

Creativity

Itâ€™s not what you can do; itâ€™s what you can do with it. This is the motto thatâ€™s being more and more upheld in our business. The future seems to be not so much on the side of the engineers as on that of the entrepreneurs. More and more company CEOs are emphasising that their businesses are not a playground for eager engineers wanting to develop and put into operation everything they can come up with. The CEOs want their engineers to develop working applications that are also profitable when sold to clients. For example: we are capable of harnessing all the techniques and logistics necessary to get us to the moon, one of the highest possible attainments of mankind. But nobody has yet turned it into a profitable expedition. In other words, CEOs want their engineers to anticipate market demand. I think they are right. In a healthy organisation you want everyone to work towards the highest possible profit for the company, which is of benefit to everybody in that company. And when youâ€™re anticipating market demands, or are even ahead of these and creating them yourself, you are building a strong position for the future, which is one of the main goals of every business. And why spend a lot of money on things your clients are not looking for, just for the sake of boosting the inventorâ€™s ego?

How come this new approach to research & development is gaining ground? I think there are two reasons. First of all itâ€™s the outcome of the recession suffered by the world economy since the late nineties. Expectations always vary according to economic climate. And a lot of companies were caught unawares by the speed of the recent economic downslide, wherein profits disappeared like snow before the sun. They began to let people go and cut back on research & development budgets, logical steps in times of recession. A second reason must be globalisation; an evolution in the world economy that results in everyone having to keep so aggressively alongside or ahead of day-to-day competition, that long-term goals fade into insignificance. For the economy, luckily, the tide seems to be on the turn towards more positive things these days. In large parts of the world profits are gradually increasing and companies recovering from years of recession and economic hard times. Globalisation, however, is here to stay and, if anything, looks like growing stronger.

It might seem sensible to respond with caution, trying to keep costs down as far as possible and taking on new people only when really necessary. But on the other hand, companies that do not allow the balance to shift altogether to the side of the entrepreneurs or marketing managers might find they have the upper hand in a modestly recovering and more and more global economy. There must remain room for creativity, and creativity does not always pay immediate dividends. Remember: something that has not had the chance to be invented in the first place will never pay off. Creativity may speed prudent improvement; it can also open up new markets and bring in new clients.