attentive and continual oversight" (Christensen and Overdorf, 2001.)

Innovation and Higher Education

As noted above, in higher education the barriers to innovation are even higher than they are in other sectors of the economy. Those barriers include tradition, a continued reliance on federal and state dollars, oversight by accreditors and the federal government, shared governance and higher-education associations (Selingo, 2011.) Siegfried, Getz and Anderson (1995) posited that perceived insulation from the competitive pressure to stay on the cutting edge may also help explain why the pace of innovation in higher education is so slow. The authors contend even prestigious institutions that compete for students nationally are insulated from competitive pressures. "They have no stockholders, and their governing boards have few ready measures to judge performance." Further "short-run problem solving" by top administrators negates a focus on the "big picture." (Siegfried, Getz and Anderson, 1995.)

More recently, Selingo (2011) argued tradition, "how things were done in the past. . .is particularly strong among the consumers. . .students. . .and their parents" whereas in most industries it is consumers who force innovation."

Yet, the importance of innovation as a driver of economic prosperity is increasing and the rules around it are changing. According to the "GE Global Innovation Barometer," an independent survey of 1,000 business executives in 12 countries, the greatest innovations of the 21st century will be those that address human needs like improving health and environmental quality, enhancing energy security, and providing more access to education. Further, it is likely those innovations will come from individuals and small-to-mid-size enterprises and will be derived from partnerships between multiple entities (Business Wire, 2011.)

Who better to develop partnerships and create environments that spark innovation than schools of journalism that are charged with preparing students to enter a profession that has been shaken to its core by the gale of creative destruction?

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication: A case study

In naming Arizona State University President Michael Crow one of the 10 best university presidents in the United States, Fitzpatrick (2011) wrote, "He rode into office in 2002 vowing to build a New American University that embraced students with a wide range of backgrounds and abilities while giving élite public schools a run for their research money. During his tenure, the university has more than doubled its yearly research spending, boosted its roster of National Merit Scholars 61% and claimed a spot on three separate rankings of America's best colleges. Meanwhile, the number of low-income Arizona freshmen enrolling each year has grown nearly nine fold and the population of minority students has jumped 62%." Crow's philosophy ties back to the founding of the GE study and centers on helping the public with the things that matter the most to them.

As part of his plan to build a New American University, Crow in partnership with then-Phoenix mayor Phil Gordon envisioned a new campus in the heart of Downtown Phoenix, the sixth largest city in the United States. Early in his tenure, Crow identified the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication as one of a handful of units at the university that had the potential to become nationally prominent and earmarked it as the centerpiece for the new downtown Phoenix campus. Among Crow's first acts as president was to make the Cronkite School an independent unit. It had previously been part of a college comprised of disparate departments and schools. Crow also named as the school's founding dean Christopher Callahan, an experienced journalism administrator who shared Crow's vision, sense of urgency and commitment to change. For innovation to flourish, the members of the enterprise must be empowered and encouraged to pursue new ideas and approaches. Callahan has done both. Under his leadership, faculty began demanding more of the school's students and developing new opportunities for the most ambitious to hone their skills. His tireless energy is infectious and has motivated faculty, staff and students to do their very best.

Even before he arrived on campus, Callahan issued an open call to all members of the faculty and staff asking for their vision of the school, concerns, challenges and ideas for the future. The vast majority of faculty and staff wrote detailed memos. Following those correspondences, the Dean met individually with each member of the full time faculty and staff as well as with students and professionals. Those discussions were followed by conversations within faculty meetings during the first semester. Ten distinct themes quickly and clearly emerged on how to fulfill the school's mission of educating and training journalists. . . generating new knowledge and serving the media, the community and the public They were:

- Building on the school's traditional strengths—professional journalism education
- Restructuring the curricula on both the undergraduate and graduate levels to better prepare students for careers in journalism and public relations in the digital age
- Providing much-needed new and expanded facilities and equipment
- Adding new faculty while decreasing the student body
- Increasing staff to provide better services to faculty and students and higher level advising
- Restoring civility and collegiality among faculty and staff
- Creating a strong relationship with the university's administration, specifically the President
- Providing more opportunities to support faculty research
- Creating new and innovative professional experiences for students
- Securing the financial resources to make all of those goals a reality (Cronkite, 2010.)

This highly collaborative and inclusive process set both a new tone and a new direction for the school. In the first year, a new undergraduate curriculum was approved unanimously by the faculty. A year later, the faculty voted, again unanimously for a new master's curriculum. In both cases, six teams were created to consider core values, basic skills, advanced skills, diversity, collegiality and standards. Each team consisted of full-time faculty, students, advisers, part-time faculty and members of the journalism professions. A series of open meetings was held to solicit input from other members of the faculty and staff as well as from students and professionals. Draft reports that incorporated the results of each team's deliberations were distributed to the faculty for further comment before a vote was taken. That spirit of openness and shared governance continues. Monthly meetings include all faculty and staff. Frequent updates are provided on matters of importance, from the budget to the state of the university to the promotion and tenure of junior faculty (Cronkite, 2010.)

Since 2005 the Cronkite School's undergraduate and graduate curricula have continued to evolve, combining traditional journalism values and skills with deep immersions in digital media and intensive professional programs based on the teaching hospital model. The school's leadership, again, with input from faculty, staff and students and the support of university administration, designed a state-of-the-art media education complex on the new Phoenix campus and successfully orchestrated the transition to a new building, a new campus and new city within three years. President Crow making good on his promise to provide the resources necessary for the Cronkite School to become a top-tier program heavily invested in the school beyond its building and its equipment and furnishings.

Private fundraising led to the creation of seven new faculty positions and a series of new centers and programs. The full-time faculty increased by two-thirds and includes a mixture of top-flight professionals and young communication scholars.

The Cronkite School also works in unison with ASU's long-range strategic plan that focuses on excellence, access and impact on the community and the world. The Cronkite School has embraced that strategic vision and has leveraged its location to concentrate on state government coverage and starting specializations in Latino and borderlands coverage and business reporting. And entrepreneurship and

innovation pervade the school through classes such as 21st Century Media Organizations and Entrepreneurship, a course required for all students and labs that serve as incubators for new digital media and use-inspired research (Cronkite, 2010).

Through it all, visionary leadership, the ability to create and sustain a sense of urgency in members of the enterprise, a commitment to excellence, the relentless focus on initiating change after change and the infusion of new, energetic talent have made it possible for the Cronkite School to overcome the barriers to innovation and become a model for 21st century journalism education.

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