“Visible but not Seen”: The Genius of Peter Drucker

C.K. Prahalad
Paul and Ruth McCracken Distinguished University Professor
The Ross School of Business
The University of Michigan
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<td>The Essential Drucker: The Best of Sixty Years of Peter Drucker's Essential Writings on Management (2001)</td>
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What Characterizes Drucker?

1. The Volume and Range of Work
2. Sixty five Years of Productive Life (1939-2004)
3. Continuous Innovation (cutting edge)
4. New Topics, New Issues, New Perspectives
5. Commitment to a few Core Themes
6. Very Productive after 1979 (After Seventy)
7. Enormous Impact on Management Practice
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Perpetual Idea Machine: an “Outlier”
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Perpetual Idea Machine: an “Outlier”

What Questions for Management Scholars?
What Characterizes Drucker?

1. **Focus on the Future**
   - Next Practice not Best Practice
   - Amplify Weak Signals
   - See New Patterns
   - Focus on “outliers”?
   - Focus on Customers, Markets
   - Ask New, Big Questions

   “I never predict. I look out of the window. I see what is visible but not seen…….”* 

* Source: Frances Hesselbein
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   Question for Scholars?
   - What is our Focus?
   - Next Practice? Best Practice or Current Practice?
   - Data as Illustration or Data as Proof?
   - What are the Limitations of our Dominant Methodological Preferences?

* Source: Frances Hesselbein
What Characterizes Drucker?

2. Action Bias

Management by Objectives,
Five Questions Leaders must Ask,
Mission Driven,
Focus on Performance,
Focus on People,
Focus on Motivation

“Management as a Liberal Art; not Science.”
What Characterizes Drucker?

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   - Management by Objectives,
   - Five Questions Leaders must Ask,
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Question for Scholars?

   - Who is our Primary Audience?
   - What is our Bias?
   - What is the Basis for impact On Management Practice?
   - Is Management Art? Science? or Art with Embedded Science?
What Characterizes Drucker?

3. **Focus on Work of Leaders**
   - Leadership as a Function and Work
   - Disaggregating Elements of Work
   - Command and Control to “Volunteerism”
   - Leaders and “mis - Leaders”
   - Focus on Effectiveness

   “Truman didn’t have an ounce of Charisma. Truman was as bland as a dead Mackeral…”
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Question for Scholars?

Study of Leadership – a Person, Outcomes, or Functions?
Functions of the Leader as an Evolving Phenomenon?
Measures of Effectiveness of Leaders?
What Characterizes Drucker?

4. Focus on Concepts/Ideas

- Power of an Idea,
- Synthesis of Multiple Streams of Data,
- Look beyond Corp. world – NGOs, Religious Order(s),
- Operationalize Concepts,
- Clear and Simple Language,
- Passion for Communication,

“Was never afraid. Didn’t limit himself. Looked beyond firms to understand Management. Never stopped asking question”*

* Source: Jose Salibi Neto
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Question for Scholars?
   - Primary Focus- Analysis or Synthesis?
   - Theory to Phenomena or Phenomena to Theory?
   - Communication Strategy?
   - Outlets? Style?

* Source: Jose Salibi Neto
What Characterizes Drucker?

5. Evolution of Practice
   The Evolutionary Nature of Management Practice,
   Constancy of Values and Changes in Context,
   Identifying New Patterns,
   Evolving Tools of Practice,

   “Innovation & Entrepreneurship(85)
   ---Ecological Vision(93) ….Management Challenges for The 21st Century (99) …
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Managing in the Next Society ...(02).”

Question for Scholars?

What is Constant and what is Contextual?
What is the Source of Additive Quality to work in Management?
What is the Focus of our Teaching?
What Characterizes Drucker?

6. Focus on Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship and Innovation,
Iterative, Continuous, and “Interactive”,
Knowledge work and decentralized Innovation,
Dominant Societal Concern

Discontinuities provide opportunities.
Entrepreneurs welcome change.
Innovation is a discipline and can be learned
What Characterizes Drucker?

6. Focus on Entrepreneurship
   Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Iterative, Continuous, and “Interactive”, Knowledge work and decentralized Innovation, Dominant Societal Concern

Question for Scholars?

How do we research / teach Entrepreneurship? Can Entrepreneurship be democratized? Can Entrepreneurship be the norm rather than be an Exception?

Discontinuities provide opportunities. Entrepreneurs welcome change. Innovation is a discipline and can be learned
Constant Themes in Drucker

Purpose,
Performance,
People,
Accountability,
Change,
Entrepreneurship &
Innovation,
Future,
Discipline and
Process

Leaders
What Made Drucker Different?

Drucker: Thinker, Writer, Mentor

- Deeply Rooted In Business Reality
- Skills in Synthesis
- Abundant Curiosity
- Attitude Toward Age
- Wide Range of Interests – NGOs, Japanese Art, …
- Discipline in Communicating
- Deep Sense Of History
- Personal Courage, Confidence
Questions for Academics

1. What is the Measure of our Work? Measure of our Impact?
2. In a Rapidly Changing World, how should Our Approach to Research Change?
3. Does “Focus on Rigor” push out “Relevance”?
4. How do we Maintain a high Level of Personal Productivity?
5. What is the Right Balance between Synthesis and Analysis?
6. What are the Limitations of the Dominant Methodology?
7. What determines “additive quality” in Research?
9. Do we have an Obligation to Operationalize Concepts?
10. Is Action Bias in Research Appropriate?