Lean and serendipity, two religions on one pillow?

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At best machine learning based recruitment selects employees that perfectly match the already present employees. In periods of change (and crisis), that is not enough. The Beatles, for example, were rejected by Decca, because they would not fit in the direction that pop music was evolving according to Decca. So they did not (yet) perfectly match the successful "employees" of pop music. EMI’s Parlophone label gave them a chance. The rest is history.

Let’s be honest. Of course in corporations there is probably much more often a need for continuity than for revolution. So these tools may be practically deployable, although based on fundamentally incorrect assumptions, e.g. people are constant and cooperations change continually. However, there is a scientifically sound approach to systematically improving a company’s performance, the lean methodology. It systematically and usually gradually helps improve the efficiency of a company. A good example is Toyota, which makes, for example with relatively light materials, indestructible belts (and other parts). It is sometimes said that beautiful craftsmanship and even art consists of 90% perspiration and only 10% inspiration. Lean is completely about perspiration. Inspiration is about dreams, coincidence, individuality and fascination. Man reveals himself in inspiration. Perspiration can be optimized. Ants behave very lean in many ways, but individuality is non-existent. Robots can also work lean, and perhaps the lean methodology is a prelude to broader applications of robotics. A more mechanic, diligently cooperating humanity.

But, once again, thinking out of the box, novelty, innovation, and immediately exploiting the possibilities of accidental finds - serendipity - are at odds with the lean improvement system. In fact, the global world has a huge need for smart systems, but at the same time the cultural identity of population groups as a source of meaning is under pressure. This causes conflicts, from suicide to terror and from subversive counter-movements to blunt and fatalistic behaviour on various scales. However, perspiration and inspiration do not have to swear.

The two lines must be combined: improve lean, and dream freely, experiment and innovate in an innovation space. The latter is done at the R & D department (Research and Development). However, these departments are often made lean and sometimes things go wrong. Multinationals are sometimes passed by in many ways by small, agile newcomers, such as Kodak. But again, two methods in one company are possible and desirable (only inspiration gives beautiful ideas that do not work, as undesirable as the reverse). With two methods, something can enter the lean line once it has been discovered in the free space. If a product is no longer needed (market saturated, or the need for it disappeared by another solution, etc) it can go back to the innovation lab.

Both lines do not automatically endure each other in one biotope. In the system of psychologist Carol Graves, lean is "blue" (everywhere rules and agreements about, structuring everything) and innovating "yellow" (dreaming, researching, experimenting). Water and fire. It is impossible to organize dreams (inspiration) lean, just as it is impossible to organize a production line just by dreaming. We can, however, learn from ants without becoming them. Of course, one type can define, or lock in the other. Nowadays many perfectly lean organized companies acquire innovation by "eating" young inspired start-ups. That is certainly a solution. But a school and especially a university must operate efficiently, while also offering innovation space. In meeting these requirements, it can neither leave 100% on lean, nor inspiration (think of the art schools half a century ago). Learning at 1 school, but in 2 methodologies, the standard "LEAN" methodology, and the open innovation method. Children can choose again and again.

In short, companies need continuity. However, sometimes they have to be able to exploit new opportunities at lightning speed. In those cases, continuity can be fatal, because it removes agility. Think of Kodak, who ceased in the revolution (discontinuity) of analogue photo technology to digital communication media. Despite the fact that Kodak also had an R & D department with a lot of new digital patents! The knowledge was there, but the organization was too heavy. This is precisely why investing in an inclusive organization and society - a neurotypic majority in harmony with a neuro-atypical but relevant minority - is important. Are we going to develop? Are we going to tackle the dilemma between lean and serendipity?