

*Amplifying Strategy:
Lessons from Vanguard Companies*

Global Drucker Forum

Wien, Nov 14, 2013

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The Vanguard – The Forefront of the Future?

- *Be your own guru:* Vanguard companies take a stand on the future and simplify its complexities in their strategy.
- *Strategize from the future back:* Vanguard companies help us escape thinking that simply extrapolates the present to the future.

The Motivation for Our Session:

74% of studies in leading management journals “eliminate or control for” outliers (vanguard companies) and another 18% note the outliers as “important” but do not study them.

“Our strategy is a good one. We know it because everyone else [in our industry] has the same strategy.” *CFO of a Fortune 500 company*

At the Vanguard Here Today:

1. Jouko Ahvenainen, Grow VC Group
2. Otto Chrons, Microtask
3. Juho Malmberg, ZenRobotics
4. Petri Rahja, Scoopshot
5. Liisa Välikangas, Aalto University & Hanken School of Economics (chair)

Do I hear something (very) different?

IF NOISE,

- we eliminate it:
 - “An outlier [a vanguard] is an observation which deviates so much from the other observations as to arouse suspicion that it was generated by a different mechanism” (Hawkins, 1980).
- we consider it irrelevant:
 - Vanguards do not compete on managerial logics that incumbents consider strategic and are thus potentially, eventually, highly disruptive.

Do I see something (very) different?

IF SERENDIPITY,

- Vanguards offer an opportunity for renewing strategic thinking (blindness).
- Vanguards suggest potential ways of making sense of complexity and generating (r)evolutionary change.

Strategic Discovery: What is our attitude?

- Noise: Prove it!
- Serendipity: Explore it!

Exploratory Learnings?

- Capital is democratizing and disintermediating.
- Work is becoming micro-tasking.
- Post-industrial intelligence is ubiquitous.
- Engagement is key to attention.

Amplifying strategy:

The vanguard companies do not simply suggest novelty but amplify change. **They punch above their weight. How?**

Be Your Own Guru – Presentations:

1. Jouko Ahvenainen, Co-Founder & Group Chairman, Grow VC Group
2. Otto Chrons, Co-Founder and CTO, Microtask
3. Juho Malmberg, CEO, ZenRobotics
4. Petri Rahja, Founder & CEO, Scoopshot
5. Liisa Välikangas, Professor, Aalto University & Hanken School of Economics

Strategize from the Future Back – Discussion:

- What kind of insights do these (and other) vanguard companies suggest to you?
- What is most challenging in learning from the vanguard?
- How do vanguard companies cope with complexity?
- How do vanguard companies seek to amplify their global impact?
- What is the most “viral” or radical element of these strategies discussed in your view?
- What steps should you take as an incumbent after this session?