Design as Entrepreneurship: Towards a Design-Specific Entrepreneurship Framework

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Mr. Con Kennedy

Aims & Objectives

This research investigates the applicability of entrepreneurship frameworks for Communications Design enterprises. Current frameworks are discussed through the lens of a Design Entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship frameworks are compared with Design frameworks to identify critical factors in determining applicability to the sector. The study also analyses the Irish industry in comparison to the industry internationally. A competitive analysis of the Irish industry is undertaken to identify factors affecting entrepreneurial activities of the sector.

Methodology

Research is conducted through literature review and primary analysis (semi-structured interviews). National and International literature is used to identify appropriate Entrepreneurship Frameworks and compares these to relevant Design Frameworks. This analysis determines the appropriateness of existing Entrepreneurship Frameworks for Communications Design Enterprises. From this, a Design-Specific Entrepreneurship Framework is proposed to address the identified gap in the literature.

The Entrepreneur & Entrepreneurship / The Designer & Design Process

The literature identifies various entrepreneurship frameworks available to Entrepreneurs, elements of which may be applicable for use by Design Entrepreneurs in their businesses. Current Entrepreneurship thinking indicates that there is no specific link between the Entrepreneur and their enterprise. However, Designers, as Entrepreneurs, create design enterprises. This research investigates the applicability of entrepreneurship frameworks for Communications Design enterprises. Current frameworks are discussed through the lens of a Design Entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship frameworks are compared with Design frameworks to identify critical factors in determining applicability to the sector. The study also analyses the Irish industry in comparison to the industry internationally. A competitive analysis of the Irish industry is undertaken to identify factors affecting entrepreneurial activities of the sector.

Sector Performance

In Ireland, Design Practice is an inseparable process from the Designer, who is both the product offering and the practice building. Entrepreneurs can design unique, not-for-profit ventures. The Designer is a differently skilled Entrepreneur, affecting entrepreneurial activities of the sector.

Competitive Analysis

A competitive analysis of the Irish Communications Design industry reveals that established practices tend to have more corporate clients, newer practices tend to have more Not-for-Profit clients. Which suggests that established practices are trusted by clients, while emerging practices may engage in pro-bono work to establish their design studios and build a creative reputation. However, the relationship between the performance of the economy during the recent recession (GDP deficit) and the retention in client spend, affects the position taken by these enterprises. Therefore, the impact on the economy fundamentally changes the approach and position taken by entrepreneurs in the Communications Design sector. The literature on Design discusses the paradigm as practice with a creative output; ultimately, the above diagram indicates that the sector is behaving in an entrepreneurial manner, despite Design Entrepreneurs lacking specific skills. Therefore, Design Entrepreneurs may be acting entrepreneurially without realisation.

Design-Specific Entrepreneurship Framework

There is a definable process to both Entrepreneurship and Communication Design, with some commonalities. Current Entrepreneurship frameworks do not address the specific requirements of the Designer, in particular, the entrepreneurship skill deficit. Because of the link between the Designer’s process, their creativity and their enterprise, the Design Entrepreneur would seem to be different from other entrepreneurs. The Design Entrepreneur is both the product offering and the enterprise - and the Designer. Therefore, a Design-Specific Entrepreneurship Framework is required to answer the research question. The above Framework is developed through literature review and primary research to address the gap in the literature. It proposes a specific framework to aid Designers to understand entrepreneurship for their enterprises.