

# Lorange

The logo for Lorange Institute of Business Zurich. The word "Lorange" is written in a large, grey, sans-serif font. A thick red horizontal bar runs across the bottom of the letters. To the right of the word, there are five horizontal blue lines of varying lengths, stacked vertically, resembling a stylized flag or a graphic element.

**Institute of Business Zurich**

## Successful Culture in Business Schools

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Peter Lorange

President / Chairman

Lorange Institute of Business Zurich

# **CLASSICAL BUSINESS SCHOOLS – AND THEIR CULTURES**

- Discipline-driven; axiomatic focus (von Humboldt, 1809)
- Classical departmental structure, based on established academic disciplines
- Positions (academic jobs), dictated by disciplines
- Doctoral programs
  - Discipline-based
  - And, as qualifier for academic positions

# Classical Business Schools – cont.

- Criteria for promotion / tenure:
  - Axiomatic-based research
  - «publish or perish»
  - Single-authored articles, referred, in axiomatic academic journals (Gordon and Howell, Ford Foundation, 1965-)
  - «me, me, me»
- Teaching – relatively less important
  - Often seem as a «burden» – to be minimized
  - Standard courses; relatively little content changes over time; large co-horts; one-way lectures
  - «my course»

# But, what about today's customers?

(Definition: Students = Participants = Customers)

Individual customers as well as organizations entities are customers

First, some background:

Research from fast-moving consumer goods (Lorange and Rembiszewski, 2013, From Great to Good, Gower):

- Understand the modern consumer (i.e. the talented, young student in a full-time job)
- Then, innovate, to meet his/her needs (often fast innovations; relatively small; modularized)
- Then, communicate effectively (not brochures, but social media)

Result: You sell more, at a higher price! Top-line growth and bottom-line growth! (More, and better / older / more experienced students)

# More re. implications for our business schools – and call for potential changes

## 1. For our curriculum

- A more integrated teaching approach, in line with our understanding of the modern consumer and, how to pull off relevant innovations for the modern consumer, and how to communicate this to our target group – above all through modern social media
- One course, not 3! (Marketing; Innovations; Communication)
- Do we have enough cutting-edge competence in each of these 3 areas – with each seen in the context of the totality?
- Several other examples, too – see later!

## 2. For our students / participants / customers

- They would typically want to keep their full-time jobs, and come here to learn with us, in parallel! Positive power of this two-way learning.
- More focus on what is practical knowledge – «how to do it»!
- More focus on dilemmas, not basics (now to be done at home – on web-based learning)

# Implications, and changes in our business school's realities – cont.

## 3. For our corporate customers

- Companies are more sparsely staffed than ever – each person doing more! Cost focus, too! This is the reality of today's competitive climate.
- Can only «afford» to send their employees to specific, relatively short modules at the time, but often in a sequence. To avoid «disturbance»!
- Teams

# So, how can we develop a more effective culture in our business schools, to handle these challenges?:

«we, we, we», not «me, me, me»?!

- The issue of teaching.

- Several professors, with complementary competences involved together, not «my» course!  
e.g.: - marketing / innovation / communication
  - finance / psychology; finance / IT
  - logistics / cycles / organizational behaviour
  - economics / psychology; economics / sustainability
- Also include experts from outside – practitioners as well as visiting professors
- I.e. a network of teaching competences, rather than exclusive, typically in-house, resources / professors

# The issue of teaching cont. - Pedagogy

- Utilize the web – pre-work at home
- Allow a professor to lecture for 20-25 minutes only, then group discussions (20 minutes), then plenary discussions (20 minutes).  
Result: In ca. 2 days one may get more-or-less the same done as with 5 days of more classical teaching
- Implications:
  - «Flat rooms», not auditoria for teaching.
  - Round tables, not rows / benches
  - Many professors «hide» behind stacks of pictures – no more!

- The issue of research and publishing
  - A call for more joint, interdisciplinary research
  - A call for more joint publications
  - Not necessarily only in axiomatic journals
  - Incentive system for faculty:
    - Broader than single-authored academic journal publishing!
    - Another key is relevant communication!
    - Hence, also books, more practitioner-oriented publications in managerials journals, web-based pieces, etc.
    - Teaching is perhaps equally key: research and teaching: two sides of the same coin!
  - And, what about citizenship?
    - Work with students! (projects)
    - Work with corporations!

- The issues of organization, promotion and career
  - So, why do we have all these axiomatic-focused academic departments?
  - And, why do we keep tenure?
  - And, why do we encourage a career to «work in the academic institution solely»? What about more of a pulsation: academia and practice?
  - Are we too inward-oriented? «We know best?» Imposing our own «correct answers», rather than dialogueing around dilemmas!?

- The issue of our facility / building
  - Why do we need to have individual offices / miniscule «cubicles»?
  - Research results are clear regarding benefits from open space  
(Allen, T.)
  - «we, we, we» / speed / network!

# We have formidable constraints to overcome - strong forces to preserve the status quo

- Vested interests of many faculty members
  - Axiomatically based careers
- Often strong axiomatic departments, above all perhaps in
  - «classical finance», e.g. agency theory; efficient markets theory - but typically less focus, say, on behavioural finance; large data-sets and finance
  - «classical» economies, e.g. macro; micro; - but typically less focus on sustainability; behavioural, etc.

- Let us also acknowledge the issue of competing with ourselves
    - Let us keep in mind that we cum faculty members, should «own» our academic institution
      - Our main asset – the «only» value: the accumulated body of knowledge – cross-axiomatic!
      - Buildings, endowments, etc. – not critical true value!
      - Governmental support regarding our budget – likewise, not critical true value.
    - Thus, this implies that we should work more together – «we, we, we»!
      - So, do we have individuals at our academic institution that might be offering their own competences, on their own? I.e. are some of us acting in an extreme «me, me, me» way regarding this?
    - So, a «we, we, we» philosophy re. outside work is more than:
      - a «one day per week» consulting allowance
      - A prior approval policy is key!
- > It must be a genuine committment to building our school!**

## So, what might be some rudiments of a business school of the future?:

- More modularized, shorter courses, within a more flexible overall curriculum structure
- Keep the role of the traditional tenure professors as an in-house resource, but this must be complemented with outside resources – and one culture! More open networks!
- More pedagogical openness. Faster learning!
- Less administrative bureaucracy!
- Clarity regarding the «competing with our own school» issue.

## General principles / Caveats / Assumptions:

- Always build on what is strong and good! Let us evolve, not break down. Build on our positive energies!
- Try to keep politics to a minimum – always act «to do what is best for our schools»! A call for a top-down dimension – the Rektor is key!
- Basic undergraduate training is by definition more axiomatic than, say, graduate programs, or, say, even more executive programs – the latter ones are typically more eclectic
  - But it is a continuum!
  - Let us however not use our undergraduate focus as an excuse for not progressing eclectically!