

Another new year in a strange new world

Another new year in a strange new world. Although the title for this editorial may sound odd, even grammatically incorrect, it personifies the way many of us throughout the world are feeling as profound change appears to be occurring everywhere. We have new leaders who utilize the technology we thought would save the world to seemingly destabilize it. We have changes in the way we live looming over the horizon as I contemplate not having to worry about ever losing my driver's license due to old age and infirmity as self-driving cars become a reality. The climate is changing, and the world, while becoming smaller through communication and travel advances, is simultaneously becoming bigger as the same technologies seem to be driving us apart.

What does all this actually mean? Well, for most of us (I am a young 50-something), it means that things are happening that we have never seen before. We are seeing demonstrations driven by social media throughout the world. If you turn on the news, it appears that the world is truly ending – it is stressful, distressing, and in some cases, downright scary. But the reality is that while most of us are too young to remember, the world has always been in a state of disruption, and when we are in the midst of it, I am sure it always seems like the end of the world. This is a fundamental of innovation.

Before you condemn me and give up reading the *Journal* forever, hear me out. I still have a land line. Why I have a landline, I have no idea. Perhaps it is just comfortable to know I can just pick up any phone in the house and talk all I want. The only thing about this landline is that the only calls I ever receive are from marketing or polling companies, and usually during dinner or while I am in the shower. Yes, there is some comfort to be had in the landline, but it is from a bygone era so my mind tells me I need to give it up, but my heart has a hard time letting go.

About six months ago, I purchased a fully-automated, Wi-Fi-enabled sprinkler controller for my home. It connects to the local weather station and only waters my yard when it needs it. My best guess is that I have already in six months saved over 50,000 gallons of water because this device only waters when it is needed and doesn't even turn on if it is expected to rain, or it has been unusually wet. It took some time to resist the urge to force it to water every other day (my previous setting), but the company that builds the product insists that they have a team of experts with advanced college degrees that developed algorithms to water the right amount at the right time of day for the optimal times per week (my sprinkler didn't turn on for two months this winter). After the initial four or five months of wanting to override the system regularly, I realized the lawn was healthier than ever. The problem now is that my gardener needs my looking over his shoulder, as there are no more manual on-off valves. I have to take out my phone and turn things on and off as he adjusts the sprinkler heads. Mind you, the application will allow me to invite my gardener as a guest to the system, but with all due respect to my gardener, I don't believe this will ever happen. More resistance to change.

The world of today is changing very quickly and many citizens are terrified of the changes that are coming. However, much like Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, we can apply the stages of death to the land line and sprinkler controller and countless other material, social and economic models under which we have grown comfortable. My father talked me out of applying for cell tower rights back in the 80s by convincing me that no one would ever want to carry around a phone



(I expect many of you know someone like this). In the Kübler-Ross model, this is the first stage, otherwise referred to as “Denial”.

Throughout much of the world, and given our political climate today, we are in the second stage of the model – “Anger”. Anger that the world is changing, that my land line is no longer valuable. In all great changes, the stage of anger seems to be particularly troubling and in today’s climate of change, disturbing. To use the phone example again, we all hated dropped calls and areas where there was no coverage. We were angry at our phones as much as addicted.

The third stage is “Bargaining”, when we find reasons to accept the change rather than be angry about it. My father finally said that all his friends and my mother had a smart phone so he might as well just have one, too; but he didn’t need one of the fancy ones because all the rest of the stuff that you can use a smart phone for is just dumb. In the larger world, we will eventually get to a point where people will say, “OK, we will allow societal changes, but we don’t like them”. I think we teeter back and forth between anger and bargaining as we get a little closer every day to throwing out the land line phone.

The fourth stage is “Depression”. In this ever-changing world, we do lament the things we have lost. How many times do you hear older people tell you that the old land line phone was just so much easier to use. All you had to do was pick it up, the battery never died, and my old number “PENnsylvania 6-500” was so much cuter that a country code, area code, and number. We long for the good old days, and that sounds familiar to anyone who just wants the world to slow down and go back to the way it used to be. We are sad, but also probably a little bit excited to see where this is all going.

Never fear though – the final stage is “acceptance”, and we all eventually get there. We decide that the smart phone is actually pretty cool and the land line now sits in a trash can. In society, we figure out that we will not be going back to the 50s or 60s and that maybe they really weren’t that great anyway. After all, we had many problems in those days that brought us into the 70s, 80s and beyond.

It is going to be a tough few years for change, innovation and evolution; but, we will come out on the other side better than we went in. We will accept the changing world and make it our own.

This quarter’s edition is particularly interesting with five very interesting papers and one practitioner paper. We start with Robleske and Berente, who have written *A Pragmatic View on Entrepreneurial Opportunities*. Essentially, the paper makes the case that opportunities are dynamic and unfolding experiences that can be exploited for social or financial gain. Entrepreneurs are those that see the opportunity and conceives of a new, general market need (opportunity). These pragmatists are the ones that can learn about it and develop new solutions or innovations that are able to act on the opportunity. The model that the paper advances describes the process through which an entrepreneur conceived of a new general market need and then acts to exploit it.

Our second paper, by Rivera, is a practitioner piece that describes the modern organization entitled *Leveraging Innovation Growth and Entrepreneurship as a Source for Organizational Growth*. What is particularly impactful about this paper is the description of the changing organization (acceleration) and the entrepreneurs place in that new dynamic. Although one could argue that organizations have always been dynamic, one could also argue that change today is even greater than any other time in

history. Accordingly, this paper describes the roles in the fast changing organization and the entrepreneurs' place in it.

Our third paper is by Ondra, Škaroupka and Rajlich and is titled *Innovating Product Appearance Within Brand Identity*. As an Editor, I admit to having spent little time thinking about this topic. Essentially, the authors describe the process of designing a drill, with all the considerations of form, function and design. The design considers use and branding of the product. When you look at brands of cars, kitchen appliances and even drills, you notice that although they may have been designed by different teams, they all have a brand to the design that sends a message about functions, reliability or whatever you wish to communicate about the product.

Our fourth paper, *Scientific or Technological Driving Force? Constructing a System of National Innovation Capacity*, by Chang and Fan, examines the variables used in measuring innovation capacity at the national level. It includes the different approaches and the benefits and shortfalls of each. As a measurement of innovation capability at the national level, it is a good paper to add to considerations.

The fifth paper in this issue is titled *Inter-organizational Cooperation and Organizational Innovativeness. A Comparative Study*. The finding of Pouwels and Koster are fascinating because of their findings that there is a time and a place for overall inter-organizational cooperation. Specifically, when building a product, it may not be as advantageous as when redesigning a process or jointly developing a service.

The final paper (sixth) examines research and development (R&D) activities in US pharmaceutical firms. Titled, *R&D Investment Behavior of USA Pharmaceutical Firms*, Jirásek argues that the findings indicate that there are real differences in R&D between small and large firms.

This issue is one of our best, so I hope you dig deeply into each paper and enjoy the work of these authors.

Brett E. Trusko

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, USA