

Digital Innovation: Can it Provide an Enduring Conceptual Foundation for the IS Curriculum?

Rob Fichman, Professor and IS Department Chair
BC Carroll School of Management

MIS
Quarterly

ISSUES AND OPINIONS

DIGITAL INNOVATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL AND POWERFUL CONCEPT IN THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS CURRICULUM¹

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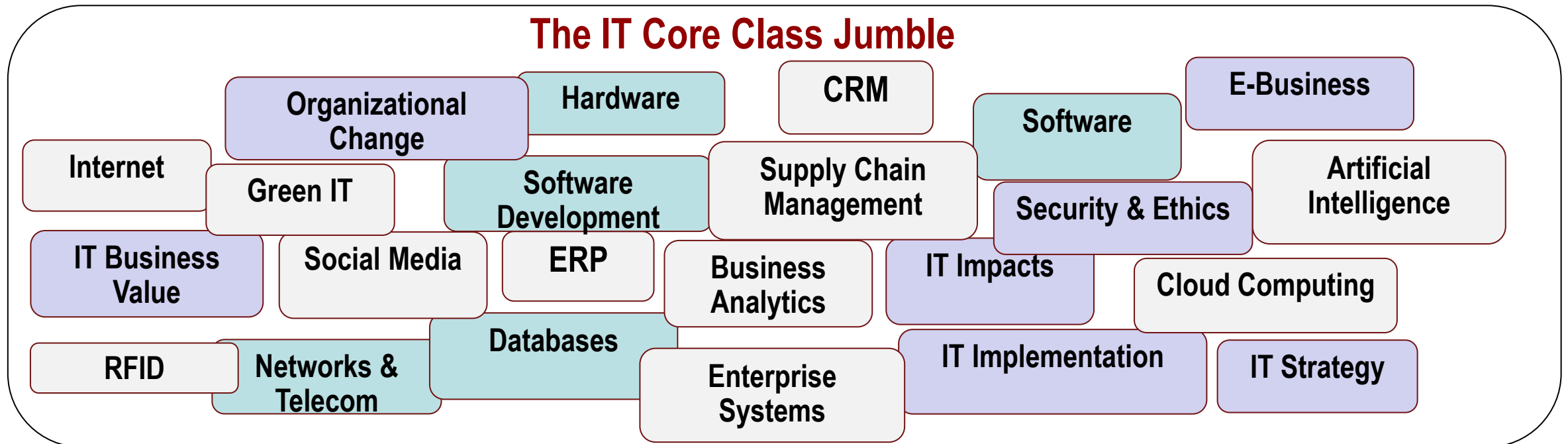
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1. The IS core class needs a fundamental and powerful concept

A **fundamental and powerful concept (FPC)** provides the conceptual “glue” for a field. It enables a structured way of thinking through a variety of questions, problems and situations in a field. The importance and relevance of an FPC is nearly self-evident, and so any thing that can be tied to the concept gains immediate legitimacy by association.
(for more, see Nosich, Learning to Think Things Through (2005))

2. If we are to have an FPC, then “digital innovation” is an excellent candidate

A **digital Innovation** is *product, process, or business model that is perceived as new, requires some significant changes on the part of adopters, and is embodied in or enabled by IT*



3. If we are to have digital innovation as FPC, it will have far reaching implications for design of the IS core class and even the broader curriculum

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Appendix B

Modules for “Information Technology in Business: A Digital Innovation Perspective”

Note: In our own core courses, technology topics (infrastructure, applications, emerging technologies) are generally discussed as an adjunct to an innovation-related topic (e.g., part of the discussion of an ERP implementation case is devoted to ensuring students know what ERP is). We sometimes devote a whole class or two to a general discussion of an important emerging technology (e.g. social media analytics), especially if no suitable managerial case can be found that centers on that technology. Also, because few business students become IT specialists, we tend not to address topics related to the management of the IS function in a core course. However, we see two potential approaches to addressing these topics within an innovation framework. One is to include a module on innovation in IT management processes. The second is to include IT management innovations in each module (2–5), and treat innovation in IT management as just another set of digitized process innovations. Alternatively, these topics can be included as stand-alone topics residing outside of the main course framework.

Module I: Fundamentals of Digital Innovation

Topics: Introduction to digital innovation, distinctive IT characteristics, process/product/business model innovation, cycles of digital innovation
Learning Objectives: Be able to explain what IS/IT is fundamentally about in business; be able to link past, current, and emerging IT in business to digital innovation; be able to explain the three distinctive characteristics (Moore’s Law, digitization, and network effects) and how they relate to digital innovation and affect the value-producing potential of IT; be able to elucidate the digital innovation cycle at the four stages (discovery, development, diffusion, and impact); be able to discern some broad factors affecting the success and failure of digital innovations (e.g., health of the ecosystem); be able to explain firms’ strategy, organization, governance and operations from the perspective of digital innovation.

Candidate Readings:

Topic	Article/Case	Source	Description/Relation to Digital Innovation (<i>italicized</i>)
Introduction to Digital	Lecture Note: Learning to Think Like a Digital Innovator	Fichman 2012b	<i>The Note introduces the topic of Digital Innovation and explains why it is essential for aspiring managers today to understand digital innovation, and to be able to think like a digital innovator.</i>
	Winning the Race With Ever Smarter Machines	Brynjolfsson and McAfee 2012	Describes how Moore’s Law and pervasive digitalization are allowing machines to do intelligent tasks previously reserved for people (e.g., drive cars, play Jeopardy!). <i>Makes the argument that these advances serve to expand the range of opportunities available to organizations, and that firms must foster innovation in order to benefit from these opportunities.</i>

Welcome to this site!

Posted on [August 24, 2014](#)

Here you will find a repository of teaching materials and tips for instructors teaching IS and digital innovation in business schools. The site consists of a set of static pages accessible from the menu at the top of each page, and an associated blog.

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Rob Fichman

Professor and Chair of the IS
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Management, BC

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HP Offers 'That Cloud Thing Everyone Is Talking About'

Posted on [August 26, 2014](#)

I ran across this hilarious video when preparing for a cloud computing segment last year:



Then a funny thing happened...

The Bad news...

ISYS7720 IT for Management (Fall: 2)

Information Technology (IT) systems permeate the strategy, structure, and operations of modern enterprises. IT has become a major enabler of business innovation, especially for organizations that have the right skills, resources, and capabilities to exploit it. Therefore, it is essential for managers to gain fluency with information technology (IT), not just to become more astute consumers and users of the technology, but also to become more effective leaders of innovative businesses that are increasingly enabled by IT. In this course, students will obtain an overview of technical and basic emerging technologies, and managerial frameworks. Students will gain—through a combination of readings, case studies, lectures, and team projects—an appreciation for the transformative effects of digital innovations on individuals, businesses, industries, and society, and will develop the ability to manage the challenges of conceiving, developing, and deploying innovative digital initiatives.

“to get a job they have to be able to do sh*t”

The Good news...

ISYS7720 Data Analytics II: Technology Use and Management (Fall: 2)

Data has become an ever more powerful driver of business innovation and competitive advantage in modern enterprises. It is essential that managers develop a deep understanding of data—and the most effective methods to capture, structure and analyze it—in order to make better decisions and develop strategic insights. In this course, students will learn about data from a technical and a managerial perspective. They will learn database fundamentals and how to gain insight into data using SQL. The course will also address the role that data analytics and related information technologies play in enabling new strategies, product offerings, and ways of working in modern enterprises. Through a series of business cases, students will learn to combine data analytics concepts with IT managerial frameworks to analyze and address innovation opportunities and business challenges.

ISYS7730 Data Analytics III: Business Intelligence (Spring: 2)

Modern information systems now generate massive volumes of data. Organizations everywhere struggle to aggregate, analyze, and monetize the growing deluge of data. Business Analytics capitalizes on this data by combining statistical and quantitative analysis, explanatory and predictive modeling, and fact-based management. Managers can explore patterns, predict future trends and develop proactive, knowledge-driven decisions that affect all parts of modern organizations. This course provides students with a pragmatic familiarity with the capabilities and limitations of emerging analytics techniques, an introduction to the R statistical computing software, an overview of methods and tools, and a core understanding required to be an intelligent manager, designer and consumer of analytics models.

Digital Innovation: Can it Provide an Enduring Conceptual Foundation for the IS Curriculum?

Rob Fichman, Professor and IS Department Chair
BC Carroll School of Management

Presented to SSIT, London School of Economics 20 April 2015

Agenda

1. Briefly revisited: Our original argument for Digital Innovation as the FPC
2. Contextual conditions triggering a change in direction at BC
3. Can Digital Innovation endure as the FPC?
4. Provisional Lessons for the IS field?

Why adopt Digital Innovation as an FPC for the IS curriculum?

Why Digital Innovation?

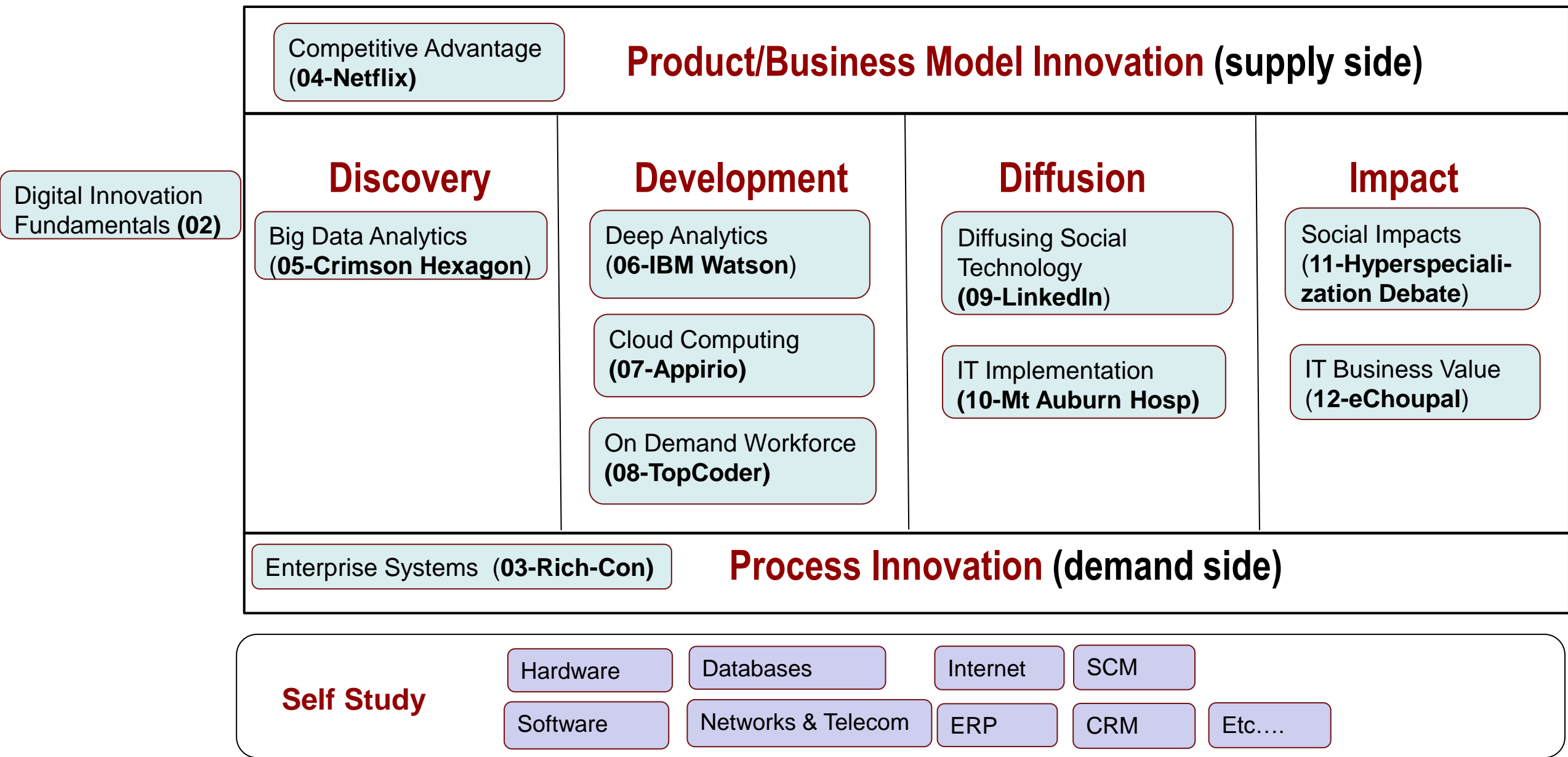
- 1. Digital innovation is a particularly broad and deep concept
- 2. In many ways, IS—particularly the kind of IS that matters most—has always been about enabling new ways of doing things in organizations
- 3. IT has become an increasingly important driver of business innovation
- 4. Business innovation has become an increasingly important competitive differentiator

Digital Innovation: *A product, process, or business model that is perceived as new, requires some significant changes on the part of adopters, and is embodied in or enabled by IT*

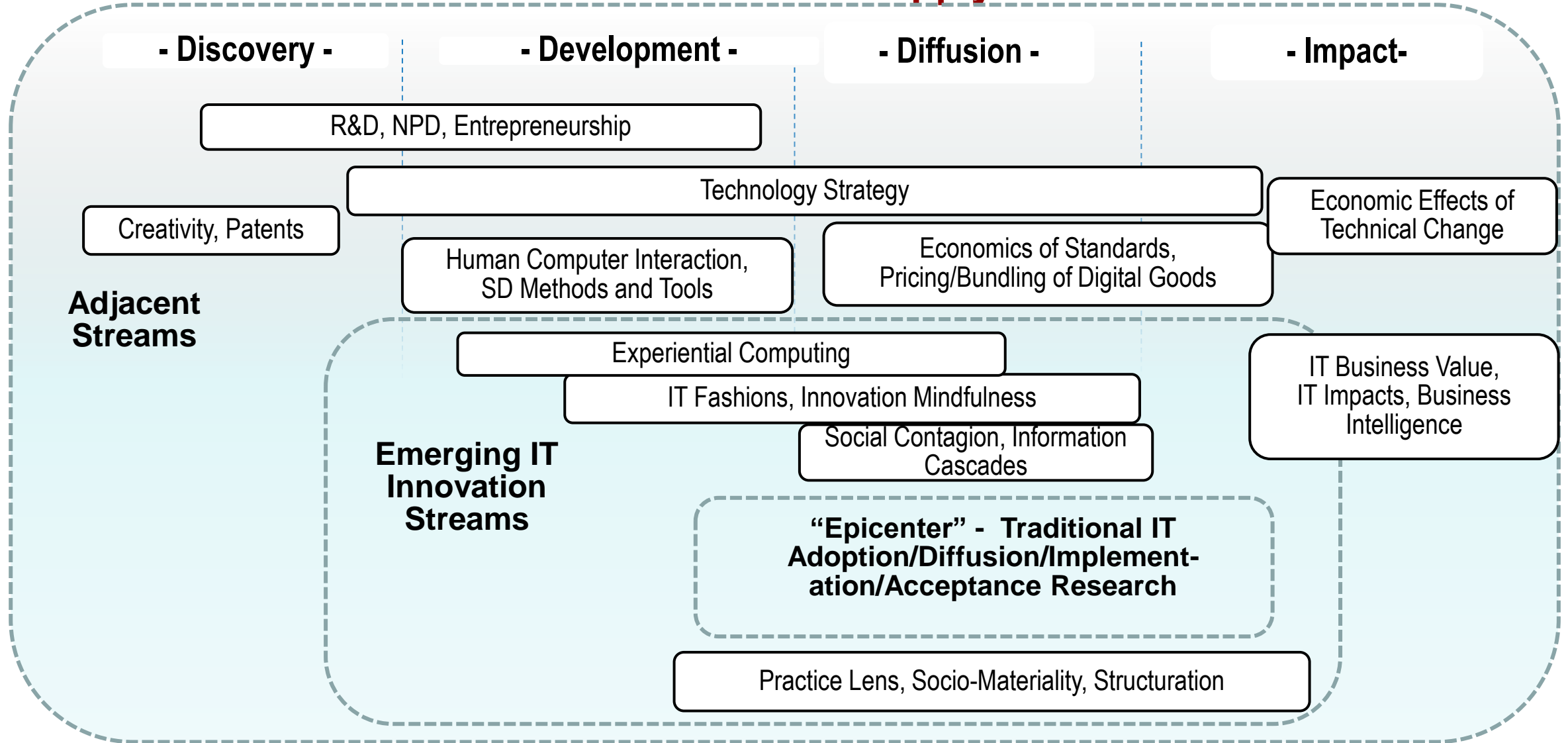
Product/Business Model Innovation (suppliers)

Discovery (selection, invention)	Development (packaging, configuration)	Diffusion (deployment, assimilation)	Impact (appropriation, transformation)
Process Innovation (adopters)			

The Foundational Concept for ISYS7720: *Digital Innovation*



Product Innovation/Supply Side



Process Innovation/Demand Side

0 Introduction & motivation

1 Digital Innovation as an FPC

2 Contextual Conditions Triggering Change

3 Can Digital Innovation Endure as an FPC?

4 Provisional Lessons

Contextual conditions triggering change at Boston College (and elsewhere)

BloombergBusiness

News Markets Insights Video

GETTING IN

News and insights on B-school admissions, careers, and more

MBA Admissions

At Top Business Schools, an MBA Application Drought

By Alison Damast | September 07, 2012



Photograph by Ethan Miller/Getty Images

Among the schools that have reported declines are the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, the Yale School of Management and Duke University's Fuqua School of Business

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.



11



1590



[ACCELERATED MBA RANKINGS](#)

B-School Applicants Decline for Four Years

By MELISSA KORN

September 17, 2012

The business-school numbers are in and they aren't pretty.

Applications for two-year, full-time M.B.A. programs that start this fall declined for the fourth year in a row, according to new data from the Graduate Management Admission Council, which administers the Graduate Management Admission Test.



The median number of applications world-wide fell 22% in 2012 for the two-year degrees, after a nearly 10% decline last year. For many programs, the losses are off of multiyear highs that occurred as young professionals sought refuge and new skills in academia amid the financial crisis. But prolonged economic uncertainty is leaving many prospective

students wary of the significant investment of both time and money required for a two-year, full-time program.

The GMAC survey included 744 M.B.A. and other business programs at 359 schools world-wide.

Some top schools experienced sharp declines. Columbia Business School posted a 19% drop in applications to its flagship two-year master of business administration program this year, after four years of rapid growth.

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Something has to give. But what?

P&Q Rank & School	2013 GMAT	2012 GMAT	2011 GMAT	2010 GMAT	2009 GMAT	5-Year Trend
26. Ohio State (Fisher)	666	668	674	676	677	-11
27. Rice (Jones)	676	673	673	672	668	+8
28. USC (Marshall)	686	690	687	690	690	-4
29. Maryland (Smith)	654	656	661	670	658	-4
30. Wisconsin	676	675	680	675	663	+13
31. Georgia Tech (Scheller)	678	678	674	678	684	-6
32. Notre Dame (Mendoza)	690	687	692	685	683	+7
33. Penn State (Smeal)	645	643	650	650	652	-7
34. Texas A&M (Mays)	648	649	647	646	652	-4
35. Iowa (Tippie)	671	665	666	657	662	+9
36. Minnesota (Carlson)	686	692	686	694	683	+3
37. Rochester (Simon)	680	680	675	677	682	-2
45. Boston College	666	666	656	662	663	+3

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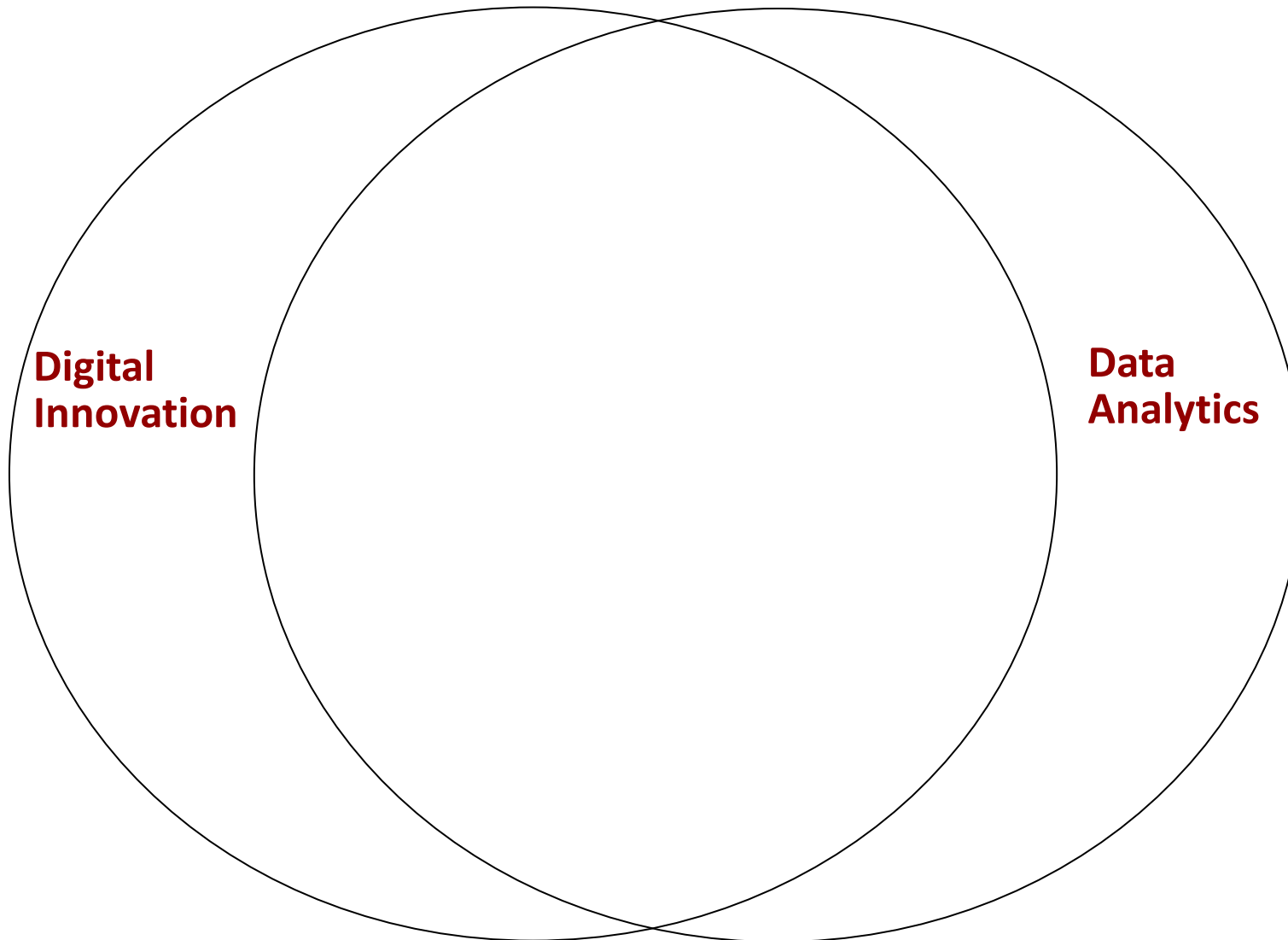
4 Provisional Lessons

The current challenge

- Can we find a way to meet the analytics and other the needs of our evolving student body, while staying true to the digital innovation as the foundational concept?
- And should we even try?



Can we design a course such that analytics and digital innovation are joined in a natural way?



Data Analytics + Digital Innovation

Nexus 1: Wearables

Nexus 2: The On-Demand Virtual Workforce

Nexus 3: The Sharing Economy

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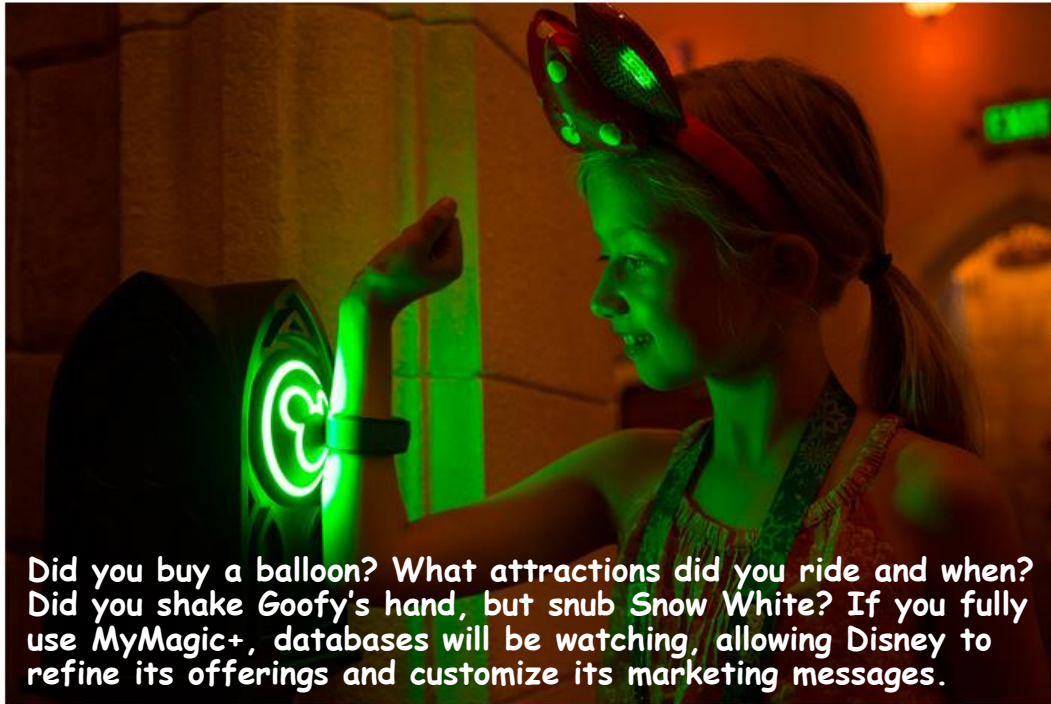
3 Can Digital Innovation Endure as an FPC?

4 Provisional Lessons

Nexus 1: Wearables

CLIFF KUANG DESIGN 03.10.15 7:00 AM

DISNEY'S \$1 BILLION BET ON A MAGICAL WRISTBAND



Did you buy a balloon? What attractions did you ride and when? Did you shake Goofy's hand, but snub Snow White? If you fully use MyMagic+, databases will be watching, allowing Disney to refine its offerings and customize its marketing messages.

The Magicband wields access to the park, replacing virtually every transaction you'd make inside. © BOB CROSLIN

April 8, 2015 | 5:38 PM | Curt Nickisch

John Hancock Taps Fitness Trackers To Breathe New Life Into Insurance Industry

FILED UNDER: Boston, Insurance, Money, Personal Health

E-mail Twitter (18) facebook (105)



"Sure!" said 38-year-old Julie McMahon. "Sure, I'd get cheaper life insurance, for what I do anyway."

John Hancock Financial is the first U.S. insurer to offer discounts to policyholders who wear Internet-connected fitness trackers, like the ones pictured here. (Richard Drew/AP)

BOSTON — Could 15 minutes of exercise could save you 15 percent on your life insurance?

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Nexus 2: On Demand Virtual Workforce

Online labour exchanges

The workforce in the cloud

“Talent exchanges” on the web are starting to transform the world of work

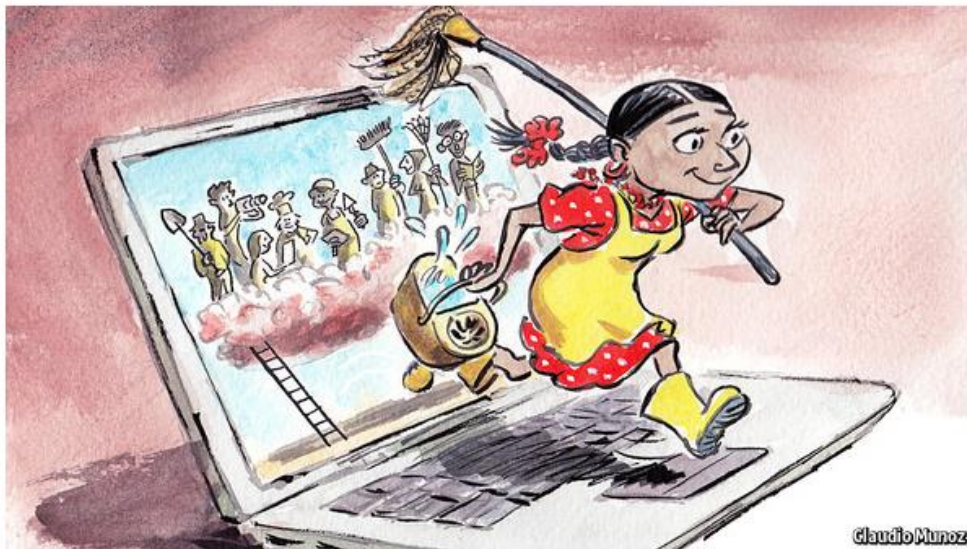
Jun 1st 2013 | REDWOOD CITY, CALIFORNIA | From the print edition



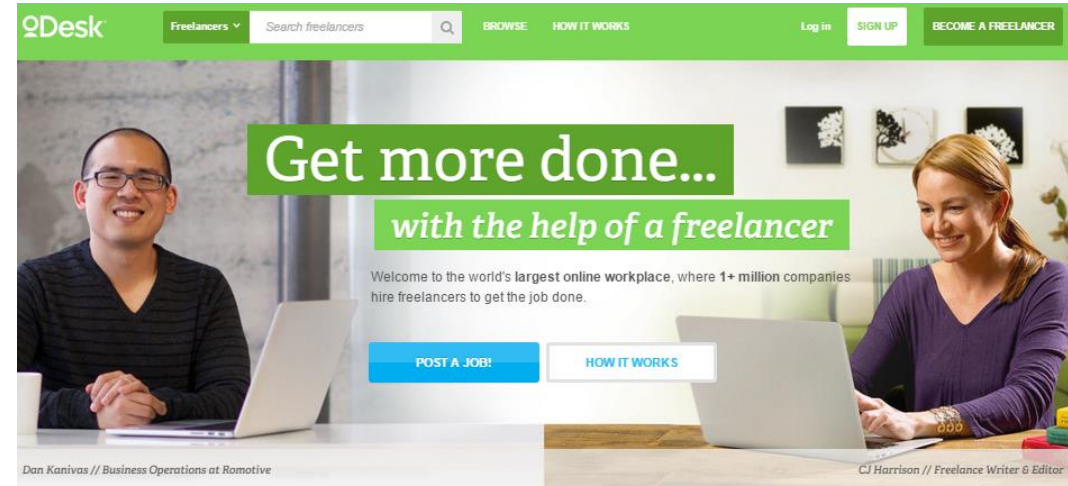
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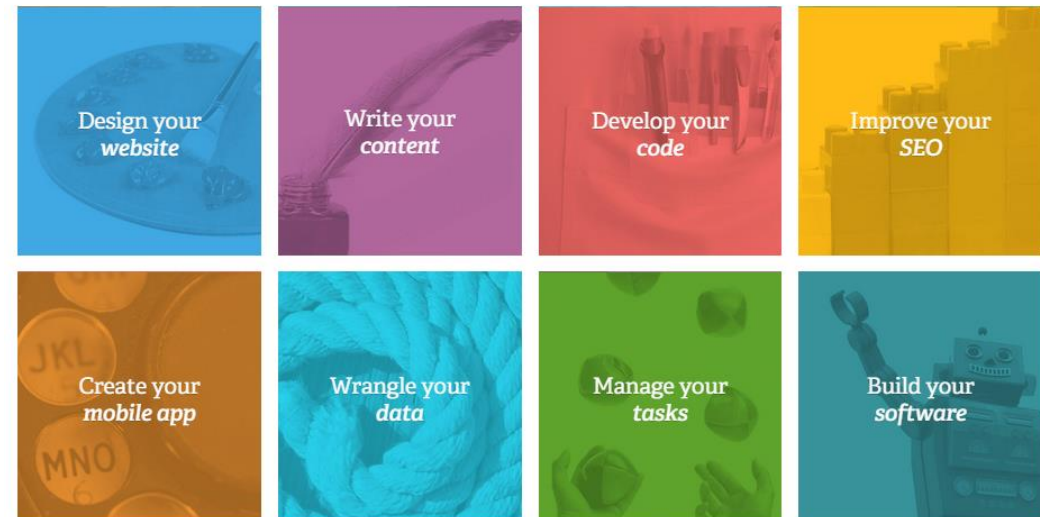
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FOR translating a 22-minute video from English into Spanish at short notice, 7Brands Global Content, a professional-translation firm based in New York, quoted “approximately \$1,500”. This fee seems in line with the local going rate for the job from a firm which boasts membership of three professional associations and clients such as Chase and Bank of America. Not so long ago, paying the local rate was the only option. Today anyone seeking to get this sort of job done is only a click away from the whole world of professionals competing to do it far cheaper.



Find talented freelancers ready to...



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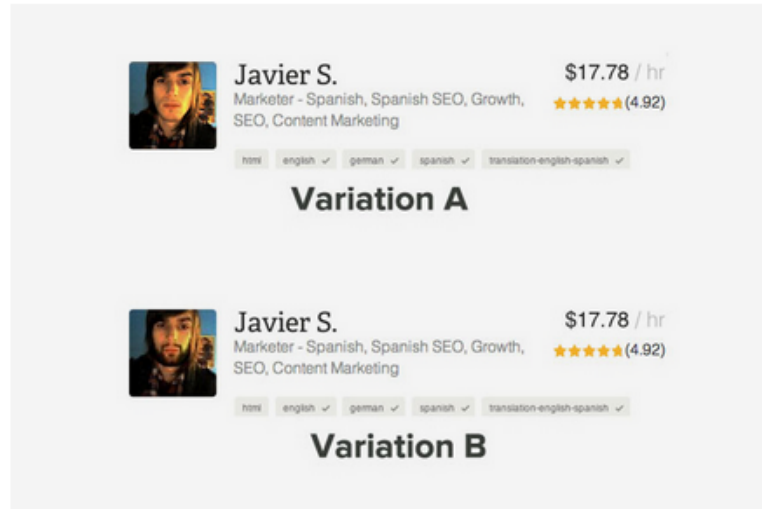
3 Can Digital Innovation Endure as an FPC?

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Nexus 2: On Demand Virtual Workforce (cont.)

KLINT FINLEY BUSINESS 01.08.14 6:30 AM

HOW A FAKE BEARD CAN GET YOU HIRED ON THE INTERNET



Freelance marketer Javier Sanz before and after he applied a fake beard to his oDesk profile.
Photo: Javier Sanz



JAVIER SANZ RECENTLY decided his oDesk profile pic needed a fake beard.

Find Me a Match: Updates on oDesk's Job & Freelancer Match Efforts

Our enormous growth also raises some big questions for each individual. Clients may wonder, "With all those freelancers, how will I find the one that's right for me?" Freelancers may wonder, "With all those jobs, how will I find the one that's right for me?" Each faced a simpler problem when oDesk was smaller: with fewer freelancers or jobs to sift through, finding the right freelancer or job for you was a reasonable task.

In the past, we have largely relied on you — our users — to perform most of the work in finding each other. As we have grown, however, we are hearing from many of you that you'd like to rely more on oDesk to make it easier to find the right match. There are two important reasons we believe we now need to help you. First, in a bigger online workplace — while the perfect freelancer (if you're a client) or job (if you're a freelancer) is much more likely to be available — it has become much harder for you to find them. Second, we have the benefit of learning from the volumes of data generated on oDesk — data we can learn from to help you succeed.

What does this mean for you?

In the coming months, we will be rolling out additional features designed to improve your match experience on oDesk. For clients, we want to make it easier for you to quickly identify and hire the right freelancer for your job. For freelancers, we want to make it easier for you to successfully find work.

What this means, of course, is that oDesk will become more of a meritocracy than ever before. Freelancers with appropriate skills and satisfied clients, for example, will earn more visibility for relevant jobs than in the past. Among other efforts, we will improve the freelancer and job search experiences; we will improve the recommendations we make to you; and we will roll out a host of features that help us learn more about what you are looking for, so we can best meet your needs.

0 Introduction & motivation

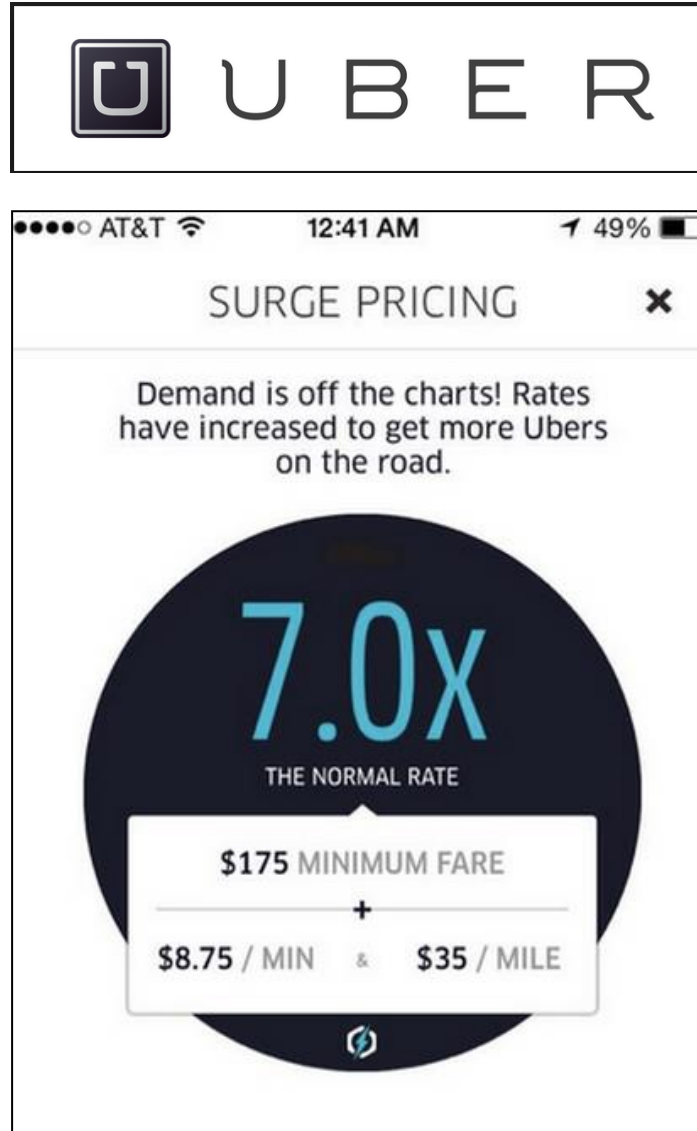
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Nexus 3: The Sharing Economy



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Nexus 3: The Sharing Economy (cont.)

Hotels vie to become offices of the future

By Daisy Carrington, CNN

🕒 Updated 2:49 AM ET, Wed April 10, 2013



4 photos

An office with room service? – Groups of workers can rent small-scale meeting rooms for \$50 an hour, as part of Marriott's newly launched Workspace on Demand program.



PEGGY FANG ROE is Marriott's chief sales and marketing officer for Asia Pacific. She spoke with HBR about creating the company's Workspace on Demand pilot. Edited excerpts:

Where did the idea come from? It was partly driven by research we did on Gen Y. They blend work and life differently. They're mobile. They use coworking spaces in cities. We noticed that they were ordering room service in the lobby because they prefer to work outside their rooms. Our hotels have a lot of unused meeting spaces, but to reserve them you needed to talk with our sales staff, sign a contract, and agree to order food and beverages from our caterer. I tried to do it for a meeting with my team, and I thought, Why does this have to be so hard? We began looking for a simpler, on-demand solution.

What was the goal? It wasn't just revenue generation—it was also to find out whether there really is demand for this and whether we could execute it. In my view, it was also about changing consumer perceptions of our hotels and becoming more relevant to how people live and work today. We've renovated the interiors of many of our hotels—especially the lobbies—but you won't know that unless you come inside. Some of our hotels offer free workspace just to get people in the door.

0 Introduction & motivation

1 Digital Innovation as an FPC

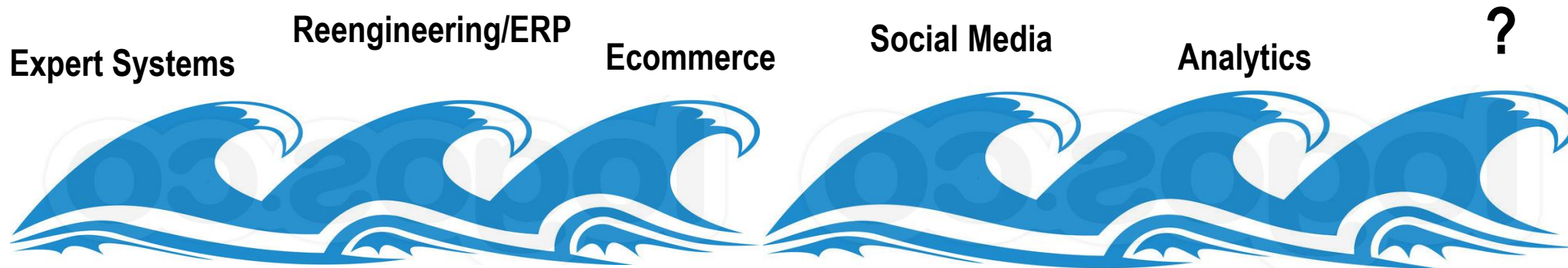
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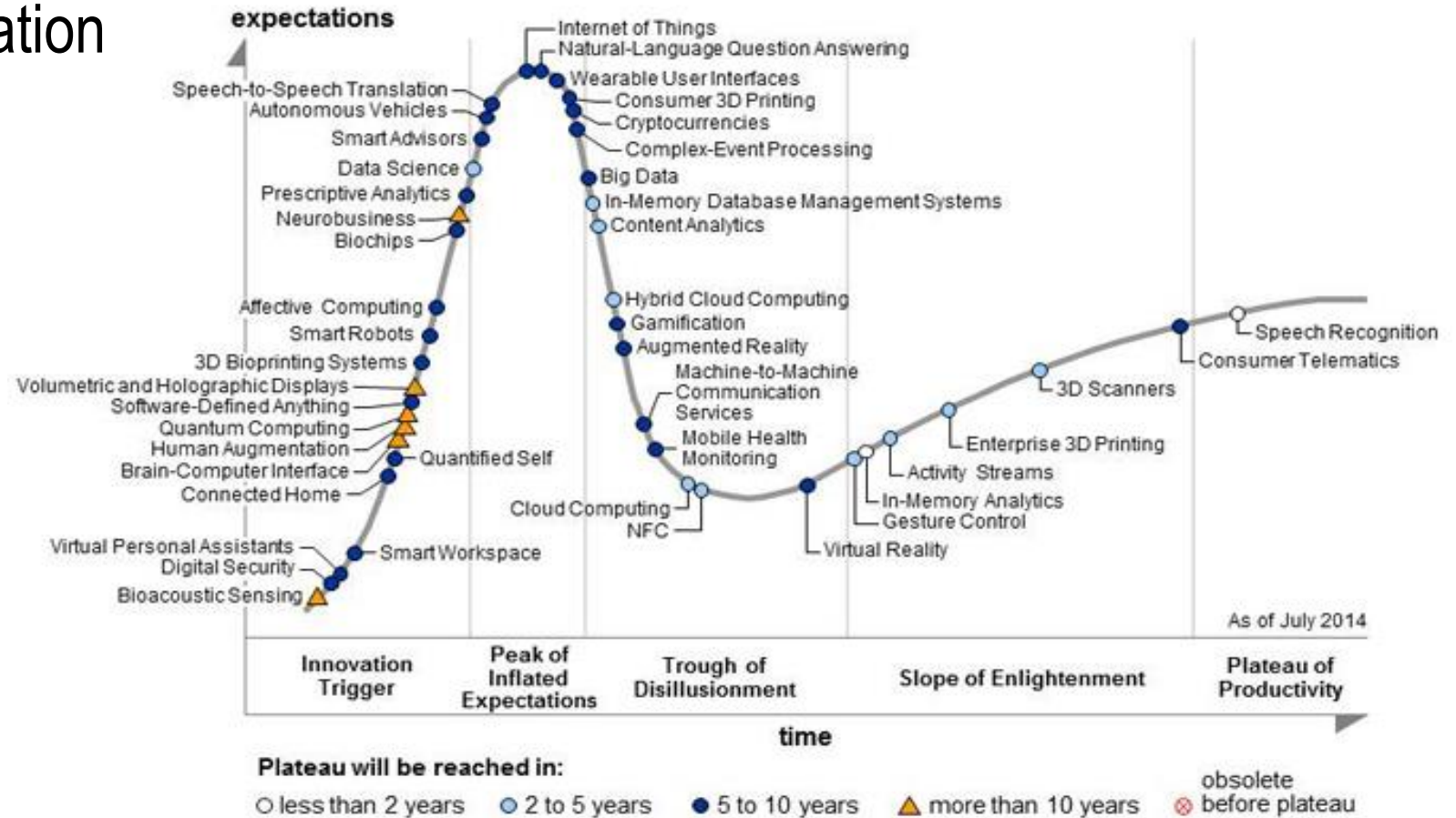
Are there any provisional lessons here for the IS field?

1. How did this exercise make us feel about IS core class having a joint focus on data analytics and digital innovation?
2. Can we generalize this exercise to other major technology waves that have crashed over the IS field?



Are there any lessons here for the IS field? (cont.)

3. Does retaining digital innovation as the FPC make IS more resilient to the inevitable technology backlash?



Are there any lessons here for the IS field? (cont.)

4. How do we shift focus of what we teach about digital innovations over time?

Discovery	What is the nature of core technology underpinning the digital innovation? What problems or needs can the technology address? Should the innovation be a major focus of attention or a minor focus?
Development	What constitutes the innovation's core feature set? To what potential organizational uses can it be put? What other elements (organizational, technical) comprise a sound innovation system incorporating the technology?
Diffusion	What is the innovation's diffusion trajectory? Who is adopting, how, and why? What kinds of firms should be more prone to adopt the innovation? What kinds of deployment barriers are most salient, and how can they be overcome?
Impact	What impacts are being seen among adopters, and what contingencies affect these impacts? What transformations resulting from the technology are being observed at the level of individuals, firms and markets? How can adopters appropriate maximum value from the innovation?

The End

Why adopt Digital Innovation as an FPC for the IS curriculum?

Digital Innovation: *A product, process, or business model that is perceived as new, requires some significant changes on the part of adopters, and is embodied in or enabled by IT*

Why Digital Innovation?

- 1. Digital innovation is a particularly broad and deep concept
- 2. In many ways, IS—particularly the kind of IS that matters most—has always been about enabling new ways of doing things in organizations
- 3. IT has become an increasingly important driver of business innovation
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Product/Business Model Innovation (suppliers)			
Discovery (selection, invention)	Development (packaging, configuration)	Diffusion (deployment, assimilation)	Impact (appropriation, transformation)
Process Innovation (adopters)			

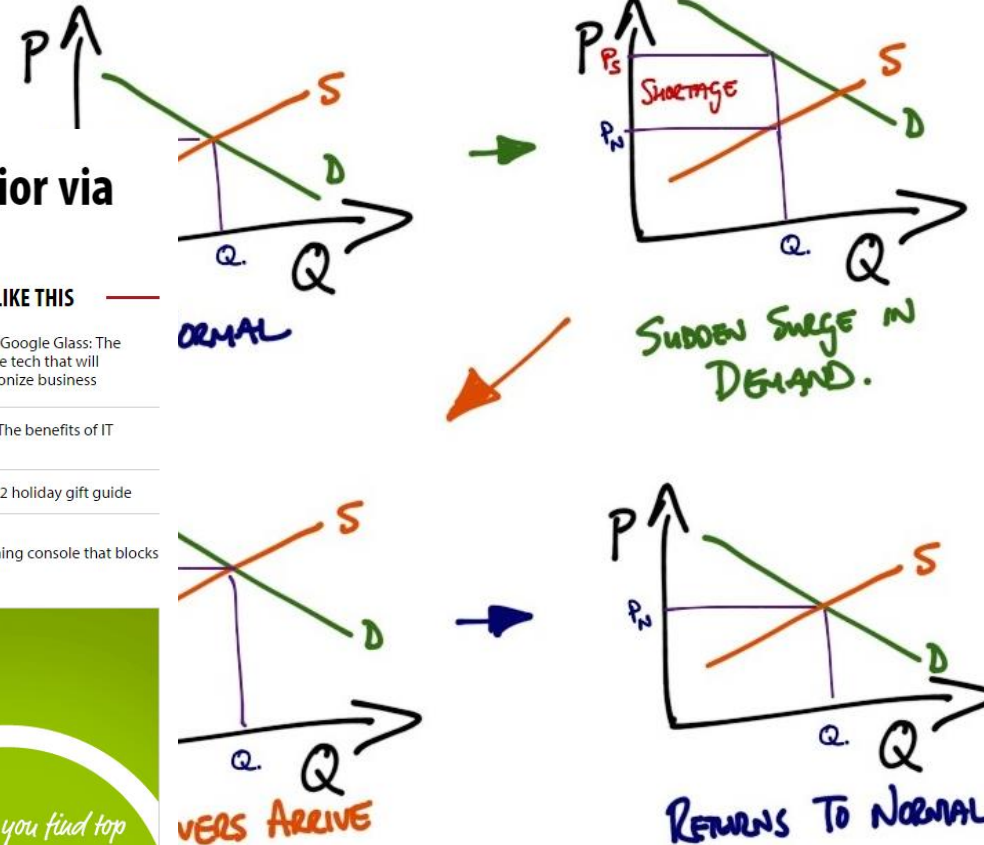
Suppliers: Invention – Development – Commercialization

Adopters: Awareness – Adoption – Assimilation

Nexus 3: The Sharing Economy



Surge Pricing



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“Digital Innovation”:

Rob Fichman

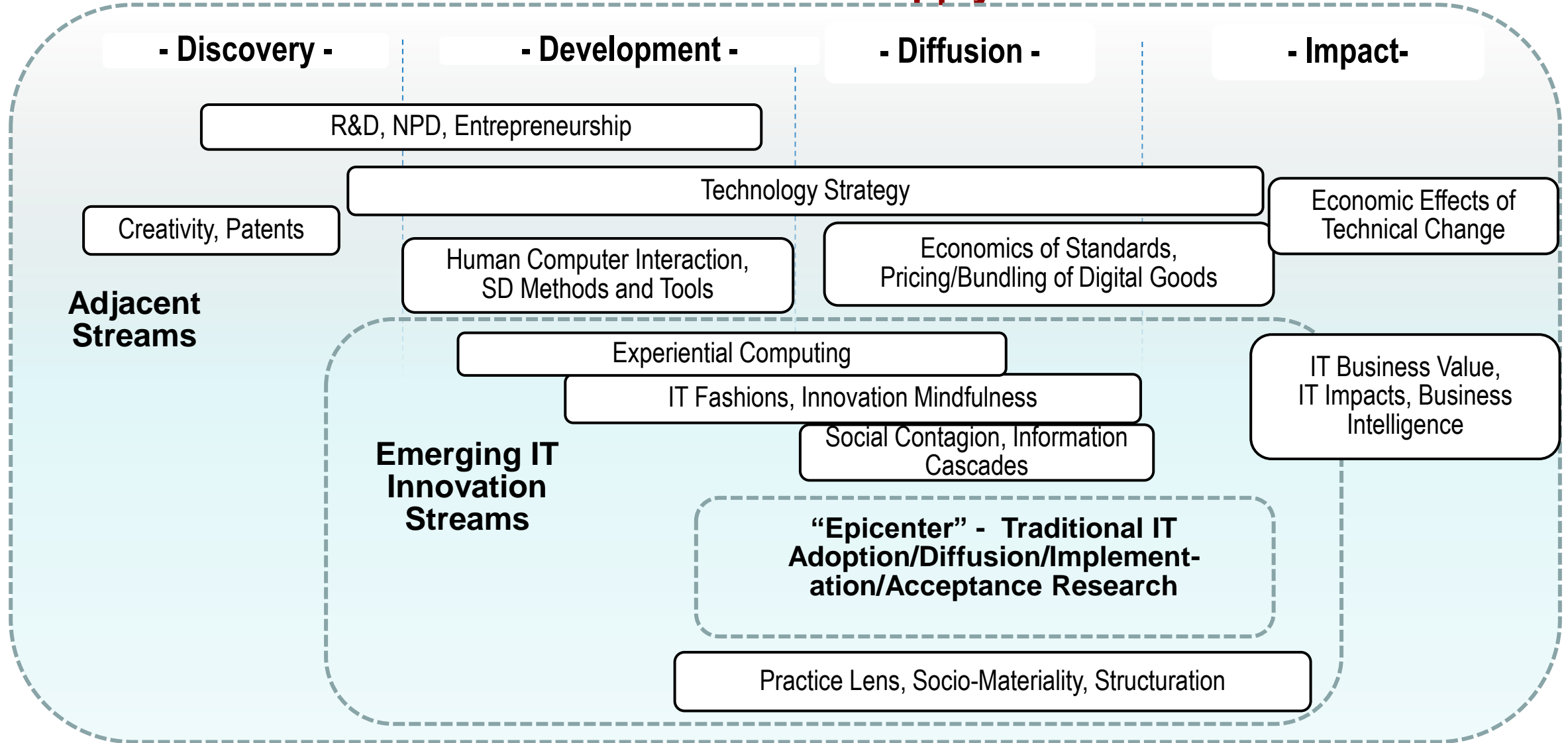
Boston College Carroll
School of Management

*Can it Provide an Enduring
Conceptual Foundation for
the IS Curriculum?*

Two Questions [probably don't need this slide]

1. Is it possible to design a course where analytics and digital innovation are joined in a natural or even synergistic way?
2. How can we make IS core course resilient hype cycle du-jour?

Product Innovation/Supply Side



Process Innovation/Demand Side

0 Introduction & motivation

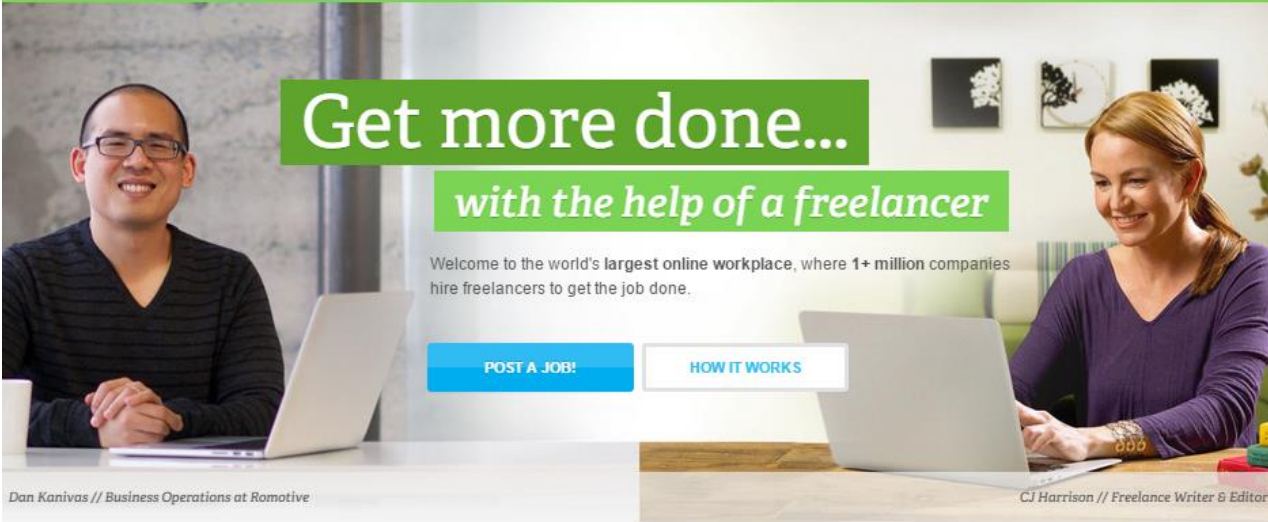
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Log in
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BECOME A FREELANCER



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with the help of a freelancer

Welcome to the world's largest online workplace, where 1+ million companies hire freelancers to get the job done.

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[HOW IT WORKS](#)


Dan Kanivas // Business Operations at Romotive
CJ Harrison // Freelance Writer & Editor

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🇺🇸 DANIEL B. | Video/Animator | ★★★★★

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Designers



367,000
Writers



79,200
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118,935 Jobs

posted in past 30 days

\$1,286,614,033

earned through Elance
to date

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Choose to pay hourly, ad-hoc, via
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Measure and manage productivity,
performance and cost with **powerful
reporting.**

Keep Your Team Happy



Pay your freelancers faster
(even instantaneously) once work
is approved.

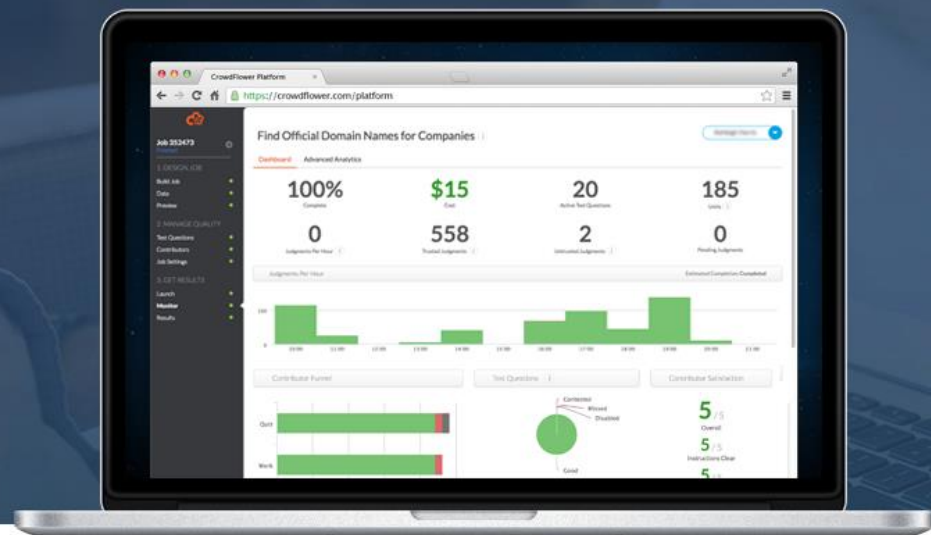
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Eliminate stress over getting paid.
Enable freelancers to self-manage
billings and earnings.

The leading people-powered data enrichment platform.

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There's No Limit to What CrowdFlower Can Do - Just Ask Our Customers

AUTODESK.

“So that's when we said: 70% is not good enough. How do we get higher?”

PATRICK BOOHER
DIRECTOR OF ENTERPRISE DATA
MANAGEMENT, AUTODESK

Case Study

Give your data meaning with our on-demand workforce.

You can achieve amazing things with CrowdFlower's platform. Learn how.

Data Collection & Enhancement



Verify and enhance your business data at massive scale.

SHOW ME

Data Categorization



Tap into the power of the crowd to organize your data.

SHOW ME

Content Creation



Get the content you need when you need it.

SHOW ME

Content Moderation



Eliminate the worst. Keep the best. Comply with the rules. Protect your brand.

SHOW ME

Search Relevance Tuning



Return relevant results the first time your customers search.

SHOW ME

Sentiment Analysis



Don't just monitor the conversation. Understand it.

SHOW ME

Survey



Get targeted data in less

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+	Title	Posted	Deadline	Award	Solvers
	Automating Turf Health Diagnostics TAGS: Chemistry, Computer Science/Information Technology, Engineering/Design, Food/Agriculture, Theoretical-IP Transfer + View More	12/02/14	1/08/15	\$20,000 USD	29
PREMIUM CHALLENGE					Share

	Seeking Invertebrate and/or Parasite GABA Receptor Modulators TAGS: Chemistry, Requests for Partners and Suppliers, Novel Molecules, RTP + View More	12/01/14	12/28/14	varies	9
PREMIUM CHALLENGE					Team Database Share

	Conquer Paralysis Now Challenge – Trial & Error Prize TAGS: Engineering/Design, Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, Social Innovation, Global Health, Public Good, Ideation + View More	12/01/14	6/01/15	\$3,000 USD	
GRAND CHALLENGE					Share

As business people, you must be able to...

1. Perceive how **IT-driven transformations** are affecting the firms & industries that you...

Analyze.

Work for.

Do deals for.

Consult to.

2. Assume the **responsibilities of the general manager** related to process innovation...

Discovery,
Development,
Diffusion,
Impacts.

3. Think like a **digital innovator**. This means you can

Use knowledge of what is (suddenly) possible (due to technological advances

plus

Insight into an important unmet need

to

Conceive a plan to do something new with digital technology.