



We want to be innovative ... but we don't want to be the first ones

2009-09-06

Selling involves finding new customers, to attract unknown new players, like a mind conquest over our commercial target, over their knowledge. A patently obvious concept, usually forgotten in these crisis and restructuring ages. Selling is not marketing, but it has anyway innovation elements. Going out to a new market, gives a huge differential to the product, making possible to reposition an entire company behind him.

This simple thought is what led Daniel Carasso to success, when he called as “Greek yogurt” what was medical yogurt, to abandon pharmacy retail in Spain, landing later at U.S. restaurants, doing a transformation from a prescription drug into a high added value dessert. This thinking also enabled Carasso (who died recently at 103 years old) to create a company based on its own product. The company is known as Danone.

As Ignacio Prieto says on “[Que inventen ellos](#)”, we usually understand as “innovation” the progress on top of knowledge, both academic, scientific or high technology. Even if these processes (see “[Innovation & Internationalization](#)”) sooner or later result in the industry, from textiles to food, our first reaction is confined to certain areas such as pharmaceutical, energy, military. However, the creation of concepts is the viral ability to generate new ideas, concepts and research.



In this way, opening the HIT Barcelona in mid-June, [Professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter](#) made a great conference called “How to become one of the companies that are transforming the world”. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to talk to her after the speech. Moss Kanter is the Ernest L. Arbuckle Professor at Harvard Business School, where she specializes in strategy, innovation, and leadership for change. She has been named to the lists of “50 most powerful women in the world” (London Times), and the “50 most influential thinkers of the world” (Accenture, thinkers 50). Without doubt, an exceptional person with a great knowledge of academic and real world of business. And crisis in particular.

Precisely about this, arose the “innovation into globalization” issue, as a needed backdoor of all mid-range industries (in Spain and in other countries). And then Kanter summarized: “We say that we want to be innovative, but you see, let others to innovate the firsts” adding “that bad practice is about waiting to a foreign companies call”. In the same vein, I heard saying: “if the market does not want our solution maybe the market is wrong”. This is not mismanagement but a weak conceptual position of the institution in relation to its environment.

It all starts with a sort of fear of emptiness, which is where we haven't built a state of



continuous change of corporate culture. We need to become aware that the only constant pattern is changing scenarios, where the only thing stable is the acceleration speed of the change.

When we accept the “continuous change”, we can transform that knowledge into a corporate desire, into a new horizon of targets. This is ultimately of another class of needs, another sort of crisis: those which we are consciously pursuing, in order to grow.

Finally, Kanter gives us an escape door to deal with the paralysis feelings (executives’ stress, lack of energy on the Board, delays facing changes) that is, instead of waiting an internal change, provoke the twist from the borderline, regenerating the corporate culture, landing in new markets with our existing and known products, carrying our local medicinal yogurts to foreign restaurants as very tasty desserts.

This is the first of three articles arising from the global HIT conference: visit the next one called "[Singularity on internationalization](#)"

[También disponible en Español](#)