

2008: The Year in Review

By Lanny Vincent

As a whole, 2008 turned out to be another gratifying year for Vincent & Associates, Ltd. Though the economic maelstrom that most of you have experienced also significantly affected us, especially in the final months of the year; we know the requirements, challenges and necessity of innovation and its effective management are ongoing.

What made the year so gratifying were the assignments in which you invited us to engage and contribute. These engagements fostered:

- inventions where they matter most for both the business and the user,
- foresight for sustaining and aiming innovation efforts,
- insight for more effective parenting of innovations, and
- clarity of vision and understanding for sustainable and substantive growth.

Experienced golfers know when returning to the golf course after a long absence, it is prudent to carry very few performance expectations. In fact, some players refuse to keep score for the first few rounds. Instead of trying to fine-tune their grip, swing or tempo, many find it is best to attend to basics that the golfer can more readily control: posture, balance and alignment, and not even worry about the swing.

For most of us, the contagion of fear born out of the credit crises and fall of trust in the financial system is infecting our innovation investments and efforts. In many cases, it is causing lengthening absences from

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Annual Report: Trends for 2008

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Looking back on the past year, we can't help but feel a deep sense of gratitude and humility for the confidence that many of you place in us to provide the advise, counsel and facilitative support to you and your innovation and invention efforts. It is a privilege and joy to work with so many committed and experienced innovators. Thank you.

Our eighteenth year in business saw four new client companies amidst assignments coming from a total of 17 different companies. With the help of five subscribing client companies, we completed our fifth year of the annual Innovation Practitioners Network, and most of these companies have re-subscribed for 2009.

Consistent with the previous 17 years we have been in business, over 87% of our revenues came from clients who have previously engaged our services, several for over 10 years.

We had 28 different assignments across our practice areas: strategic invention (30%), opportunity foresight (22%), and entrepreneurial planning efforts (18%), with the balance of our efforts being devoted to the health and development of innovator networks in our subscriber companies (30%).



Almost half of our engagements (45%) were sponsored by the chief technology office or R&D side of our client companies. The

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2008 in Review

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the innovation "course." As fear (Future Evidence Appearing Real) projects itself into tomorrow, today's reduced consumer demand, severely constrained credit, and widespread sluggishness of economic activity, some companies can very easily choose to leave their clubs in the garage.

Sooner or later though, we will put the clubs back in the trunk and head out to the innovation course again. Those who are willing and able to do this sooner than others will likely find an advantage. However, whether sooner or later, when we do return to the course it may be best to avoid keeping score, and instead, concentrate on the basics. Rigorous score keeping can tempt us to navigate by looking at where we have been. Instead, concentrating on the basics of balance, posture and alignment can keep us appropriately oriented to where we are headed.

What we learned in 2008 about these three basics came from our client assignments and the community of experienced practitioners with whom we have been privileged to collaborate.

For maintaining **balance**, we have been inspired this year by innovation efforts driven by:

- the need to create value for people more than the desire to differentiate from the competition, and
- the call to make a contribution more than the desire to identify oneself as innovative.

R. S. V. P.

Please send us your thoughts on this issue of *Innovating Perspectives*.

Vincent & Associates, Ltd.

Innovation Management Services

San Anselmo, California
(415) 460-1313 • (415) 460-1341 fax



*"Life is like riding a bicycle.
To maintain your balance, you
must keep moving forward."*

—Albert Einstein

For keeping a relaxed but steady **posture**, we have been impressed this year by the fundamental role played by:

- communities of practice and innovator networks in keeping organizations responsive, adaptive and flexible (not to mention, collaborative, creative and able to learn).

For finding **alignment**, we have been led this year by:

- leaders who refused to succumb to making trade-offs, relying instead upon the inventiveness of their innovators, and
- leaders who have clearly stated not only that innovations are needed, but also *where* and *why* they are needed.

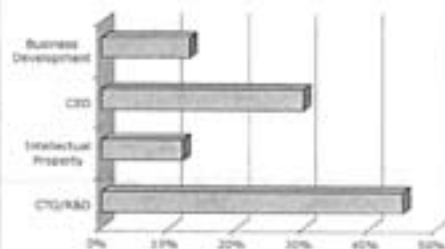
In this new year, we are excited to learn more, staying balanced between general innovation management principles and the special circumstances of each innovation itself, as we keep moving forward with you and *innovations that works*. □

Annual Report

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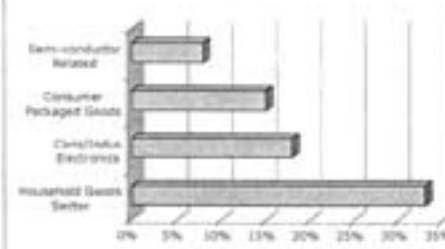
remaining half was split in sponsorship between intellectual property leadership (12%), the chief executive office (30%), and strategic market or corporate development (13%).

2008 Assignments by Function Areas



Every year the mix of industry sectors represented in our client assignments shifts and 2008 was no exception. The variety of industry sectors in which we found ourselves included semiconductor-related (8%), the household goods sector (33%), consumer and industrial electronics (18%), consumer packaged goods (15%), with telecom (8%), materials (8%), and medical (8%).

2008 Assignments by Industry Sector



As we begin 2009, we look forward to collaborating with you again and remain deeply grateful for each assignment. We appreciate your continued confidence in us and in the value we can bring to your innovation and renewal efforts.

Thank you for another great year full of learning, growth and *innovations that works*. □

Lanny Vincent is the principal at Vincent & Associates, Ltd. You can contact him at lanny@innovationsthatwork.com