

Innovation and Commercialization Part 3 of 4**September 2013****⚙️ Game-changers → same market or new?**

Innovation may be classified as radical, disruptive or incremental. Radical innovation is invasive. It establishes its own new market and sends incumbent markets into history books. The automobile displaced the horse and carriage. Disruptive innovation is one which causes turmoil in an industry, but does not create new markets. As to if smartphones are a disruptive innovation over cellphones depends on whether a new market for hand-held communication devices was created with the smartphone launch. Both radical and disruptive innovations are game-changers. On-line shopping has certainly been a game-changer in the retail sector. Has it created new markets (radical) or simply caused turmoil (disruptive)?

⚙️ How Next Happens

Incremental innovation is how 'next' happens. Defined as "an improvement in the cost or functionality of an existing product in an existing market", a [BI Norwegian School of Management Thesis](#) concluded that "most progress in society is achieved through incremental innovation, which is far more frequent and economically predictable than radical innovation". Two car-based examples are the GPS and IPAS (Intelligent Parking Assist System), standard new features on several car brands. Both were first launched as a personal-car feature 10 years ago, yet only recently matured to a technologically-dependable and cost-effective proposition. Neither feature is radical (no expansion or displacement in the personal car market). Are these features disruptive to the automotive sector? Would a driver examiner permit use of an IPAS during the parallel-parking portion of a driver's test? If so, is this fair to those without access to an IPAS? The topic would become a moot point should all cars eventually include an IPAS, in which case correct operation could be an evaluation point. Is a GPS a hazardous distraction from a driver's attention? Or, will GPS-equipped cars net on the upside? - due to less time being lost, ability to schedule travel time, less need to frantically confirm the name of a street, more timely arrivals, etc. As society decides these matters, any market upheaval is a consequence.

⚙️ Getting to Next

"I don't see much new here" sighed the trade-show attendee, an IT expert on the fringe of the food industry. On the surface, an accurate observation. However, the [IFT](#) Innovation Awards Committee evaluated 62 entries, many of which could be described as incremental: a more soluble, true-salt-flavour sodium replacement; a sanitization system which greatly reduces water and energy usage; an edible gold glitter. Incremental innovation moves in increments (if at all) and is a timely process. In addition to taxing the patience and resources of the entrepreneur, a willing and engaged consumer is mandatory, to shed a bit of the customary methods so as to make way for, and embrace, the new.

⚙️ A Course for Improvers

The 1000-year old [Buckfast Abbey](#) in Devon, England offers bee-keeping courses to serve three levels of apiarists, or honey farmers: beginners, one-day workshops and... improvers! There is no mention of 'advanced' courses here or a place for those who may describe themselves as such. The Buckfast history provides clues to this choice of words, as the pages are peppered with "drastic change" "immediate and fundamental transformation" and "rebuild" interspersed with long periods of calm and civil livelihood. Centuries of experience has allowed the apiarists to recognize and value the counterpoint activity of continuous improvement, and the factors which foster it.

⚙️ An Enduring Example

One of the world's [leading companies in the frozen food sector](#) is "Newlyweds". In 1932, a founder created a smash success when he layered ice cream onto a sheet cake and rolled the two into a frozen pinwheel. The company was re-named "newlywed", having newly married cake and ice cream. Today, the company owes its success to having "consistently invested in infrastructure, human resources and capacity". **FF**

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