

Dvanajst “znakov umiranja” rastočega proizvodnega podjetja

The Twelve “Death Signs” for a Growing Manufacturing Company

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Na podlagi obsežnega dela z malimi in srednje velikimi podjetji (MSVP-SMES) v tem prispevku predstavljamo zgodnje opozorilne znake v proizvodnih MSVP, ki lahko vodijo podjetje v poslovni zaton. V obdobju enega do treh let poslovanja propade največ podjetij, veliko podjetij pa propade tudi v prvih desetih letih. Ključni dejavniki so nezmožnost inovacij, vodenja poslovnih postopkov, proizvodov in storitev. Prispevek predstavlja tipologijo znakov umiranja, ki daje osnovo za dejaven inovacijski program. Zasnova “preventivnega zdravljenja” se osredotoča na inovacijo izdelkov in postopkov z navedbo primerov podjetij, ki so uporabila tovrstne preventivne ukrepe. Z upoštevanjem literature in izkušenj s področja tehnologije in menedžmenta inovacij se v tem prispevku osredotočamo na specifične metode inovacije, ki lahko malim in srednje velikim podjetjem omogoči uspeh. Vpeljali bomo tudi zasnove zavarovanja pred upadom na področju inovacije pri MSVP.

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(Ključne besede: propadanje podjetij, znaki opozorilni, menedžment inovacij, upadanje rasti, zavarovanje)

Based on extensive work with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), this paper describes the early-warning signs for SMEs in manufacturing, which, if ignored, later result in business decline and even failure. There is a high failure rate for SMEs during the start-up phase of 1 to 3 years, but also a significant failure rate in companies that are less than ten years old. Failure to innovate, the business process, and products and services are the key elements. This paper presents a typology of the “death signs” that can form the basis of a proactive innovation agenda. The concept of “preventive healthcare” is applied to product and process innovation, and cases are cited of companies taking such preventive steps. Drawing on literature and experience from the fields of technology and innovation management the paper focuses on specific methods of innovation that can help a small-to-medium-sized manufacturing firm thrive over the longer term. The concept of “recession-proofing” is also introduced and applied to innovation in SMEs.

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(Keywords: company failures, early-warning signs, innovation management, recession-proofing)

0 UVOD

V Združenem kraljestvu približno ena tretjina podjetij ne preživi prvih dveh let. Vzroki so ponavadi slaba poslovna sposobnost, slabe poslovne zasnove, slabo upravljanje s financami in neučinkovito trženje.

Te pomankljivosti, ki od samega začetka poslovanja povzročajo propad podjetij. Druga tretjina malih podjetij ne preživi desetih let. Ta prispevek podpira mnenje, da je nezmožnost za učinkovito inoviranje vzrok za dolgoročen neuspeh. Prav tako navaja številne “simptome”, ki lahko vodijo v poslovni neuspeh. Ti “znaki umiranja” predstavljajo osnovo inovacijskega programa za mala in srednje velika podjetja.

0 INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom approximately a third of small businesses do not survive the first two years. This is often down to a lack of business capability, a poor concept, poor financial management, or ineffective marketing.

The “basics” are often not right from the start, and business failure is the result. Another third of small businesses do not survive beyond ten years. This paper supports the view that failure to innovate effectively is a cause of longer-term failure. It also outlines a number of “symptoms” that can lead to a business’s demise. These “death signs” form the basis of an innovation agenda for small-to-medium-sized firms.

1 ZASNOVA ZNAKOV UMIRANJA

Znaki skupinskega umiranja so prvi simptomi, ki opozarjajo na potrebo po inovacijah. Po uspešnem pričetku poslovanja grozi nevarnost usihanja. Brez nenehne poslovne dinamike podjetje izgublja sposobnost prilagajanja spreminjajočim se razmeram, da bi se odzvalo na to kar Levy in ostali [3] imenujejo »okoljski opozorilni znaki«. Francis in ostali [2] opozarjajo, da je lahko inovacijska potreba spremenljiva, saj se podjetje odziva tako na organizacijski kot tudi proizvodni in procesni ravni. Caffyn in Grantham [1] prav tako poudarjata pomen postopno rastočih inovacij izdelkov in postopkov v obdobju razvoja podjetja.

Če se podjetje med 18 meseci in dvema letoma starosti ne uspe inovacijsko odzvati obstaja velika verjetnost, da bo začelo doživljati »znake umiranja«. Ta zasnova je bila razvita v Združenem kraljestvu v delavnicah, ki so potekale z malimi in srednje velikimi podjetji (MSVP) med leti 2003 do 2005. Z več kot 50 podjetji smo preverjali ta nastajajoči model in tipologijo, ki jo predstavljamo v prispevku.

Potreba po preventivnih ukrepih po merilih dejavnega »zdravljenja« je temelj učinkovitega premagovanja znakov umiranja in zagotavljanja dolgoročnega poslovnega preživetja.

Odkrili smo tudi vzporedne znake tako imenovanega »propadanja in odlašanja«, ki povpešijo poslovno umiranje.

Z »umiranjem« označujemo finančni ali poslovni propad podjetja, ki vodi do zaprtja podjetja. Tako lahko poslovna smrt nastane zaradi finančnega neuspeha oz. bankrota, ki vodi podjetje v likvidacijo, ali pa zaradi odločitve lastnika podjetja oz. direktorja, da zapre podjetje.

2 DVANAJST ZNAKOV UMIRANJA RASTOČEGA PODJETJA

Znaki umiranja so predstavljeni kot preglednica zdravstvenega stanja, ki lahko služi kot orodje za samo-ocenjevanje, razkrivanje priložnosti in za dejavno ukrepanje pri odpravljanju simptomov. Inovacija tako postane orodje za preživetje in rast podjetja. Predstavljeni so kot način zavarovanja podjetja pred upadanjem s spodbujanjem izboljševanja poslovne učinkovitosti in organizacije med obdobji rasti – »zavarovanje pred obdobjem upada«.

1. *Obseg prodaje/povpraševanja narašča počasneje – upadanje rasti je brez ustreznih*

1 THE CONCEPT OF DEATH SIGNS

The signs of corporate death are essentially symptoms giving early warning of the need to innovate. Having survived start-up, the firm is in danger of atrophying. Without an ongoing dynamism the firm loses the impetus to adapt to changing circumstances, to respond to what Levy et al [3] call environmental signals. Francis et al [2] point out that this innovation may need to be transformational as the firm responds to organizational, product and process-innovation perspectives. Caffyn and Grantham [1] also highlight the importance of incremental innovation to product and process as the firm develops.

Without an innovation response at about 18 months to 2 years in the business biography, the firm may experience the onset of what we call the "death signs". This concept arose from workshops in the UK with small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during 2003 to 2005. We worked with over 50 companies, testing out this emerging proposition and forming the typology that is presented in this paper.

The need for preventive measures in the spirit of proactive "healthcare" lies at the heart of effectively managing the death signs and ensuring longer-term business survival.

We also uncovered what might be termed signs of "decay and delay" which overlap with and contribute to the signs of business death.

By "death" we refer to the financial or operational collapse of a business, resulting in closure. Some events of business death will arise from financial failure and bankruptcy, sending the firm into liquidation. Other events arise from the owners or directors of the business deciding to close the business down.

2 THE TWELVE SIGNS OF DEATH IN A GROWING BUSINESS

The death signs can be presented as a health checklist and can provide a useful tool for self-analysis, identifying opportunities for taking proactive steps towards eliminating the symptoms. Innovation therefore becomes the tool of business survival and expansion. They are also presented as a way of recession-proofing a firm by encouraging the strengthening of performance and organisation during times of growth – a "proofing" against leaner times.

1. *The rate of sales/demand acceleration has begun to decline - even though the curve still in-*

- izračunov težko zaznati, saj krivulja še vedno narašča;*
2. *Izrazi "dobro, zelo ugodno" in podobni kažejo na nevarnost sprijaznenosti s povprečjem;*
 3. *Rahlo naraščanje pritožb in nezadovoljstva – bodisi med zaposlenimi ali zunanjimi javnostmi;*
 4. *Opazno je povečanje lojalnosti obstoječih kupcev, hkrati pa rahlo upadanje števila novih kupcev ali strank;*
 5. *Zaposleni ne prihajajo na delo tako zgodaj kot prej, vse pogosteje pa odhajajo točno ob uradnem zaključku delovnega časa;*
 6. *Povečanje zalog – različnih gradiv, proizvodov, zamisli se ne uresničujejo*
 7. *Občutek "izpraznjenosti" – težje se je navdušiti, pričeti z delom, imeti nove zamisli;*
 8. *Ena ali več dobrih zamisli iz prejšnjega obdobja je obležalo na delovni mizi;*
 9. *Podjetje je na področju inovacij ujeto v preveliko odvisnost od tehnologije ali v odvisnost od ene/dveh oseb ali majhnih skupin;*
 10. *Rahlo, vendar opazno naraščanje pritožb glede proizvodov, storitev ali odnosov. Eden ali dva od najpomembnejših kupcev sta prenehala sodelovati s podjetjem;*
 11. *Stroški iz meseca v mesec poberejo del dobička zaradi pomanjkanja tekočih virov;*
 12. *Občutek vsakdanjosti in dolgočasje kljub navidezno stimulativnemu in dinamičnem okolju. Pomanjkanje pravega "naboja"*

3 RAZPRAVA O POSAMEZNIH ZNAKIH UMIRANJA

1. *Obseg prodaje/povpraševanja narašča počasneje – upadanje rasti je brez ustreznih izračunov težko zaznati, saj krivulja še vedno narašča*

Ta prvi znak umiranja je slabo zaznaven, saj ne kaže na padanje v prodaji, temveč upadanje stopnje rasti prodaje. Na potrebo po inoviranju opozarja že veliko prej kot običajni opozorilni znak upada rasti prodaje ali celo upada v prodaji.

Pomembno je poudariti, da je to zelo nežen znak. Prodaja namreč še vedno narašča v pozitivnem smislu toda stopnja rasti upada. Potrebno je dejavno ukrepanje, za zaustavitev upadanja, ali za pridobitev vzporednega dotoka dohodkov.

- creases, the rate of increase is declining, and this not easy to see unless you do the calculation.*
2. *Things are described as "nice", as "very comfortable" - here there is a danger of a collusion of mediocrity.*
 3. *A small increase in complaints or dissatisfaction, either internally or externally*
 4. *There is an increase in loyalty from existing customers, but a tiny decline in the number of new customers or clients.*
 5. *People do not get in as early as they used to; they arrive and leave on time more often.*
 6. *An increase in the level of inventory/safety stock - either materials, products, ideas not yet put into action.*
 7. *A feeling of "drag" - harder to get enthused, to get going, to be inspired.*
 8. *One or several ideas/practices from the "early days" are still in place, and really should not be.*
 9. *The organisation is stifled in terms of innovation through over dependence on technology or one or two people/small groups.*
 10. *A small but perceptible rise in the number of complaints about the product, service or the relationship. One or two important "first" customers have moved on.*
 11. *Costs are eating a little more each month into profitability as a result of a "slackness" with resources.*
 12. *There is a hint of "sameness", of boredom even, in an apparently exciting and changing environment. A lack of real "buzz".*

3 A DISCUSSION OF EACH OF THE DEATH SIGNS

1. *The rate of sales/demand acceleration has begun to decline - even though the curve still increases, the rate of increase is declining, and this is not easy to see unless you do the calculation*

This first death sign is a subtle sign where the early signal of possible decline reveals itself not at first in falling sales, but in a decline in the rate of acceleration of sales growth. It suggests a signal to innovate at a much earlier stage than the usual warning sign of declining sales growth or even a fall in sales.

It is a subtle sign. Sales are still accelerating in a positive sense, but the rate of acceleration is declining. It requires a proactive response to reverse the decline in acceleration or to look for parallel revenue streams.

Tu je delovanje osredotočeno na inovacijo izdelka in storitev. Analiza mora biti opravljena glede na vzroke upada stopnje rasti. Lahko je le del naravne dobe trajanja izdelka. Lahko pa so prisotni tudi drugi dejavniki, ki zajemajo tudi spremembe zahtev kupcev ali njihove povratne informacije o nekaterih lastnostih izdelka ali storitve.

2. Izrazi "dobro, zelo ugodno" in podobni kažejo na nevarnost sprijaznenosti s povprečjem

Ko podjetje raste in se razvija lahko pride do udobja, neke vrste sprijaznenosti. Nihče si ne želi sprememb ko barka pluje s polnimi jadri. Razvije se kultura udobja, ki lahko zakrije nekatere izmed znakov umiranja. Ta sprijaznenost s povprečjem nastane na več področjih in jo je zelo težko odpraviti. Posledice ne-odpravljanja tovrstne sprijaznenosti – kulturne norme »navidezne prijaznosti«, ki preprečuje izzive in odkritost – je, da postanejo priložnosti za inovacijo prepovedane teme, zato jih podjetje zamudi, kar lahko vodi do izgube poslovnih priložnosti in uspešnosti.

4 STOPNJE SPRIJAZNJENOSTI

4.1 Stopnja sprijaznenosti 1

Na tej prvi stopnji želja po udobju izpodrine potrebo po odkritosti in s tem tveganje neudobja. Tako nastane površinska (navzven) »prijaznost«, ki ne dovoljuje nikakršnih sprememb v čustvih, mišljenju ali dejanjih. Ta "status quo" varnosti pa terja svojo ceno. Potencialno neudobne stvari so opuščene in neizrečene. Nastajajo problemi prikrivanja. Tako, kot če v restavraciji, kjer smo nezadovoljni odgovorimo na natakarjevo vprašanje da je "dobro". Ne želimo motiti ustaljenega reda. Tako si ponavadi dopovedujemo da problemi niso tako veliki, da "ne bo viharja v kozarcu vode". Prav tako se nikoli preveč ne navdušimo nad dobrim izidom. Prava odličnost in sreča sta pomanjšani v prijetni "v redu" ali "vljudnost"

4.2 Stopnja sprijaznenosti 2

Na drugi stopnji premagamo sprijaznenost prve stopnje in se končno soočimo z resničnim dogajanjem, čeprav s tem tvegamo neudobje. Navdušeno hvalimo kar je vredno pohvale! Soočimo

Here, action is focused on product or service innovation. An analysis needs to be carried out as to the causes of the reduced rate of acceleration. It may be part of a natural product lifecycle; however, there may be other factors including changing customer requirements or customer feedback about certain aspects of the product or service.

2. Things are described as "nice", as "very comfortable" - here there is a danger of a collusion of mediocrity

As the business grows and develops, a certain comfort can set in, which is actually a form of complacency. No one wants to "rock the boat" of success, and so a culture of comfort develops that can hide some of the death signs. This "collusion of mediocrity" is a many-levelled thing and can be hard to break. The consequences of not challenging such a collusion – a cultural norm of "superficial niceness" that avoids challenge and honesty – is that innovation opportunities become taboo subjects and are missed, with a resulting loss of potential and even effectiveness.

4 LEVELS OF COLLUSION

4.1 Collusion Level 1

At this first level, comfort is sought at the expense of honesty and a risk of discomfort. A superficial "niceness" exists, and it is not the norm to show any extremes of emotion, thought or deed. The status quo of safety is secured at a price. Potentially uncomfortable things are left unsaid. Problems are "papered over". In the restaurant where we might be dissatisfied we tell the waiter, when asked, that the meal is "fine". We do not wish to "rock the boat" or to "muddy the waters". We tend to dilute problems - real problems - down to a "storm in a tea cup". We never get too positive either, too excited over a good outcome. Excellence and joy are diluted down to pleasant "okayness" or "niceness".

4.2 Level 2 Collusion

At level 2 we break the collusion of level one and surface what is really going on, even at the risk of discomfort. We go wild with praise, where such wild praise is due. We call things by their real name, where

se s stvarmi, ki povzročajo težave. Pogosto pride do očiščenja in vse pride na dan. Toda tu se pogosto ustavimo in zavzdihnemo: "No to pa je bilo zares dobro. Vse smo privlekli na dan" in upamo da je tovrstna izrečenost dovolj. Ničesar pa ne naredimo. Obred odkritosti razumemo kot skrajno točko, izvedba pa je preveč oddaljena, da bi se je lotili. Spet se vse ustali in ponovno se pojavijo enake težave. Na nek način je ta nenadna odprtost tako pretresljiva, da nas paralizira v popolno nedelovanje!

4.3 Stopnja sprijaznenosti 3

Na tretji stopnji stojimo pred pragom sprememb. Stvari so dobile prava imena – vemo kaj je treba storiti. Izpovedali smo resnično stanje. Vsa vprašanja so bila izpostavljena. Nato pride do vdaje. Zadamo si le najmanjše in najlažje spremembe, pogosto z izgovorom, da je spremembe treba izvajati postopoma. Pogosto bi bil pravilni odziv začetek izvajanja učinkovitih sprememb, ne pa zgolj taktika sprenevedanja ali sprijaznenje. Ne le metoda izogibanja! Namesto, da bi spremenili sistem se le poigramo s sedanjim. Tako naredimo majhen korak kjer bi bil potreben velik preskok. Rezultat je, da je spremembo prepoznamo kot iskrenost, očiščenje, ob prvi oviri pa se umaknemo. Nastopi prva stopnja sprijaznenosti in rečemo si – »Dobro smo opravili, da smo prišli tako daleč«. Toda naboj je bil veliko večji.

4.4 Stopnja sprijaznenosti 4

Tu začnemo s spremembami pa naj bodo še tako težavne. Vendar sprememb ne izpeljemo do konca in stvari se vrnejo v prvotno stanje. Pomanjkanje vztrajnosti in nedoslednost vodita k pomanjkanju zagona. Prvotni naboj je izgubljen. Vdaja onemogoči vsako možnost zmage.

3. *Rahlo naraščanje pritožb in nezadovoljstva – bodisi med zaposlenimi ali zunanjimi javnostmi*

V povezavi z (2) lahko pride do manjšega povečanja nezadovoljstva v podjetju ali njegovem okolju. Toda te težnje morda ne zabeležimo v formalni obliki, saj se prepogosto zatrjuje, da je rast edini kazalnik uspeha! Toda, rasteči krivulji lahko že

such things are causing problems which need to be honestly named. A catharsis often occurs, as things come out into the open. But then we stop there, often with a big sigh. We say: "Well now that was a fine thing. We got everything out in the open." In the hope that saying it will be enough. However, nothing is done as a result. The ritual of honesty is seen as the end point, more than enough for us to bear. Soon, everything settles again and the same problems occur or the good and bad practice is neither built nor improved upon. In some ways the sudden openness is so traumatic that it paralyses us into inaction.

4.3 Level 3 Collusion

At Level 3 we stand on the threshold of change. Things have been truly named - we know what needs to be done. We have named the state of affairs and all is out in the open. The issues have been surfaced. And then, we falter. We embark instead only on the smallest, easiest change, often under the guise of "taking little steps". Often incremental change is the right course, but not as a collusion or a delaying tactic. Not as an avoidance method. Instead of changing the system that needs to change, we simply tinker with the current one. We take a small jump when a large leap is required. The result: the change identified with honesty, the catharsis experienced, falls at the first hurdle. Collusion level 1 kicks in and we say - "Well, we have done well to come so far". Yet the potential was so much greater.

4.4 Level 4 Collusion

Here we begin to make the change we need to make, no matter how daunting. However, there is no follow through and soon things revert back to their former state. Even honest, dramatic change requires perseverance, and here the lack of follow up leads to things running out of steam. Momentum is lost and no one challenges this. Defeat is snatched from the jaws of victory.

3. *A small increase in complaints or dissatisfaction, either internally or externally*

Linked to (2) there may be a small increase in dissatisfaction, either internally or externally, but this information may not even be collected formally, as growth seems to be the only performance indicator. However, within the upward growth curve may be

zasledimo majhna opozorilna znamenja, ki kažejo na pomanjkljivosti ponudbe izdelka ali storitve.

Brez dejanskih in izčrpnih povratnih informacij – in delovanja v skladu z njimi – se lahko krivulja kaj kmalu obrne navzdol!

Dolgoročno uspešna podjetja te povratne informacije vidijo kot priložnost za odkrivanje novih inovacijskih področij. »Dobro« je sovražnik »boljšega« in ključni element za ohranjanje poslovne rasti iz leta v leto je prav nenehno inoviranje.

Uporaba inovacij in reševanje problemov je potrebno uporabiti in opraviti analizo temeljnih vzrokov, ki jih razkrivajo povratne informacije, saj prav te kažejo potencialne šibkosti in izboljšave izdelkov in storitev, ki sedaj sicer še dobro delujejo.

4. Opazno je povečanje zvestobe obstoječih kupcev, hkrati pa rahlo upadanje števila novih kupcev ali strank

Ta opozorilni znak kaže na pomakanje ustanavljanja novih področij poslovanja, čeprav zvesti kupci še vedno omogočajo poslovno rast. Vprašati pa se je treba: Zakaj zgolj ohranjamo zveste kupce ne pridobivamo pa novih?

Neprestano tržno raziskovanje bi pokazalo zakaj ne pridobivamo novih kupcev. Morda gre za neučinkovito ciljno trženje. Morda pa bi bilo treba preveriti izdelek ali storitve. Tu se lahko izkažejo strategije različnosti izdelkov in masovnega prilagajanja kot učinkovit način inovacije.

5. Zaposleni ne prihajajo na delo tako zgodaj kot prej, vse pogosteje pa odhajajo točno ob uradnem zaključku delovnega časa

Ta opozorilni znak kaže na probleme pri nastajanju in širjenju izurjenosti, ki povzročata zdolgočasnost in celo samozadovoljnost. Izurjenost ustvarja »mehanične« navade, ljudje postanejo zdolgočaseni in izgubijo občutek za izzive. Podjetje je v svojem delovanju preveč avtomatizirano.

Spodbuditi je treba možnosti za ponovno vzbujanje zanimanja za izdelek, ponovno povezovanje s poslanstvom in vrednotami. Obogatitev dela, usposobljenost za več veščin in menjava zadolžitev, izpopolnjevanje in razvoj ter skupinsko delo so možne organizacijske inovacije.

warning signs pointing to small “cracks” in the product or service offer.

Without real and comprehensive feedback – and action on that feedback – the curve may soon head downwards.

Successful firms in the long term see such feedback as a welcome opportunity to identify innovation areas. “Best” is the enemy of “better”, and continuous innovation is seen as a key factor in sustaining year-on-year business growth.

The use of innovation and problem-solving techniques needs to be applied and the root cause analysis carried out as feedback identifies potential weaknesses and improvements to products and services that are already performing well.

4. There is an increase in loyalty from existing customers, but a tiny decline in the number of new customers or clients

This warning symptom points to the lack of new business generated, even though the historical customer base may still be generating growth for the company. One would need to ask: Why are our older customers staying and why are we not attracting new business?

Market research on an ongoing basis should identify what is keeping new customers away. It may be through ineffectively targeted marketing. Or it may point to aspects of the product or service offer that may need to be looked at. Here, strategies of product differentiation and mass customization may be effective styles of innovation.

5. People do not get in as early as they used to; they arrive and leave on time more often

This warning sign points to the problem of growth developing into a routine that creates boredom and even complacency. Routines create “mechanical” habits of working; people become bored and the sense of challenge is lost. The company feels too automated in its processes.

Here, there is potential to look at ways of re-generating interest in the product, connecting again with the business purpose and the values that led to the creation of the enterprise in the first place: job enrichment, multi-skilling, and job rotation. Training and development, and team working are all possible organizational innovations.

6. Povečanje zalog – različnih gradiv, izdelkov, zamisli se ne uresničujejo

Tu so »zaloge« opredeljene zelo široko. V želji, da bi vzdrževali rast se vzdržuje visoko raven storitev za kupce s kopičenjem zalog. To sicer lahko zagotovi kratkoročno zadovoljenost kupcev. Dolgoročno pa investicija v kopičenje zalog zakriva težave in tudi nastajajoče potrebe po organizacijski in poslovni prilagodljivosti, ki ne temelji na »varnostni zalogi«.

Tudi prekomerno zaposlovanje je lahko ena izmed zvrsti kopičenja zalog, še posebej v storitvenih dejavnostih. Preveč investiramo v človeške vire, ki sicer prispevajo k rasti prihodka, vendar zmanjšujejo donosnost.

Prav tako lahko obstaja »zaloga idej«, pripravljeno za uporabo. Ta pa hitro zastari, ker nimamo časa, da bi vse te ideje pregledali, med tem ko se trudimo da tečemo na mestu. Zgodnja rast je neke vrste umetni vrhunec, ki ga doživi podjetje, toda v prihodnosti ga čaka tudi velik padec.

Zato mora podjetje tudi v času rasti pregledati svoje zaloge in prepoznati organizacijske inovacije, ki bi te zaloge zmanjšale ter vzpostavile novo dejavnost in prožnost, ki ne bi temeljila na umetnem kopičenju zalog.

7. Občutek "izpraznjenosti" – težje se je navdušiti, pričeti z delom, imeti nove zamisli

Podobno kot pri (5) ta znak kaže na pomanjkanje zanimanja prvotnih ustanoviteljev podjetja, ki bi si morali ogledati vzroke za izgubo vzpodbude v podjetju. Morda gre zares zgolj za izgubo zanimanja. Veliko poslovnežev je bolj navdušenih nad postavljanjem podjetja in so bolj uspešni pri ustvarjanju novih podjetij kot njihovem vzdrževanju. Morda bi bilo koristno razmisliti o različnih oblikah lastništva, ali pa bi morali prvotni ustanovitelji oditi novim izzivom nasproti.

Med zaposlenimi je lahko že rast sama po sebi vir napetosti in pritiska. Morda bi bilo koristno razmisliti o različnih načinih nagrajevanja, in podeljevanja priznanj. Pridobivanje virov ne bi smelo biti zgolj del izurjene rasti, ki povzročajo velike pritiske pri delu in vodi do zgodnjega izgorevanja zaposlenih.

8. Ena ali več dobrih zamisli iz prejšnjega obdobja je obležalo na delovni mizi

6. An increase in the level of inventory/safety stock - either materials, products, ideas not yet put into action

We are defining "inventory" broadly here. In a wish to continue growth, customer service levels are kept high by the holding of inventory. This can create short-term customer satisfaction as demand is met across the board. However, investment in inventory is not sustainable in the long run and hides problems as well as the need for organizational and operational flexibility that is not based on "safety stock".

Overstaffing can also be a kind of inventory, especially in service industries. We over invest in human resources, which creates growth in turnover but eats into profitability.

Also, there can be a "stock of good ideas", sitting on the shelf, waiting to be implemented, going out of date, which we simply do not have time to look at, as we "run to stand still". In a way the early growth can be seen as a kind of "artificial high" for the business, with a big fall waiting to happen in the future.

So, even during times of growth, the firm needs to look at its inventory levels and identify organizational innovations to reduce inventories of all kinds and create an agility, a flexibility, not based on high inventory.

7. A feeling of "drag" - harder to get enthused, to get going, to be inspired

Similar to (5), this sign underlines the loss of interest of the original pioneers in the business, who need to look at the causes of their loss of motivation in the enterprise. It can simply be a loss of interest. Many entrepreneurs are excited by entrepreneurship itself, and are better at setting up businesses than sustaining them. It may be that different forms of ownership need to be looked at, or that the original pioneer needs to move on to new challenges.

Among staff, growth itself can be a source of stress and pressure. It may be that different models and types of reward, recognition, and resourcing need to be looked at as routinised growth combined with high-pressure working leads to early burn out.

8. One or several ideas/practices from the "early days" are still in place, and really should not be

V zgodnjem obdobju po ustanovitvi delo v podjetjih temelji na improvizaciji, neformalnih oblikah dela in »gašenju«. Uspeh temelji na igrivosti in veliki meri kreativnosti. Ni toge razmejitve med funkcijami in poslovanje raste na osnovi dobre zamisli in velike mere navdušenja. V obdobju rasti pa se pojavi potreba po bolj sistematičnem pristopu in večji konsistentnosti delovanja. Možna postane tako imenovana ekonomija rasti. Potrebno je opustiti nekatere zamisli in prakse, ki so nam dobro služile v času zagona, ki pa dolgoročno zavirajo uspeh. Tako lahko na primer določena metoda obdelave naročil, programski paket, ali določen »ekspert«, ki postanejo neustrezni zaradi zahteve po bolj zapleteni in celostni storitvi. Tu je inovacija sposobnost opustiti preteklost, prepoznavanje anahronističnega vedenja in sistemov in odkrivanje novih metod, proizvodnih oblik in delovnih praks.

9. Podjetje je na področju inovacij ujeto v preveliko odvisnost od tehnologije ali v odvisnost od ene/ dveh oseb ali majhnih skupin

To je lahko resen problem majhnih podjetij, ki temeljijo na »osebnostih«. Družinska podjetja najbolj ovira prav ta problem. Najboljši primer tega je »računalniški genij« ali »izumitelj«, ki je tudi direktor ali pa vsaj vplivna osebnost v podjetju. Rast prinese tudi potrebo po hitrejšem odločanju, in poseganju po širšem spektru znanj, »eksperti« v podjetju pa temu preprosto niso kos. Običajno so potrebni ukrepi kot je delegiranje pristojnosti, spopolnjevanje in prilagajanje novim poslovnim okoliščinam.

Pojavi se lahko tudi potreba po opustitvi določenih praks, ki so prej vodile v zgodnjo rast vendar so sedaj postale predrage in neučinkovite. Primer tega so velike ugodnosti za določene kupce, ki se preprosto premočno zažrejo v donosnost podjetja in tako z ekonomskega vidika niso upravičljive.

Največji izziv v tem primeru je najti ustrezne poslovne pristope, ki ustrezajo naši definiciji usluge kupcem, a hkrati ne zmanjšujejo rasti.

10. Rahlo, vendar opazno naraščanje pritožb glede izdelkov, storitev ali odnosov. Eden ali dva od najpomembnejših kupcev sta prenehala sodelovati s podjetjem

V povezavi s (3) in (4) vidimo upad prvotne skupine kupcev. V tako dogajanje se moramo

The early days of a start-up are often based more on improvisation, informal working and "fire-fighting". Success is based on a kind of playfulness and a lot of creativity. Boundaries between functions are not always clear and the business grows on the back of a good product idea and much enthusiasm. As growth takes place, there will be a need for a more systematic approach, for more consistency in working. Economies of scale become possible. It becomes necessary to drop ideas and practices that served the company during start-up, but may actually inhibit success in the long term. For example, a particular method of processing orders, a software package, or a particular "expert" who simply is no longer an expert in a bigger company requiring a more complex and comprehensive service. Here, innovation is about letting go of the past, of identifying anachronistic behaviours and systems and finding new methods, product designs and working practices.

9. The organisation is stifled in terms of innovation through over dependence on technology or one or two people/small groups

This can be a real problem for small firms that are built around "personalities". Family businesses suffer most from this situation because sensitivities are involved. The best examples of this are the "Computer Whiz-Kid" or the "Inventor" who is also a director or, at least, a highly influential player in the firm. Growth begins to demand quicker decisions, drawing on a broader knowledge base and our "experts" are simply not up to the task. Standing aside, up-skilling, and reorientation to the new business reality, may all be required steps.

There may also be a need to drop certain practices that led to early growth but are now too costly or inefficient. One example is the practice of making high-cost promises to certain customers, which simply eat too much into profitability to be justifiable.

Here, the challenge is to find new working methods that also align with the company's definition of customer service and do not eat into growth.

10. A small but perceptible rise in the number of complaints about the product, service or the relationship. One or two important "first" customers have moved on

Linked to (3) and (4), we see the loss of our original customer base. We need to look into this

temeljito poglobiti. Morda je neizbežno, da bodo kupci, katere smo v neformalnih »zgodnjih dnevih« zelo privlačili, sedaj postali predragi kupci v našem bolj učinkovitem in rastočem modelu poslovanja. Toda inovacijski izziv leži v tem, da ohranimo vse kupce in hkrati gojimo tudi uspešnost in učinkovitost v času rasti.

Zgodnji kupci imajo lahko dragocen vpogled v kakovost našega izdelka ali storitve, ki smo jo morda izgubili v prizadevanju za rast. Obstaja nevarnost, da je podjetje v času rasti izgubilo svojo prvotno edinstvenost. Standardizacija izdelkov in poslovnih postopkov je lahko z nekaterih vidikov dobra, lahko pa povzroča tudi izgubo »enkratne prodajne zamisli«. Včasih se to zgodi, ko prvotni lastnik podjetja proda večjemu podjetju, ki pa enostavno nima enakega sklopa vrednot, ki so privlačile prvotne kupce.

11. Stroški iz meseca v mesec poberejo del dobička zaradi pomanjkanja virov

Samozadovoljnost z viri lahko nastopi v času rasti podjetja. O tem smo že razpravljali s primerom kopičenja zaloga. Vendar ima večja zaloga vsaj cilj ohranjanja uslug kupcu na visoki ravni, ohlapen odnos do upravljanja z viri pa je neke vrste oblika organizacijske lenobe. Ključno je, da poleg prodajne rasti in tržnega deleža, kot indikator uspeha štejemo tudi donosnost. Eden izmed običajnih inovacijskih pomoči je upravljanje s stroški v Dobičkovnem centru in Stroškovnem centru, pomaga lahko tudi »Vitko mišljenje«.

12. Občutek vsakdanjosti in dolgočasja kljub navidezno stimulativnemu in dinamičnemu okolju. Pomanjkanje pravega "naboja"

Občutek »dolgočasja«, kot je smo ga opisali zgoraj, se lahko kaže na zelo različne načine. Pomanjkanje »naboja« lahko vodi do pomanjkanja dejavnosti v podjetju. Zaposleni ne predlagajo novih zamisli za inovacijo, nastopi pomanjkanje kreativne energije in »naboja«, ki se kaže že v telesni govorici in komunikacijskih veščinah zaposlenih v odnosu s kupci. Primer tega so lahko gostinske storitve v hotelu, ki je »izgubil svoj prvotni čar«. V proizvodnem podjetju se lahko kaže v zmanjšanju predlogov zaposlenih in nezmožnosti, da bi s skupinskim delom dosegalo prave rezultate

carefully. It may be inevitable that customers who were attracted to the informal "early days" are actually now high-cost customers in our more efficient, growing set-up. However, the innovation challenge is to keep all of our customers, while finding efficiency and effectiveness as the business grows.

Early customers may have valuable insights to impart about the qualities of our product and service that we have lost in the quest for growth. There is a danger that the very uniqueness at start-up is lost as the business grows. Standardisation of products and business processes may look good on the bottom line, but might actually cause the business to lose its "unique selling proposition". Sometimes this happens when the original owners sell the business and move on, and a larger takeover firm simply does not have the same set of values that brought customers to the company in the first place.

11. Costs are eating a little more each month into profitability through a "slackness" with resources

A complacency with resources can set-in as a company grows. We already discussed this using the example of inventory. However, whereas higher inventory at least has the goal of keeping customer-service levels high, slackness with resources is a kind of organizational laziness. It is vital here to look at profitability, not just sales growth or market share as performance indicators. Profit-centre and cost-centre cost management is a usual aid to innovation here, as is "lean thinking".

12. There is a hint of "sameness", of boredom even, in an apparently exciting and changing environment. A lack of real "buzz"

Finally, the particular aspect of "boredom" mentioned earlier can manifest itself in very particular ways. The lack of "buzz" can result in a lack of proactivity in the business. People do not come forward with new ideas for innovation; there is a lack of creative energy and "buzz", which even shows itself in the body language and communication skills of customer-facing staff. An example of this can be in hotels and catering, where customers feel the place has "lost its original charm". Yet even in a manufacturing company it manifests itself in a reduction in suggestions from employees and a failure of team projects to deliver real results.

Tu je inovacijski izziv vzpodbuda in izboljševanje delovnega okolja. Zelo pomembno je uvajanje novih proizvodov na trg, nove tržne dejavnosti in ponovno vzpostavljanje stika s poslovno vizijo.

5 SKLEP

Vsak izmed navedenih znakov umiranja lahko pripomore k dolgoročnemu neuspehu podjetja. Tudi v času rasti smo našli sledi teh znakov umiranja na področjih grafičnega oblikovanja, proizvodnje, finančnih storitev, umetnosti, prevoznitva in gostinstva.

Tipologija znakov umiranja lahko služi kot koristno orodje za razpravo med člani uprave ali na timskih sestankih – je orodje za inovacijo.

MSVP z visoko rastjo morajo spoznati, da zahteva po inovaciji nastopi že v najzgodnejših fazah njihovega delovanja. Inovacije izdelkov, storitev in poslovne organizacije so pomembni in celo ključni elementi v času zagona in po njem.

Ko smo vprašali udeležence naših delavnic, med letoma 2004/05, zakaj ne ukrepajo ustrezno ob znakih umiranja smo zasledili številna znamenja »propadanja in odlašanja«. Presenetljivo je, da za nedelovanje niso navajali zgolj izgovora, da so prezaposleni z upravljanjem rasti!

5.1 Znaki propadanja in zavlačevanja za podjetja v zagonu in preživeli

1. Nikoli niste zares ustanovili pravega podjetja – pravna oblika ni popolna niti ni vaše zaveze k njej.
2. Poigravate se s spletno stranjo, s katero niste zadovoljni. Spletna stran skorajda nima obiskovalcev in ni nikoli zares dokončana
3. Kar naprej se ponovno izumljate. Ni jasne notranje ali zunanje istovetnosti.
4. Imate »dobro« zasnovo ali ideologijo, toda kupcev niste prepričali v nakup
5. Imate alternativen model trženja, ki se vam zdi smiseln, toda ne deluje kot bi moral.
6. Prevzamejo vas obdobja truda in motivacije, toda ti niso dovolj za uspešen zagon.
7. Niste povsem izdelali poslovnega načrta, ki bi bil uporaben.
8. Kar naprej se poigravate z izdelkom.
9. Oglaševanje je zakrpano, nekonsistentno nenačrtovano ter ne izhaja iz poslovnega načrta.

Here, the innovation challenge is one of motivation and improving the working environment. The launching of new products, new marketing campaigns and reconnecting with the business vision are important.

5 CONCLUSION

Each of the death signs can contribute to a failure over the long term for the enterprise. Even during high growth we have found evidence of these death signs in sectors including graphic design, manufacturing, financial services, the arts, transport and hospitality.

The typology of death signs is in itself a useful tool for discussion at board and team meetings. It is a tool for innovation.

High-growth SMEs need to recognize the need for innovation at the earliest stages of development. Innovation with respect to product, service and business organization is all relevant and even critical during and beyond start-up.

When we asked participants at our workshop during 2004/05 why they were not acting on these death signs (and many were not and were shocked by the list), we identified a number of signs of “decay and delay”, not all of which are concerned with simply being “too busy” with coping with growth.

5.1 Signs of Decay and Delay for Start-ups and Start-up Survivors

1. You have never really properly set up – the legal form is not appropriate, clear nor fully committed to.
2. Tinkering with a website you are not really satisfied with. The website is not getting hits, and is never satisfactorily completed.
3. You keep re-inventing yourself. There is no clear internal or external identity.
4. You have a “fine” concept and ideology but have not persuaded customers to buy.
5. You have an alternative model of marketing that makes sense to you, but is not quite working.
6. You have bursts of effort and motivation but it is not enough so far to effect a successful launch.
7. You have not genuinely developed a business plan that you find authentically useful.
8. You keep tinkering with the product.
9. Advertising is patchy, inconsistent and not planned nor derived from the business plan.

10. Kar naprej napačno usmerjate energijo.
11. Pregarja vas dvom – bo delovalo? Je vredno?
12. Vaša zamisel je preveč zapletena in zahteva preveč razlag in upravičevanja.
13. Izčrpavate se z lastno administracijo.
14. Prisiljeni ste služiti denar za preživetje iz drugih virov, ki pa črpa vašo energijo potrebno za zagon podjetja.

Ta seznam tvori osnovni program inovacije za soočanje z znaki umiranja. V nadaljnjih raziskavah nameravamo raziskati in preveriti te anekdotične ugotovitve in povezati znamenja propada in zavlačevanja s specifičnimi znamenji umiranja, da bi tako lahko zasnovali bolj natančen program inovacije. Vzdolžna raziskava bo potem služila za pregled najbolj uspešnih inovacijskih strategij.

10. You keep engaging in displacement spending and effort.
11. You are plagued by self-doubt. Will it work? Is it worth it?
12. Your concept is too complicated and requires too much justification and explanation.
13. You are burning out doing your own administration.
14. You are stuck having to earn money from other sources to survive, which saps the energy required to really launch.

This list actually forms the basis of an agenda of innovation for dealing with the death signs. In our future research we intend to explore and validate these anecdotal findings and attempt to map the signs of decay and delay onto the specific death signs in order to arrive at a more focused innovation agenda. Longitudinal research will then help to examine the most successful innovation strategies.

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