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'Women's Productivity & Innovation'

by

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Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman, It's a pleasure to be here with such an accomplished group of women inventors and innovators from such diverse parts of the world.

I'd like to begin by recounting an experiment that was conducted in Tucson, Arizona at a Conference on Consciousness in 2002.¹ The observers were asked to watch very closely the two participants throw a white ball back and forth. The observers were told to and count closely the number of times the ball was being caught and thrown back -focus on the ball. While they were doing this a man dressed up in a Gorilla costume walked directly through the space in which the two parties were throwing the ball back and forth- directly through the line of ball throwing. How many observers do you think saw the gorilla? I'd appreciate your participation here including my colleagues on the dais. Please let's have a show of hand.

There are 4 choices; how many of you believe that 10% of the observers did not see the Gorilla, 25%, 50%, 75 % The answer is 50% of the people watching the ball throwers did not see the Gorilla.

Why am I mentioning this story today?

Because the lessons from this experiment can be applied to challenges that inventor's and innovators face in two very distinct ways.

The first, for inventors & innovators it is often the consciousness of observing what the majority don't observe that lies at the heart of and fuels innovation and so to stay conscious of this is to be more finely tuned to the innovative moment and absolutely pertinent to proactively engaging one's productivity.

The first application is equally as important as the second but the second, requires more elaboration and consideration of some growing trends.

Major corporations aim to create significant inventions yet they are doing so less and less. In fact through most of industrial history, small enterprises have been

responsible for the majority of inventions and innovations. Big corporations have kept in house research and development (R&D) labs and a multitude of innovation programs for fear of the appearance of what the author, Clayton Christensen, described as a “disruptive technology”ⁱⁱ, an innovation so revolutionary that it would allow an upstart outsider to crush the corporation.

An article on companies and innovation in the 24 April 2004 issue of British publication “The Economist” proposes that it would be far better for big corporate managers to keep their eye keenly focused on the market to see new ideas they may spot to buy and then ONLY do what big corporations do best- find innovative ways to bring the inventions and innovations to market.

Nevertheless from the inventors or innovators perspective a contradiction arises because it appears that the management in big corporations don’t often see the value in “buying”, as any of you with early stage innovations who have engaged in a negotiation with a big company or even a venture capitalist can attest.

The negotiation – if there is one – begins with a convenient assumption that if the invention or innovation has not yet been to market it has little if no value. The irony is that it is this exact part of the sequence that the executives in the big corporations are not able generate.

Unfortunately, we are living in a period of history where the discovery of corruption among those that were supposed to be ‘above it all’ is rampant and Machiavellian rules apply. In the most recent Economist Magazine 2004 survey on Bankers “I’m a banker – Trust Me”ⁱⁱⁱ, a priority for ethical behavior appears to have been replaced by an evaluation on the part of a potential offender as to whether you, the innovator, have a war chest with which to defend your Intellectual Property or not. If you don’t, you are free game.

Intellectual Property (IP) ‘shop lifting’ is endemic and at epidemic proportions, this is the gorilla that most early stage innovator and inventors don’t recognize before it happens to them. This shop lifting is even more prevalent in countries where there is no consciousness of what IP is. I propose that the only defense you have is to recognize the reality of the current state of affairs and work to find a path. Not only stay conscious of the Gorilla and the value of your own IP but ‘look the gorilla in the eye’. This can be done if you come from the place that ‘you will find a way’.

What do I mean by that?

- Work to create the consciousness of the value of IP and its rights.
- Make sure you use the money of family and friends, angels, whomever before going to the VC for a round of funding.
- Be diligent and vigilant about using every legal right and means available to you.
- Do your home work about your rights and every one you are considering meeting for a discussion. (This is substantially easier due to the internet than it was years ago.) Look for conflicts of interest; learn what ever you can about the character of the persons you will meet.

- From copyrights to patents to confidentiality agreements (CA) and non-compete agreements, don't skip steps. Don't be bullied. It *may be* a tough road with these tools and it is definitely a dead end without them.
- Use personal channels to find a way that can provide some relationship framework in which CA agreements and non-compete agreements can and will be signed.
- The truth is that if a venture capitalist (VC) or a big corporation does not have the consciousness to respect Intellectual Property at the outset, it will never develop it later.
- Don't be intimidated by "holier than thou" attitudes and don't be bullied by put downs such as 'you're difficult.'

There appears to be an analogy here with a woman whose goal is to get married and at the same time she decides to have sex with her potential husband who is a man that comes from a culture in which pre-marital sex is forbidden. She does so because she believes that she will be the exception. It isn't likely to happen. Ladies, we have worked through that problem and we are well prepared to handle this one.

There ARE decent people out there, but you will never find them without vigilantly respecting and valuing your own innovation and inventions.

Awards help!

So in summary, the awareness of the Gorilla is not only core to proactively engaging the process of inventing and innovating. It is also a key element to creating wealth from inventions and innovation.

Thank you.

ⁱ "Toward a Science of Consciousness, Tucson 2002" Tucson Convention Center Music Hall, Tucson, Arizona April 8-12, 2002, Sponsored by the Center for Consciousness Studies at The University of Arizona.

ⁱⁱ *The Innovator's Solution* by Clayton M. Christensen (Harvard business School Press, 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ "I'm a Banker – Trust Me" Economist Magazine, Survey on Banking 2004