



NETTELBOSSJE 2

ALUMNI MAGAZINE STRATEGIC INNOVATION MANAGEMENT

Editorial for Twins edition: October 2016

The first Twins edition - two alumni active in the same industry

Dear all,
just before our Faculty will be audited on Monday October 31 by two important accreditation teams, I am able to share with you the first Twins edition. The idea started a while ago, but it took a while before it crystallized.

Since many of our graduates are working in the same industries, I thought it would be interesting to hear their stories to see how companies in the same industry may follow different (innovation) strategies. Although the two former students, **Marjolein Oomen** and **Nikos Dalavouras**, are both entrepreneurs and are both active in the same industry, they run different businesses. So you could say that this Twins edition reports the business stories of two fraternal twins, not identical twins.

During her studies, **Marjolein** contacted me to ask about an entrepreneurial idea she had. She wanted to develop a radically new TV concept, and asked me for advice about how to protect it properly. I gave her my personal advice (that I usually give to students) not be too overly protective, but to rather share the idea and improve it with the feedback from friends, family and fools. She kept the idea secret, but then with the help of an opportunity that came along her business idea gained momentum, and changed its course. She won the competition to follow the prestigious SPOE programme in the US. There she was inspired to become an entrepreneur of selling high-quality customized bras.

I have fond memories of **Nikos**. In all my memories of him, Nikos has a smile on his face. He was not the most serious and dedicated student, but I could always have a laugh with him. If I would be mad at him for not showing enough progress, he would simply disarm me with his radiant blue eyes and perfect smile. After his study, he first wanted to pursue a PhD - also to my surprise - but he found a better match: to become an entrepreneur. He asked me for a reference letter, as the Greek bank required this for self-employed entrepreneurs. I forgot to check his business and just wrote the letter. Then I found out he was an entrepreneur in lingerie, and for a highly specific type of lingerie.

As you will see in this Twins edition, the two former students occupy a niche market that is almost diametrically opposed to each other. This brings me to a slide of Dany Jacobs (see below).

Evolution and finding a niche

In one of his lectures, Dany Jacobs showed how evolution theory can be applied to business. From an evolutionary perspective, a firm's innovation success relates to the 'fit' between the innovation and its selection environment. Innovations (and firms) get selected when they score well on the selectors' evaluation criteria. But as we live in a large and rich eco-system, many different species (or type of firms, products, etc.) may survive, each having its own survival strategy. The richness of the ecology co-evolves through the continuous adaption of firms' offerings to the changing selectors' demands.

As you will see, the businesses and target markets of **Marjolein** and **Nikos** are completely different, but at the same time they share some communalities in their search to create value for their customers. Please read the Twins edition to find out how they each make a unique contribution to increase the diversity within the lingerie landscape.

evolution ~ increasing differentiation;
new populations (→ speciation)

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Dany Jacobs

- bicycles → racing bikes → mountain bikes →
- men's suits → ladies' suits → catsuits →
- markets → specialised sellers → specialised shops → general shops → departments stores → supermarkets → minimarkets →
- mail order → e-shops → e-auctions →
- romantic painting → impressionism → fauvism, expressionism → abstract expressionism → pop art

About the Twins design:

For the Twins edition, I have asked my sister, who is a graphic designer, to develop the template. Her design does not only show the apparent similarity, but also stresses the distinctiveness between the two individuals. She has picked colors that are "strongly separated" from each other on the color spectrum. The oblique line emphasizes the distinction or separation that exists between the two. She used a firm letter font that is classic, but easily readable online at the same time. I will use this design again then the next Twins edition arrives. Any volunteers?