

DO&IT Seminar Series

Speaker: Karl T. Ulrich
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The Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania

Date: Friday, May 15, 2009

Time: 2-3:30 pm

Location: VMH 1335

Title: Innovation Tournaments

Abstract:

Extremely valuable innovations are usually based on statistically exceptional opportunities. In most settings, organizations use tournaments to find these exceptional opportunities, by which I mean they generate many candidate opportunities and develop and filter them until only the very best remain. Although the basic idea of a tournament is common in industrial practice, very little science has been brought to bear on the problem of generating more, better opportunities and on more accurately evaluating and selecting the exceptional few. In this talk I lay out the beginnings of a science of innovation tournaments, illustrating how the somewhat random process of identifying and selecting opportunities can be managed more deliberately. I also summarize my recent experimental work on opportunity identification, the activity that feeds innovation tournaments.

Bio:

Karl Ulrich is the CIBC Professor of Entrepreneurship and E-Commerce, and Chair of the Operations and Information Management Department at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He also holds an appointment as Professor of Mechanical Engineering. His principal interests are innovation, design, and entrepreneurship. He is the co-founder of the Weiss Tech House and the Penn Integrated Product Design Program, institutions for fostering innovation by students. His work appears in, among other journals, *Management Science*, *Marketing Science*, *California Management Review*, and *Research Policy*. He is a co-author of *Product Design and Development* (McGraw-Hill, 4th Edition, 2008), the leading graduate textbook on product design. He is co-author of *Innovation Tournaments* (www.innovationtournaments.com) to be published by Harvard Business Press in June. The manuscript of his current book, *Design: Creation of Artifacts in Society*, can be downloaded

from www.ulrichbook.org. Professor Ulrich has been a member of development teams for about 50 new products or processes, including medical devices, tools, services, computer peripherals, food products, and sporting goods. As a result of this development work, he has been granted 20 patents. From 1999-2002, while on leave from Wharton, he founded and managed Nova Cruz Products (now Xootr LLC) a manufacturer of high-performance personal transportation products including the Xootr scooter and Swift bicycle. He is also a founder of TerraPass Inc., which the New York Times featured as one of the most noteworthy ideas of 2005. Professor Ulrich holds bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering from MIT.