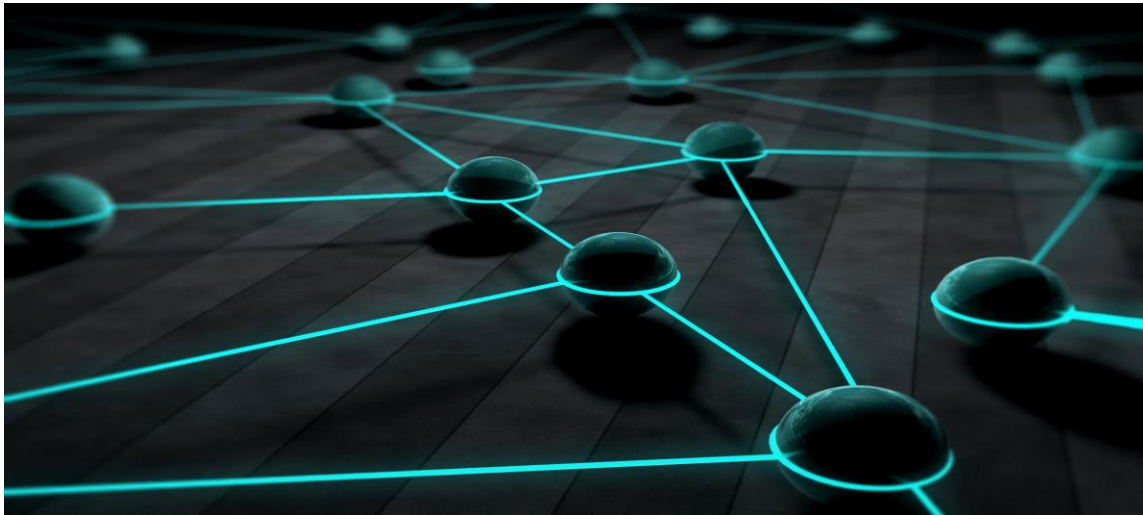


Joe Pacitti: Make the right connections and innovation is likely to follow

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The idea of collaboration to tackle problems, achieving accelerated solutions to issues that would otherwise take far longer to reach, is not new. Open innovation is often promoted as a collaboration process to support faster product and service development. With innovation now widely accepted as a key element for growth, and in some cases necessary for - sustainability for any business, then the need to find ways to support this is key in any economy. The whole aspect of collaboration naturally flows when the economic actors include customers and end users as well as existing supply chain partners.

Often the outcomes are evolutionary rather than step change. This is not a criticism, purely a fact, and should be viewed as a positive. Indeed, because of the visibility of 'near market demand', the ability to release funding to develop these evolutionary products and services is less risky and so commitments to make these steps are readily accepted. This means that companies can now take these tentative innovation steps. To move towards more revolutionary innovation inherently comes with greater risk as the collaborative forces required to assist the process require more engagement of partners not generally known to the group, and so the process is one which is much more challenging. However, if we continue to look for ways and insights on how to accelerate the process of developing great innovative products and services, then it is sensible to consider how to do this.

Widening the circle of trusted potential partners to bring higher leverage of disruptive ideas but, at the same time, minimising the risk factor has to be a key consideration. I believe this approach lies in increasing networking amongst companies who can sit within a much wider supply chain network of customers, suppliers and end users along with support organisations

such as development agencies and academia. This still has difficulties to overcome in that often the success comes from the advantage of often unlikely and diverse partners finding each other, whereas the networks tend to attract more likeminded and similar organisations. I would challenge that the approach works best if the organisations had some common purposes of sharing and learning from best practice and peer-to-peer show and tell, and trust and believe that this shared ethos is important to success for all parties.

Companies need to accept that their networks should be drawn from a wider range of organisations and sectors and fully trust that the core facilitators they rely on are mindful of maintaining that tricky balance of diversity and relevance. It needs all the stakeholders in these communities or membership bodies to embrace this approach, help promote this thinking, and facilitate these connections (or is it collisions!) that can create more step change opportunities.

CeeD is renowned as a peer-to-peer membership body which has increasingly recognised the need to extend the types of members that need to come together to learn and share. This comes from the realisation that the supply chain is increasingly wider and that success comes from the ability to spot those initial thin lines of potential connection and then find ways to help fan the flames of an innovative spark.

The need for innovative solutions of engineered products to assist in their ongoing wellbeing is critical for good social benefits to any society. The services of energy and telecoms and wider facilities management that support their delivery to clients are also demanding more innovative engineering and technical solutions to come forward.

This supports the argument for bringing market-led challenges to potential innovative solution providers in an eco-structure where the whole process of supporting this exchange of knowledge is expected and welcomed – and not bounded by barriers of lack of access to the right people and a lack of clarity in the issues at hand. If learning from shared understanding and networked exchange which supports development of new innovative products and services in Scotland can achieve local and national value-added opportunities, then it will provide a strong spring board for international growth.

Read more at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/joe-pacitti-make-the-right-connections-and-innovation-is-likely-to-follow-1-4698782>

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