

# Social Innovations Tidbits

Caroline Ridgway 09 June 2011

Each quarter, this section of the Philadelphia Social Innovations Journal brings you a selection of recent news reports and other publications featuring topics and trends related to social innovation, disruptive innovation and social entrepreneurship. These "tidbits" offer brief summaries of stories and articles from around the country and the world, and fall under themes such as social media, technology, leadership, "what works," evolving trends, philanthropy and others. If you come across something you think is worth highlighting here, please send it to Caroline Ridgway at [caroline@philasocialinnovations.org](mailto:caroline@philasocialinnovations.org).

## Technology

### **So You Want to Use Your iPhone for Work? Uh-Oh.**

**(Roger Cheng, The Wall Street Journal, April 25, 2011, [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704641604576255223445021138.html?mod=WSJ\\_hpp\\_RIGHTTopCarousel\\_1](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704641604576255223445021138.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_RIGHTTopCarousel_1))**

As smartphones grow in variety and capability, employers are discovering that it's no longer a one-BlackBerry-fits-all world. More companies are enabling employees to use

their personal devices for work purposes, including iPhones and iPads and Android devices, instead of the standard-issue BlackBerry, and those companies offering the greatest flexibility in gadget-related policies are finding success. However, there are logistical, financial and privacy concerns to address. Logistically, it may be a challenge for some companies' IT departments to work with these new platforms, and users may find access to company information and networks limited. Financially, companies are exploring different payment structures, varying from 100 percent employer backing of the plan to substantial employee contributions. To ensure that sensitive work materials are kept private, many employers are mandating, at a minimum, that employees make use of their phone's password protection. More drastically, companies may remotely wipe a phone's memory if the phone is stolen or lost. Generally, though, employees are receptive to working with employers on these policies for the trade-off of being able to use the device of their choice.

## **Infographic: Does Facebook Make You a Better Student?**

**(Peter Pachal, PC Magazine, April 26, 2011,**

**<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2384338,00.asp>)**

To say Facebook use has become widespread is a gross understatement. But what effect is it having on students,

the originators and still predominant users of the platform? Some interesting findings: Studying while using Facebook translates into 20 percent lower grades, though nearly 80 percent of students don't buy into this statistic. Facebook users are much more active in campus activities but also much less likely to hold gainful employment of more than five hours a week. Contradictorily, Facebook users are twice as likely to be "popular" yet nearly half "think they're sadder than their friends." Facebook addiction is a real issue, generating 350 times more Internet searches than cigarette addiction. Facebook status updates give users an ego boost—perhaps too much, since heavy users are also more narcissistic. Overall, while Facebook increases users' connectivity to the world around them and may enhance their feelings of self-worth, it clearly interferes with their productivity (no big surprise) and may have, or potentially exacerbate, legitimately negative psychological effects, as evidenced by users' apparent rates of addiction and self-report of depression.

## **Evolving Trends**

### **The Sharing Economy**

**(Danielle Sacks, Fast Company, April 18, 2011, <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/155/the-sharing-economy.html>)**

As kids, we were all taught the value of sharing. A five-

year-old with a beloved toy may not see the point, but an increasing population of companies and consumers are exploring, implementing and succeeding with platforms built entirely on the principle of shared resources. It seems people are becoming less enamored with the notion of exclusive ownership and are embracing the range of benefits they accrue from participating in a shared network, either as offerer or borrower of the desired product or service. As Sacks succinctly puts it, "The central conceit of collaborative consumption is simple: Access to goods and skills is more important than ownership of them." This sector is still maturing, but is projected to occupy an increasingly influential and sizeable portion of the economy. Yet to be conclusively established is how to demonstrate trust; users aren't going to be attracted to a network they can't rely on. But with interest somewhere between vast and truly galactic, we're certain to come across plenty of opportunities to put our sharing skills to the test.

## **How Information Can Fuel Jobs**

**(Clive Thompson, Wired Magazine, April 2011, [http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/03/st\\_thompson\\_free\\_data/](http://www.wired.com/magazine/2011/03/st_thompson_free_data/))**

Consider the volumes and volumes of information the government collects about a broad range of topics—public health, crime statistics, the weather, economic trends, etc. And consider that that information is (or

should be) publicly accessible without charge, as its collection is funded by taxpayer dollars. A number of companies are starting to think strategically about how they can harness that information and build fully number-crunched databases for consumers. For instance, the San Diego start-up BrightScope helps a user compare the performance of his or her company's 401(k) to those of other companies. Not surprisingly, the first trick appears to be getting the government agencies that house the information to turn it over to statistically inclined entrepreneurs. Persistence could pay off in the end, though; the MyCityWay app analyzes information from 20 different cities about topics ranging from restaurant health inspections to train schedules to public swimming pool hours, and has already been downloaded more than a million times.

## **Health Care**

### **Building a Stronger Foundation for a New Century of Treatments and Cures**

**(Kathleen Sebelius, Health Affairs, January 2011, pp .81-83.**

**<http://content.healthaffairs.org/content/30/1/81.abstract>**

New drug development is very time-consuming and expensive, and despite many billions of dollars spent, only a handful of new drugs a year may make it to market and

prove truly meaningful. Secretary Kathleen Sebelius of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services addresses the need for stronger public-private partnerships to expedite new drug development. Though pharmaceutical research and development has historically been entirely the province of private industry, Secretary Sebelius writes that the federal government can play a positive role by encouraging and building diverse networks including philanthropic foundations and patient advocacy groups. In her words, "It is important to keep looking closely for the points where good ideas stop moving forward, and then ask what steps are needed to keep the momentum going" by employing greater and broader collaboration among stakeholders.

## **What Works**

### **Strategies for Learning from Failure**

**(Amy C. Edmondson, Harvard Business Review, April 2011, pp. 49-55.**

**<http://hbr.org/2011/04/strategies-for-learning-from-failure/ar/1>**)

From a young age, we are conditioned to avoid failure at all costs—and subsequently taught to learn from and reflect upon our failures, as a way to keep from making the same mistakes. The author of this article posits that, whereas people tend to apply fairly rote mechanisms of analysis to failure, more productive and nuanced means of

examination will maximize beneficial outcomes. Just as not all failures are categorically negative occurrences, they can occur independent of specific blameworthiness and in different kinds, including “preventable failures in predictable operations,” “unavoidable failures in complex systems,” and “intelligent failures at the frontier.” It is up to organizational leaders to establish a culture that is, if not welcoming, at least understanding of the fact that failure and mistakes happen, and to implement a system to recognize and cure them without burying them under employee fear of reprisal or pretending it won’t happen again. Thorough analysis of error and experimentation at divining a better way of doing things will ensure that subsequent mistakes are identified in a timely fashion and the organization and its clients/customers/audience all benefit.

## **Reinventing Your Personal Brand**

**(Dorie Clark, Harvard Business Review, March 2011, pp. 78-81.**

**<http://hbr.org/2011/03/reinventing-your-personal-brand/ar/1>)**

The flip side of building a particular area of expertise is the risk of being pigeon-holed in your career as lacking the know-how to transition into different roles or companies. The author, CEO of a consulting firm that focuses on branding, here offers “five steps [that] are key to reinventing yourself for the business marketplace,

whether your desired changes are large or small." These steps are "Define Your Destination," "Leverage Your Points of Difference," "Develop a Narrative," "Reintroduce Yourself," and "Prove Your Worth." The first step is essential due diligence to ensure you have an identified course of change; lack of forethought will just muddle your journey. Build the necessary skill-set to make the transition. Subsequently, take advantage of what makes you unique to stand out among a field of perhaps more experienced candidates. Develop your narrative to explain the transition you're seeking out, why it makes sense and why your previous experiences are actually an asset because of the perspective they've given you. The reintroduction phase involves not just person-to-person interactions; make sure your Facebook and LinkedIn profiles reflect your changed direction. Be strategic about engaging new networks and making new connections, and stay on message; be careful about deviating and playing defense if people question your motives or the wisdom of your transition. Finally, take steps to publicize your new knowledge base; people want proof that you are as reliable in your new role as you were previously.

## **Disruptive Innovation**

### **Making Innovation Matter**

(Mark W. Johnson, BusinessWeek, March 2, 2011.

<http://www.businessweek.com/innovate/content/feb2>

For companies looking to innovate, the balance, according to Mark Johnson, chairman and co-founder of the consulting firm Innosight, is in going just far enough, but not too far. The danger in going too far is that you end up with a product that has too many bells and whistles and fails to appeal to consumers because of its complexity, cost or both. The danger in not going far enough is that you undersell yourself and lose out on an opportunity to reach a new market. In addressing whether the notion of innovation has grown overrated, Johnson suggests that “[t]he question . . . is not whether innovation matters, but how to make it matter more.” Johnson recommends a mix of bottom-up and top-down innovation. As an example, he discusses Google’s policy of granting its engineers up to 20 percent of their on-the-clock-time to allocate to tasks of personal interest. At the end of the day, though, it is management that must have the savvy and courage to assess and choose which potential innovations to act on and which to table.