

Smart copying

Can imitation be considered one of the most successful strategies in business? My answer is “yes”. It appears that this topic is getting more and more attention nowadays. It is well known that Apple’s success can be attributed to taking existing ideas and repackaging them with excellent design. However, no one can readily blame Steven Jobs for lacking originality. Even if the ideas for his company’s products did not originate with him, he was able to produce a final product that the originator of the idea couldn’t have even imagined. It was by his talent that various brilliant ideas were turned into practical products. He was able to succeed in his business with his talent of organizing ideas rather than creating them from scratch.

Is imitation easy for all? My answer is “No”. It is not difficult to see that most of the companies that have tried to copy others’ brilliant ideas, even ones that had been successfully implemented, have failed. As we know, Southwest Airlines succeeded with the idea of low price, short point-to-point flights. However, after the Southwest Airlines’ success, other companies set up copycat airlines that quickly failed. This is because copying the superficial aspects of another business strategy without understanding its underlying strengths usually ends up in failure. IBM failed at copying Microsoft years ago. Microsoft also failed at copying Google.

These questions can be revised to apply to our own research. Can imitation be considered one of the most successful strategies in research? Is

imitation easy for all researchers? My answer is this: Smart copying is one of the most successful strategies for research but it is not easy for most researchers. Nevertheless, given the possibility of great success, it is worth attempting. Successful “smart copying” in research, as Steve Jobs did in business, is certainly not mindlessly parroting the findings of others. Instead, it means truly understanding the underlying features that have made the best previous studies successful and producing original new studies that build on the foundation of previous original studies. It is my hope that, in the next months and years, more and more such deeply original articles will be submitted to JPIS.

Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time. (Ecclesiastes 1:10)

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