

THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF INNOVATION: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF  
DISCOURSE, POWER AND IDENTITY AT AN INTERNET COMPANY

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## **ABSTRACT**

**MARK S. HOLT: The Promise and Peril of Innovation: A Critical Analysis of Discourse,  
Power and Identity at an Internet Company  
(Under the direction of Steve May)**

This dissertation examines creativity and innovation as a pervasive management discourse that shapes the production of meaning and identity within contemporary capitalism. While the discourse is often seen as a liberating force in the postindustrial economy, I highlight the ways in which it constructs specific relations of power/knowledge. Through analysis of a wide variety of texts produced by the cultural circuit of capitalism, I describe how the discourse constructs an innovation imperative, which mandates that organizations compete on the battleground of constant creativity and innovation or perish. The discourse circulates at the level of business culture and is taken up by organizations in pursuit of business transformation. In the second part of my analysis, I describe how the discourse shapes the conduct of an Internet company struggling to innovate in a competitive telecommunications industry. I contend that the management discourse of creativity and innovation functions as an “art of government” for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of individuals and organizations to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

*“We’re always saying to our self . . . we have to innovate. We’ve got to come up with that breakthrough.”* – Bill Gates, Chairman of Microsoft Corporation

*“The only sustainable competitive advantage comes from out-innovating the competition. The bottom line is: Innovate or die.”*  
– Tom Peters, Author of *The Circle of Innovation*

From the boardroom to the business press, everyone is talking about creativity and innovation. They are heralded as the keys to growth, prosperity and competitive advantage. In an increasingly competitive world, organizations are exhorted to create and innovate or perish! According to Florida (2002), creativity is now the most important form of human capital in the knowledge economy. It is “the ability to create meaningful new forms” and envision new possibilities. Innovation, on the other hand, is the ability to take new ideas and turn them into marketplace reality (Mauzy & Harriman, 2003; Tucker, 2002). Yet with all of this talk about creativity and innovation, little research has examined the power dimensions of this pervasive discourse. Within the last 30 years, there has been an explosion of academic and management writings about creativity and innovation, driven by a vast network of business schools, management gurus, consulting companies, and the media. This discourse has evolved into a well-defined system of meanings, which is produced, distributed and consumed by the business world as part of an ongoing project of reform. As one

management consultant wrote, innovation has quickly become “the key idea” that is transforming organizational life (Lafley & Charan, 2008).

According to a joint *Businessweek*-Boston Consulting Group 2006 survey on innovation, 72% of senior executives named innovation as one of their top organizational priorities. As McGregor (2006) summarized, “In the 1990s, innovation was about technology and control of quality and cost. Today, it’s about taking corporate organizations built for efficiency and rewiring them for creativity and growth” (p. 64). Creativity and innovation have emerged as a fundamental business paradigm for several reasons. First, in a highly competitive global marketplace, innovation is seen as the way to achieve growth and profitability (Tucker, 2002). To survive, organizations believe they must consistently create new value by developing leading edge products and services. Second, in an age of marketing, companies have embraced the concept of organizational branding and have built their core identities around concepts such as creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Like many business trends, creativity and innovation are presented as the “solution” to the problems of rapid change and increasing competition. In their best-selling book, Lafley and Charan (2008) write: “We live in a world of unprecedented change, increasing global competitiveness, and the very real threat of commoditization. Innovation in this world is the best way to win – arguably the only way to really win” (p. xi). In this text, leaders are depicted as “game-changers” who take bold steps to change the game their organizations are playing through innovation. Likewise, management consultants Mauzy and Harriman (2003) speak euphorically about the many benefits of creative organizations in dealing with the demands of a “high-speed marketplace”:

We contend that the successful companies will have established constant, systematic creativity. They’ll do so to fuel the moment-to-moment innovative responses a high-



speed marketplace demands. They'll do so to maintain imaginative resources that can project operations into a future that will change even faster than the present. They'll do so to develop, in our here-and-gone business environment, the reliably pliable foundations from which breakthrough innovations can be launched.

Companies will strive to become systematically creative because creativity pays. It pays financially and it provides a rich array of other rewards: employee and customer satisfaction, incremental growth, the flexibility to match relentless change, the ability to attract good talent, elevated market interest, and strengthened competitive readiness (p. 4).

According to these authors, creativity “pays” not only in terms of generating organizational performance but also in creating a “rich array of other rewards.”

Indeed, many management writers contend that the rise of human creativity is a liberating force in the global economy. Florida (2002) proclaims that creativity is the driving force of our time, giving rise to a new class of creative professionals who are transforming work and communities. Likewise, Robinson and Schroeder (2004) argue that creativity and the “idea revolution” serve to liberate workers and transform organizations into collaborative, high-performing enterprises. As they state, “Why do we call this movement a revolution? We do so because it liberates people and transforms the way that organizations are run. It changes the nature of the relationship between managers and employees” (p. 2).

While discourses of creativity and innovation are compelling because they promise to increase organizational performance and empower workers, they can also be seen to instantiate new forms of power and control. As Zorn et al. (2000) write, scholars are divided as to whether “these changes make the workplace exciting and empowering (e.g., Peters, 1987) or, instead, lure workers into more embracing systems of control and oppression, leading them to toil longer and harder for reduced rewards and increased insecurity (Boje & Winsor, 1993; Clegg, 1989; Sennett, 1998; V. Smith, 1997)” (p. 523). Alvesson and Willmott (2004) assert that management discourses of innovation allow for some degree of

autonomy and freedom within the workplace, offering opportunities for creative work and “micro-emancipation”; however, they conclude that “the language of liberation is more often used to engineer consent” (p. 442). Given the power of this discourse to shape the culture of work and the productive apparatus of society, it is important to explore it in greater depth.

Traditional research on creativity and innovation has largely focused on maximizing the benefits of organizational innovation. Studies in this area have covered a range of topics from managing the organizational climate for creativity to understanding the diffusion of innovation. For example, Amabile (1996) has written extensively on how to create the right conditions for organizational innovation by managing the “stimulants and obstacles to creativity.” This includes addressing factors such as giving employees freedom and autonomy to perform their jobs, providing a challenging work environment, and minimizing pressures and undue time constraints. In the area of organizational learning, research has focused on the need to reduce “learning disabilities” such as homogeneity and strategic blindness while enhancing information sharing and team learning (Senge et al., 1994; Yeung et al., 1999). A significant body of research also continues to explore the diffusion of innovation, which seeks to explain the spread of new ideas throughout society (Freeman, 1982; Rogers, 2003). As I will discuss in Chapter Two, much of this literature adopts a strongly rationalist and functionalist approach to innovation.

Within the last 30 years, however, critical organization scholars have examined the ways in which management discourses exercise new forms of power and control over employees. Scholars have variously referred to these emerging forms of power as “normative controls” (Kunda, 1992), “unobtrusive controls” (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985), and “disciplinary power” (Foucault, 1979). These forms of power operate not through

repression or coercion, but by the power of discourse to shape the “insides – the hopes, fears and aspirations – of workers” (Deetz, 1995). In particular, scholars have noted the emergence of entrepreneurial discourses and practices designed to elicit the self-actualizing properties of employees. Rose (1999) documents the trend since the 1960s and continuing through the “management of excellence” discourse of the 1980s, highlighting the alignment of political and economic interests in forging a new image of the self-actualizing worker to correspond with the growing demands of capitalist enterprise. This was supported by the application of a whole set of psychological concepts, technologies and assessments for working on the self.

Since then, numerous studies have examined the role of management discourse in producing the disciplined, enterprising professional of late capitalism. (Du Gay, Salaman & Rees, 1996; Holmer-Nadesan & Trethewey, 2000; Knights & Morgan, 1991). For example, Knights and Morgan (1991) examine “corporate strategy” as a managerial discourse that constitutes “a field of knowledge and power which defines what the ‘real problems’ are within organizations and what are the parameters of the ‘real solutions’ to them” (p. 260). As such, corporate strategy discourse constructs a regime of truth in which managers and employees see the world in terms of strategy. Furthermore, the authors argue that this discourse re-constitutes the very subjectivity of the employees as “strategic actors.”

Likewise, du Gay, Salaman and Rees (1996) outline the emergence of an organizational discourse they entitle “the enterprise form,” which emphasizes the need for organizations to reform their business practices in line with a more market-driven economy. This, in turn, requires organizations to transform the conduct of their managers and employees into ‘enterprising’ subjects. To construct the enterprising subject, the authors highlight the use of management competencies as one key “technology of power” for transforming the employee.

Other studies highlight the self-disciplinary practices of women, specifically how they manage their own subjectivities and bodily comportment to conform to organizational discourses of enterprise. For example, Trethewey (1999) and Holmer-Nadesan & Trethewey (2000) analyze how organization's gendered assumptions and women's popular success literature respectively inscribe themselves on the bodies of professional women through employee self-monitoring and regulation in order to fit ideal conceptions of female professionalism and entrepreneurship. While there are elements of resistance in their interview accounts, these studies largely show how women's professional bodies (and identities) are normalized and made docile in the context of organizational power relations.

More recently, scholars have focused on the emergence of a new managerialism in the global economy, which constructs the enterprising subject in new ways. Unlike the old management paradigm based on stability and bureaucratic control, the new managerialism emphasizes adaptability, change and constant creativity toward the marketplace (Ezzamel, Lilley & Willmott, 1993; Thrift, 2005). Thrift (2005) argues that this new managerialism constructs a new version of capitalism, or "soft" capitalism, "signifying this formation's adaptive characteristics and its supposedly caring, sharing ethos" (p. 11). In this new version of capitalism, managers are positioned as "creative, fast subjects" who must engage in constant communication to marshal the talents and resources of the organization to deal with continuous change. Central to this new approach to management is the importance placed on creativity and innovation. Innovation becomes a rallying cry and a style of working that motivates workers to pursue organizational goals with renewed intensity and enthusiasm. Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) assert that discourses of creativity and innovation are part of

a new “spirit” of capitalism, which is designed to build excitement and commitment to the capitalist process.

While this new managerial discourse seemingly provides a more exciting and humane environment for workers, others argue these improvements are illusory. Sennett (1998) has written extensively about the culture of the new capitalism, with its emphasis on the flexibility and disposability of labor, and how it poses significant threats to the security and emotional well-being of workers. Likewise, numerous scholars have stressed the tremendous disadvantages facing workers in today’s global labor market due to the changing social contract between employers and employees. In this new environment, job security is fleeting and employees must constantly upgrade their skills to remain employable (Eisenberg, Goodall & Trethewey, 2010).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research project is to examine creativity and innovation as a pervasive management discourse that shapes the production of meaning and identity within contemporary capitalism. In the first part of my study, I conduct a critical discourse analysis of popular management writings about creativity and innovation, and describe how the discourse constructs specific relations of power/knowledge. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, I argue that creativity/innovation is a large-scale discursive formation that orders and naturalizes the world of work in particular ways, constituting worldviews, organizing practices and social identities. In particular, I describe how the discourse constructs a business imperative, which mandates that organizations compete on the battleground of constant creativity and innovation or perish! I describe how the discourse circulates at the

level of business culture and is taken up by organizations in pursuit of business transformation.

In the second half of my analysis, I examine the ways in which the discourse shapes power relations at the level of an individual technology organization. Using ethnographic, focus group and interview data, I describe the efforts of a leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) located in the United States to transform itself into a more competitive and entrepreneurial organization by taking up the discourse of creativity/innovation, and how the mandate to “innovate or die” shapes organizational life in significant ways. I introduce the concept of governmentality to highlight how the discourse shapes the conduct of the organization “at a distance” by circulating specific images, forms of knowledge, and social technologies (Dean, 1999; Foucault, 1991). Central to my analysis is how innovation has become an “art of government” for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of organizations to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy.

### **Rationale**

This research project is an important area of study for several reasons. First, creativity/innovation is a pervasive management discourse that shapes the contemporary ethos of business. As I highlighted, the discourse is part of a new managerialism that has become hegemonic in the global economy, premised on the values of constant change, adaptability and creativity toward the marketplace. The discourse shapes the ideology of managers and directs the conduct of organizations in significant ways. However, while innovation is an important element of management thought, few studies have examined the broad rhetorical sweep of the discourse – its knowledge claims, logics and truth effects.

Critical scholars have addressed creativity and innovation as a series of management programs such as Business Process Reengineering and Total Quality Management (Knights & McCabe, 2003), as a characteristic of “enterprise” culture (Du Gay, 1996) and as one aspect of managerialism (Deetz, 1992), but little research has analyzed the content and form of the discourse itself and how it shapes the contemporary culture of business. This project will examine the specific content and form of the innovation discourse and describe how it constructs specific relations of power/knowledge that govern organizational life in innumerable ways.

Second, the nature of power relationships has changed significantly over the last 20 years, especially within knowledge-intensive organizations and the new economy. Coercion and direct supervisory control are no longer viable strategies for managing the motivations and commitments of professionals. Instead, organizations rely on a variety of “soft” controls to manage employees. In the context of late capitalism, identity has become a key modality of control, which both produces and disciplines workers. Alvesson and Willmott (2004) suggest this occurs through a variety of means, including corporate image, cultural control, normalization and subjection. This study will contribute to the growing body of research on identity regulation in the workplace by examining how the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes the individual and collective identities of workers as enterprising subjects. Furthermore, I highlight how identity regulation in the workplace is increasingly accomplished through a regime of practices, including the power of corporate and employment branding.

Third, while many studies of organizational communication focus on the organization as the key site of production, this project attempts to examine how larger cultural discourses

shape power relationships at the level of the individual organization. I introduce the concept of governmentality to explain how the writings of the cultural circuit of capitalism function to stimulate and regulate the productive apparatus of society “at a distance” by circulating images, forms of knowledge and social technologies. In the case of the Internet company, I describe how the innovation imperative became a dominant rationality that shaped the motivations and ambitions of the organization and, in turn, how executives drew upon this discourse to manage the enterprising capacities of their workforce. This project, then, highlights how organizations are both *governed by* and *governors of* the discourse.

Fourth, this project will provide important insights into the culture of work at a high-tech company. Many important works have contributed to our understanding of power and control in the world of technology organizations. For example, Kunda (1992) provides a critical analysis of the rites and rituals of culture at an engineering division of a large American high-tech corporation. He highlights how management efforts to promote a culture of informality and empowerment mask a more subtle and pervasive form of normative control, which attempts to shape the hearts and minds of employees. Many other works have addressed the power dimensions of high-tech work as well (Jorgensen, 2002; Kidder, 1981). This project will contribute to this growing body of literature by highlighting how the contemporary emphasis on innovation shapes the pressures and ambitions of organizations, and how innovation has become a new modality of control that shapes the culture of work in contemporary capitalism.

Finally, while most studies of business creativity and innovation adopt a functionalist perspective, this study attempts to destabilize the notion of innovation as an unquestioned “good.” By placing creativity and innovation within the larger context of a new



management ideology that shapes contemporary business practice, I highlight the power dimensions of the discourse and how it creates new forms of work and subjectivity that are seemingly more creative and humane yet also more fragmented, stressful and insecure.

### **Research Questions**

This project will address a number of important research questions about creativity/innovation and how it shapes the world of work. I have grouped these questions into three key themes, organized along the dimensions of discourse, power and identity.

Discourse: What is the content and form of the creativity/innovation discourse? As I have described, creativity and innovation is a pervasive management discourse in the global economy. It shapes the ideology of managers and constructs the world of work in distinct ways. Therefore, this project will address the content and form of the creativity/innovation discourse: What is the broad rhetorical sweep of the innovation discourse? What are its knowledge claims, logics and truth effects? Who are the key purveyors of the discourse, and how does it circulate at the level of business culture? And most importantly, how does the discourse construct specific relations of power/knowledge?

Power: How does the discourse operate as a form of power to manage the conduct of organizations and their members? While the discourse of creativity/innovation is a dominant ideology within the business world, it also operates through specific practices. Foucault (1983) defines the concept of governmentality broadly as the “conduct of conduct,” which involves systematic efforts to manage the behavior of populations. In this dissertation, I will examine how the discourse of innovation functions to govern organizational life in strategic ways through the use of specific discourses, practices and technologies. Furthermore, Rose

(1999) argues that increasingly the media offers representations of “styles of existence” by which individuals come to understand and act upon themselves. Therefore, I will examine how the discourse of creativity/innovation operates as a form of power through a variety of mechanisms: what forms of knowledge are deployed by the discourse? How do media images shape the identities and aspirations of organizational members? And, more generally, what are the strategies, practices and technologies used to manage a knowledge-based workforce?

Identity: How does the discourse shape the identity practices of organizations and regulate the subjectivity of workers? Organizational identity and identity management are important areas of research within organizational communication and organization studies. As Cheney (1991) writes, “Organizations are in the business of identity management; their controlling members must be concerned about how to (re)present the organization as a whole and how to connect the individual identities of many members to that embracing collective identity” (p. 14). Increasingly, organizations attempt to manage the commitments and identifications of employees through the production of powerful forms of individual and collective identity. In addition, I highlight how corporate branding has become a pervasive technology for managing the subjectivities of organization members. Therefore, in this dissertation, I will address how the discourse of creativity/innovation shapes the identity practices of organizations: How does the innovation imperative shape organizational identity? How does branding function as a technology of control? How does corporate identity regulate employee subjectivities while also providing the resources for resistance? And more broadly, what are the dynamics and tensions of organizational identity at a high-tech company?

In the remainder of this dissertation, I organize my research into five main chapters. In Chapter 2, I conduct a review of literature in the area of innovation and management discourse. As I will describe, economic factors alone do not fully account for the emergence of innovation as a celebrated organizational practice. I describe how innovation must also be understood as a cultural practice – an active process of sense-making – in which a vast network of management gurus, consultants, business schools and media outlets shapes the production of meaning. Furthermore, I argue that creativity and innovation operates as a central discourse within a new managerialism, which functions to stimulate and regulate the enterprising capacities of workers. I then highlight the value of adopting a Foucauldian approach to management discourse in order to understand how innovation functions as a form of power in organizations, which shapes organizational cultures and work-based identities.

In Chapter 3, I describe my research design and methodology for analyzing the discourse of creativity and innovation. As I explain, my research design examines the interplay between management discourse (or discursive formation) and everyday organizing practices. Toward this end, I incorporate two distinct methodologies for analyzing how the discourse of creativity/innovation shapes organizing practices: Foucauldian discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork. Foucauldian discourse analysis is used to conduct a critical analysis of popular management writings about creativity and innovation. Ethnographic fieldwork is used to observe and document the social interactions of work life at an Internet technology company.

In Chapter 4, I conduct a critical discourse analysis of popular management writings about creativity and innovation, examining key texts from the cultural circuit of capitalism.

The cultural circuit of capitalism is the main group of stakeholders responsible for a vast amount of knowledge and ideas generated about the economy, especially as it relates to creativity and innovation. This group is comprised of management gurus, consulting companies, business schools and the media. In my analysis, I highlight how the cultural circuit of capitalism constructs a dominant narrative of innovation as both promise and peril, which shapes the worldview, organizing practices and identities of organizations.

In Chapter 5, I examine the ways in which the discourse of creativity/innovation is taken up by an Internet technology company struggling to survive in a highly competitive telecommunications industry. Drawing upon the concept of governmentality, I describe how the discourse functions as an “art of government” for shaping the conduct of the organization “at a distance” and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of its workforce.

And lastly, in Chapter 6, I discuss my research findings and highlight directions for future research. I begin with the overall thesis of this research that the discourse of innovation both *reflects and constructs the world of work*. This leads to a discussion of a number of key findings and conclusions about this research. I conclude by highlighting future directions for research related to innovation and management discourse.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In this chapter, I conduct a review of literature in the area of innovation and management discourse. I begin by highlighting how innovation has become a pervasive discourse in the global economy driven by fundamental changes in the mode of production. As scholars contend, Western economies have shifted toward a new form of work and organization centering on the production and transformation of knowledge as a source of capital. Integral to this new form of work is the increased importance placed on creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Yet, as I will describe, economic factors alone do not fully account for the emergence of innovation as a celebrated organizational practice. I describe how innovation must also be understood as a cultural practice – an active process of sense-making – in which a vast network of management gurus, consultants, business schools and media outlets shapes the production of meaning. While many scholars have examined the persuasive power of this industry, few studies have examined the broad rhetorical sweep of the innovation discourse and how it constructs specific relations of power and knowledge. Central to my argument is that creativity and innovation is a powerful managerial discourse within the contemporary “spirit” of capitalism, which functions to stimulate and regulate the entrepreneurial capacities of workers to meet the demands of a highly competitive global economy.

## **Creativity/Innovation and the Economy**

According to scholars, Western economies have moved toward a qualitatively different mode of economic and social organization than the one associated with modern industrialism (Hancock, 2001). Driven by advances in electronic technologies and globalization processes, this new era has been variously referred to as post-Fordism, post-industrialism, and the postmodern condition. In the 1970s, Bell (1973) wrote presciently about the emergence of an “information age” in which “theoretical knowledge” would become the primary commodity of exchange, giving rise to service industries and a new professional and technical middle class. In similar fashion, Drucker (1993) foresaw the importance of a new role of “knowledge workers” in the emerging economy, which relied on human capital as its main asset. More recently, authors such as Friedman (2007) and Florida (2002, 2005) argue that today’s economy can best be described as an “era of creativity.” Human creativity has become the key factor of production, giving rise to technological innovation and creative output in many areas of economic and social life.

Along with the importance of information, authors also describe how processes of globalization are transforming economic practices. Globalization, in its broadest conception, is “the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary life” (Held, et al., 1999, p.1). Stohl (2005) identifies six dynamic and interdependent processes that are embedded in most globalization theories. These include: 1) the dramatic increase in economic interdependence worldwide, 2) the intensification and deepening of material, political, and cultural exchanges, 3) the global and rapid diffusion of ideas and knowledge enabled through new information technologies, 4) the compression of time and space, 5) the disembedding of events and institutions, which permits new

realignments and restructuring of social interaction across time and space, and 6) increases in global consciousness through processes of reflexivity (p. 247). These processes are profoundly affecting the circumstances of everyday life, especially the organization of work.

Du Gay (2000) contends that globalization has serious implications for the conduct of organizations. As he states,

Globalization . . . creates an environment of massive uncertainty. In such an environment, only those organizations that can ‘stay close to the customer’ – reflexively reconstituting their conduct to become ever more enterprising and innovative – will survive and prosper. In other words, the successful management of globalization and its effects requires constant ‘creativity’ and the continuous construction and reconstruction of organizational forms that rest less and less upon ‘mechanistic,’ bureaucratic practices and increasingly upon the development of more flexible, reflexive, and hence ‘entrepreneurial’ organizational forms and modes of conduct (p. 68).

Thus, globalization necessitates that organizations shift from traditional bureaucratic mechanisms of control to flatter, flexible, and more entrepreneurial forms of organization. For example, Harvey (1989) describes the shift from the rigid practices of Fordism to the flexible modes of production and social structure characterized by a post-Fordist economic organization. While Fordism relied upon strong, centralized power controls, with rigid hierarchies and a clear division of labor, post-Fordism encourages flexibility and innovation through the decentralization of power. Leadership is much more distributed, and individuals are encouraged to embrace “fluidity, change and the creative use of chaos” (Mulgan, 1989, p. 348).

### **Creativity/Innovation and Cultural Context**

While these scholars highlight fundamental changes in the mode of production as explanation for the importance of creativity/innovation in the global economy, other scholars

contend that economic factors alone do not fully account for the widespread adoption of innovation as a business “imperative.” These authors argue that innovation must be understood not simply as economic practice, but as part of a larger cultural context of meaning construction. For example, McCabe (2002) contends that we must avoid the twin poles of economic determinism on one hand, and volunteerism on the other. Economic determinism attributes innovation efforts to external forces or stimuli such as economic cycles or new technologies, and assumes that managers have little influence or space of action to make decisions about innovation. On the other hand, he also cautions against the perspective of volunteerism, which views innovation as an inherent part of managerial efforts to control labor. Following the work of Marx, these accounts represent managers as the “agents of capital seeking to extract surplus value” (McCabe, quoting Marglin, 1974, p. 509). As a result, this perspective assumes that managers exercise little human agency and reproduce an “ideology of control” as members of a specific class category. Alternatively, McCabe argues that “Instead what is required is an understanding of innovation as part of a far more complex social process: interrelated to the way in which individuals interpret, act and ascribe meaning to the world” (p. 509). He advocates analyses that focus on how managerial efforts to implement innovation are embedded within dynamic social contexts that mediate the relationship between economy and organization. In other words, he argues for a cultural approach to innovation studies. As he writes,

Culture, as it is used here, is a site wherein the production and reproduction of meaning occurs through subjective interpretations in a context of political machinations, power relations and inequality. It is the socially constituted mask of normalcy that often conceals antagonism, disorder, resistance and oppression. Thus, culture is seen as the very fabric of organizational life and as such innovations are understood as arising through culture to sustain, reproduce, modify and even transform it (p. 511).



From this perspective, innovation is neither a product of economic determinism nor a generalized ideology of control on the part of management. Instead, innovation is understood as an interpretive practice shaped by socio-cultural context.

### **Theoretical Approaches to Organizational Innovation**

Now that I have highlighted the importance of a cultural approach to innovation, I want to provide a brief review of existing literature on the subject of management innovation. Knights and McCabe (2003) provide a valuable summary and critique of different theoretical approaches to the study of organizational innovation. In their analysis, they highlight three dominant research orientations: rational managerialist, processual and critical control. Let me describe each of these approaches briefly, along with their contributions and limitations.

#### **Rational managerialist approach**

The rational managerialist approach assumes that managers are rational actors who make decisions based on the cost-benefit potential of any particular innovation. In this approach, there is a strong assumption of economic rationality. Studies that exemplify this approach include a large body of research on technology and diffusion of innovation (Freeman, 2008; Rogers, 2003). While this approach may adequately explain the adoption of straightforward technologies that enhance business performance, it does not effectively explain why more dubious or ambiguous management practices are taken up by organizations, such as Stephen Covey's (1989) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Furthermore, it assumes that organizational change efforts follow a linear progression toward increasing levels of efficiency and control.

More recently, management scholars have broadened their analyses to examine the political dimensions of organizational life in order to account for the selection of certain innovations as opposed to others. These studies focus on how management knowledge is the product of an active management-fashion-setting industry. According to Abrahamson (1996), management fashion setters are “organizations and individuals who dedicate themselves to producing and disseminating management knowledge” (p. 256).

Many studies in this area focus on the ability of management gurus and consultants to shape the demand for management knowledge through the power of their rhetoric and marketing activities. For example, Jackson (2001) provides a detailed rhetorical analysis of three individual management fashions that have gained widespread popularity in recent years: Michael Hammer and James Champy’s reengineering movement, Stephen Covey’s effectiveness movement, and Peter Senge’s learning organization. Using the fantasy theme method of rhetorical criticism, Jackson describes the content, style and processes by which each of these management gurus creates a large following of supporters who are attracted to their vision of change. Most importantly, he critically examines the specific rhetorical strategies and marketing techniques that contributed to their power and success. In contrast to the purely rational approach, the management fashions research provides a more complex analysis of the persuasive methods involved in the emergence of management fashions. Yet, while this approach offers valuable insights into the rhetorical ability of gurus and consultants to shape management thinking, it is limited in its ability to provide detailed descriptions of organizational life or to explain how managers reproduce or resist these practices.

## **Processual approach**

A second theoretical perspective is the processual approach. This approach differs from the rationalistic perspective by adopting a much less deterministic and linear approach to the study of innovation. First introduced by Mintzberg and Pettigrew in the 1980s, these studies attempt to understand the micro-politics of organizational life and how meaning is negotiated among competing parties and subgroups. This approach draws on a diverse range of theories to highlight the plurality of interests within organizations. For example, drawing upon the work of Weber and Mead, Pettigrew (1973, 1985) describes the conflictual process by which various organizational actors generate demands and mobilize support for decisions and how this leads to unpredictable outcomes. Another example is Fairhurst's (1993) analysis of the micro-politics of implementing a TQM vision and the contradictions that arise between management rhetoric and the actual behavior of the organization. In these examples, politics is seen as a fundamental process that mediates conflicting interests. However, while the processual approach is more sensitive to the diverse and negotiated order of organizational life, it still adopts a limited perspective on power. As Knights and McCabe (2003) state, "The processual approach lacks a political awareness of how organizational practices are a reflection of struggles to create and sustain identities and competition for power and status. These political dimensions of organization are not simply 'contingencies' to be considered and planned for in advance; rather, they are inescapable dynamics of the context, which cannot be anticipated or predicted, nor explained away after the event" (p. 60).

## **Critical control approach**

The final theoretical approach is the critical control perspective. In stark contrast to the rationalist perspective, the critical control approach views organizations as sites of power and control. This approach draws on Marxist and labor process theory to highlight systemic inequalities in the workplace due to the fundamental antagonism between capital and labor (Braverman, 1974). Innovation efforts are seen as part of a general “ideology of control” on the part of management to intensify the work process in an effort to extract surplus value (Thompson & Warhurst, 1998; Willmott, 1993). For example, Willmott (1993) provides a critique of the corporate culture literature by arguing that corporate culture programs are designed to elicit the self-managing properties of employees and, thus, operate according to a general philosophy of control. The strength of this research orientation is that it places a central focus on the role of power and inequality in organizational life. However, while some studies highlight the complex interactions and struggles that characterize organizational power relationships (Burowoy, 1979), others can be seen to adopt a strongly deterministic orientation to the workplace, in which managers and employees exercise very little agency or space of action.

Given the limitations of each of these theoretical approaches, Knights and McCabe (2003) argue that what is needed is a more constitutive view of organizational power, focusing on the ways in which discourse shapes subjectivity in the workplace but also provides the resources for resistance. Drawing on the work of Foucault, they advocate a conception of power that is coextensive with meaning and the production of knowledge. In the following section, I highlight the advantages of adopting a Foucauldian approach to the study of management knowledge.

## **A Foucauldian Approach to Management Knowledge**

Foucault has contributed substantially to contemporary understandings of modern power by highlighting the central role of discourse in constituting systems of domination. Central to Foucault's argument is the interrelationship between power and knowledge, which highlights the inextricable link between the production of knowledge and the exercise of power. As Foucault (1980) states, "'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth" (p. 133). Employing a method of historical analysis called genealogy, Foucault emphasizes the discontinuities and struggles inherent in knowledge production and how what is taken to be "true" is the result of "discursive regimes" that become ascendant at specific historical moments.

A Foucauldian perspective is thought to have several distinct advantages for conducting organization studies. First, Foucault's power-knowledge construct provides valuable insight into the new and emerging forms of control within organizations. As Deetz (1998) states, "Foucault's conceptions of 'disciplinary power' and 'social technologies of control' have been very important in understanding new forms of domination arising in a variety of social institutions" (p. 152). These new forms of power are embedded in the discourses and practices of everyday organizational life and exert control through many subtle mechanisms of culture. However, I also want to emphasize that Foucault's conception of power is not merely "repressive" of organizational subjects but rather "productive" of knowledge and subjectivity in the workplace. As Mumby (1992) explains, "Foucault insists that power is not merely a constraint on knowledge; rather, power incites knowledge and creates its very possibility" (p. 90). A central part of this analysis will focus on how

discourse works through its positivity to construct organizational subjects who exercise varying degrees of self-management.

Second, a focus on the “genealogy” of discursive formations has highlighted the historical construction of power/knowledge regimes. This form of critique has served to undermine the seemingly “natural” and “fixed” position of dominant managerial ideologies in the workplace.

Third, a Foucauldian perspective presents a relational form of subjectivity which, rather than attributing some essential, immutable core of “self” to individuals, advances a linguistic conception of identity—one that is often fragmented, multiplicitous and contradictory. In this way, a discursive approach offers a constitutive model of identity whereby the individual continuously constructs and re-constructs his/her identity through social interaction. Thus, a Foucauldian perspective helps to explain how power can be exercised through the shaping of individual and collective identities.

Last, a discursive approach also suggests possibilities for resistance. As Foucault emphasized, even though individuals are constantly situated in webs of disciplinary power, there always exists the possibility for struggle and re-definition of the self due to the instability of social relationships (as cited in Townley, 1994).

In summary, a growing number of scholars have adopted a Foucauldian perspective in their analyses of contemporary organizational practices (e.g., Holmer Nadesan, 1997; Knights and Morgan, 1991; Townley, 1994; Trethewey, 1999). Using the contributions of Foucault, researchers have been able to identify new and emerging forms of power in organizational contexts and how these forms of power operate at the level of knowledge production and discourse.

## **Innovation and Management Ideology**

Now that I've highlighted the advantages of a Foucauldian approach to management innovation, I want to describe how creativity and innovation functions as a form of power/knowledge in contemporary practice. In order to do so, I will situate creativity and innovation within the larger context of a new managerialism that has become hegemonic within the business world, premised on the values of change, adaptability and creativity. Furthermore, I highlight how this new managerialist discourse constructs a new "spirit" of capitalism, which is designed to stimulate the enterprising capacities of workers and build commitment to the capitalist process.

Since the rise of industrialization, scholars have noted the emergence of a dominant ideology that governs management thought. According to Deetz (1993), managerialism is a "systemic logic, a set of routine practices, and an ideology" that has become pervasive in modern society (p. 222). It does not refer to a particular group of people, but to a dominant discourse that shapes management thought. In its traditional conception, managerialism focuses on control as a means of securing identity. Its primary mode of reasoning is power and money. However, within the last 30 years, scholars have identified the emergence of a new managerialism within business culture, shaped by the writings of the cultural circuit of capitalism (Thrift, 2005). This new managerialism (or new wave management) is predicated not on stability and bureaucratic control but on change, adaptability and creativity toward the marketplace. As Ezzamel, Lilley and Willmott (1993) write, "During the 1980s a new wave of management thinking developed which questioned much of the received wisdom ... about how to organize and manage companies. In particular, the new ideas challenged the value of

bureaucratic structures and organizational controls.... What businesses need today, according to proponents of the new wave, are leaner, more creative and adaptive forms of organization. These have to be based on the commitment of all employees to shared values” (p. 99).

While the old management philosophy emphasized hierarchy and control, the new management philosophy emphasizes commitment to shared values, a participative approach to problem solving, and teamwork as a way to deal with the complexity of global business. Most importantly, it encourages managers to organize for continuous change (Zorn, Page & Cheney, 2000) and innovation (Thrift, 2005). As Zorn et al. write, “The new managerialist discourse embodies a powerful bias toward change now operating in boardrooms and on shop floors.... Like the organizational mantras of efficiency, quality, and customer service, change has now come to the forefront of popular managerial thought as a slogan that prevents debate and its own examination” (p. 517). While change is a critical feature of the new managerialism, it is also premised on the importance of constant creativity and innovation. As Thrift (2005) states, “A good portion of these management theories were directly or indirectly concerned with creativity and innovation, and one way to look at the knowledge revolution inspired by the cultural circuit of capital is as the routinization of innovation . . .” (pp. 6-7).

As many scholars have noted, the new managerialist discourse is part of larger transformations in the global economy within the last 40 years, giving rise to a new form of “soft” capitalism. Soft capitalism is based on the philosophy that economic success lies with “*soft*” characteristics rather than straightforward technological or cost advantages” (Heelas, quoting Ray and Sayer, 2002, p. 81). These “soft” characteristics include “culture,



knowledge and creativity”; “identity”; “values, beliefs and assumptions”; and “the psychological realm of life” (Heelas, 2002, p. 82). More broadly, Thrift (2005) contends that “soft” capitalism refers to the “formation’s adaptive characteristics and its supposedly caring, sharing ethos” (p. 11). In this view, the world is characterized by increasing ambiguity, complexity and change and, therefore, requires that business managers adopt more flexible and entrepreneurial forms of work as well as embrace principles of nimbleness, adaptation and creativity toward the marketplace.

According to Thrift, the chief architect of this new version of capitalism is the cultural circuit of capitalism. The cultural circuit of capitalism is the discursive apparatus responsible for producing the vast amount of knowledge and beliefs about the economy, especially as it relates to change and innovation. The cultural circuit is comprised of four key stakeholder groups: business schools, management consultants, management gurus and the media. The first three groups are the main producers of the new managerialist discourse while the last group, the media, is responsible for its broad distribution and circulation within the business world. As Thrift documents, these stakeholder groups have forged substantial ties and levels of collaboration within the last forty years, resulting in a powerful formation.

The new managerialist discourse can be seen not only as a way to reform business practice, but also as a way to manage the motivations and commitments of labor. Heelas (2002) argues that soft capitalism is a way of infusing work with meaning and significance – “bringing life back to work.” He states:

Soft capitalism involves narratives, more specific discourses, and practices to do with enhancing commitment and motivation; identifying and unblocking ‘barriers’ to success; seeking identity (what it is to become/be a good manager or telephone call centre operative, for example); working as a team or as a company; exercising responsibility or initiative; engaging in emotion work . . . . (p. 82)

Thrift (2005) argues that the new discourse requires managers to “re-enchant” the world, to “become a kind of charismatic itinerant, a cultural ‘diplomat’ (Hofstede, 1991), constantly imbuing the business organization’s values and goals, constantly on a mission to explain and motivate an increasingly multinational and multicultural workforce in an increasingly global firm” (p.43). From these analyses, we begin to see the ways in which soft capitalism and the new managerialist discourse construct a new version of capitalism premised on the values of creativity, adaptability and continuous change, which is designed to foster renewed commitment and enthusiasm for work.

In slightly different terms, Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) argue that the new managerialist discourse is part of the broader ideological system of a “new spirit of capitalism,” which is a key concept re-worked from Weberian sociology. The “spirit of capitalism” is the ideology that justifies people’s commitment to capitalism, and which renders this commitment attractive. According to the authors, the spirit of capitalism has undergone a number of historical changes since the late nineteenth century, which includes at least three periods. The third “spirit” emerged during the 1980s, giving rise to specific forms of organization within the capital accumulation process such as network firms, Internet and biotech companies, and global finance. Within the third spirit of capitalism, the authors highlight the prominence of discourses emphasizing creativity, innovation and permanent change.

In order to successfully build commitment to the capitalist process, Boltanski and Chiapello argue that the spirit of capitalism must respond to three key questions: what is stimulating about it, how does it provide security, how does it assure justice? Stimulation refers to what is exciting about capitalism, and how it can generate enthusiasm. This

dimension typically highlights the ways in which capitalism offers “liberation” to individuals and enables them to grow as persons. The second question emphasizes the forms of security that are offered to those involved, for themselves and their families. And the last question, justice, refers to notions of fairness and equity and how capitalism is coherent with a sense of the common good. Boltanski and Chiapello explain that the first dimension, stimulation, is most prominent in management discourse, whereas the others are relatively underdeveloped. However, they predict that as the element of stimulation diminishes and people begin to see the limits of the new order in terms of security and justice, the spirit of capitalism must strengthen these dimensions to stand up to critique. This is an important insight, which I will take up in later chapters.

For now, it is important to recognize that much of what is exciting about the contemporary spirit of capitalism is the promise of stimulation that it offers in terms of creativity, innovation and change. The discourse constructs a compelling vision of work in the new capitalism in which individuals are super-empowered to use their talents, compete in the global marketplace and pursue their dreams. While the discourse takes on different forms depending on its articulation within various contexts, in general it projects idealized images, narratives and knowledge claims about the promise of work in the new capitalism.

### **Discursive Formations and Governmentality**

In analyzing creativity and innovation as a managerial discourse, I will draw upon two key theories from the work of Foucault: discursive formations and governmentality. According to Foucault, a discursive formation is a collection of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” – a “system of formation” – and “the relation that is

established between them . . . by discursive practice” (as quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, pp. 62-63). Fairhurst & Putnam (2004) elaborate further by specifying discursive formations as “general and enduring systems for the formation and articulation of ideas in a historically situated time” (p. 8). As systems of formation, discursive formations erect regimes of truth by constituting “objects” and “subjects” of knowledge. “Objects” of knowledge are the constructs and entities that comprise a discipline or social field and become the targets of investigation and elaboration by its adherents. For example, in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) describes the dramatic rise of prisons in the nineteenth century under the guise of humanitarian reform and how it created a whole new system of legal codes, institutions, disciplines and social categories for administering state power.

In delineating a social field, discursive formations also constitute “subjects” of knowledge by discursively positioning individuals in specific ways (such as “delinquents” and “criminals”) and tying them to constructions of the self through conscience. The power of discursive formations comes from their ability to construct dominant worldviews that make it difficult to think beyond them. Foucault (1982) makes this point well when he states: “One cannot speak of anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough for us to open our eyes, to pay attention, to be aware, for new objects suddenly to light up and emerge out of the ground” (p. 44). In this dissertation, I will examine creativity and innovation as a discursive formation, which is part of the larger ideology of the new managerialism.

## Governmentality

In addition to the theory of discursive formations, I also draw upon Foucault's theory of governmentality. According to Foucault (1980), government is a form of power concerned with the "conduct of conduct" – that is, "to govern . . . is to structure the possible field of actions of others" (p. 221). In his famous lecture on "Governmentality," Foucault (1991) describes the emergence of an "art of government" beginning in the sixteenth century in which political rulers introduced questions of economy – that is, "the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family" – into management of the state. This complex form of power, he writes, "has as its target *population*, as its principal form of knowledge *political economy*" (p. 102).

Since the publication of this work, scholars have advanced conceptions of government in significant ways. In particular, Dean (1999) provides a useful definition of government in contemporary practice. He writes:

Government is any more or less calculated and rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects and outcomes. (p. 11)

In this definition, government involves attempts to rationally shape or direct human conduct by employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, which are enacted by a multiplicity of authorities. The term "rational" emphasizes that government involves distinct ways of thinking and includes clear, systematic efforts to manage conduct. Above all, government is conceptualized as an "art" – an activity that involves "craft, imagination,

shrewd fashioning, the use of tacit skills and practical know-how, the employment of intuition and so on” (p. 18).

According to Dean, government can be conceptualized along three dimensions – truth, power and identity. These correspond to the episteme, techné and ethos of government (p. 18). The first dimension, truth, highlights how government involves practices for the production of knowledge and expertise. Knowledge practices govern subjects by constructing systems of meaning that define what is “true,” “correct” and “ethical.” They operate through the circulation of specific vocabularies, practices and norms that shape behavior. In this way, knowledge practices construct a “regime of truth” by which populations come to understand themselves and the world around them. The second dimension, power, emphasizes the technical aspect of government. Government employs particular strategies, programs, mechanisms and social technologies that direct the behavior of individuals and populations. Strategies of government operate through “our organized ways of doing things” to shape human conduct toward specific ends. And the third dimension, identity, recognizes that government establishes particular identities and forms of subjectivity for individuals and collectives. Through its knowledge practices and techniques, government fosters, promotes and elicits certain qualities, capacities and dispositions to those who are governed. Most importantly, government works through the agency and freedom of individuals to produce self-actualizing subjectivities. As Rose (1999) writes, “[Government] entails a twin process of autonomization and responsabilization – opening free space for the choices of individual actors whilst enwrapping these autonomized individuals within new forms of control” (p. xxiii). In summary, then, government examines the relationship between specific forms of truth by which populations come to understand themselves and the

forms of governing practices employed to shape their conduct. At the intersection of these two dimensions is the production of new forms of human subjectivity and identity.

Many studies have employed Foucault's notion of governmentality to explain how power is exercised "at a distance" through various techniques and technologies of control. Perhaps the most influential work is Du Gay's analysis of "excellence" discourse in the retail industry in the UK. According to du Gay (1996), "excellence" can be seen as the latest discourse of work reform in a long history of attempts to transform workers' subjective experience of the employment relationship. As he states:

...the government of economic life in the twentieth century has entailed a range of attempts to shape and regulate the relations that individuals have with society's productive apparatus. From 'scientific management' through 'human relations' up to and including the contemporary programmes of 'excellence', the activities of individuals as workers have become 'an object of knowledge and the target of expertise, and a complex web of relays has been formed through which the economic endeavours of politicians and businessmen have been translated into personal capacities and aspirations of subjects' (Miller and Rose, 1990: 19). In other words, the identity of the 'worker' has been differentially constituted in the changing practices of governing economic life" (p. 55).

He goes on to explore how the management discourse of 'excellence' provides the means by which the political objectives of neo-liberal government in the UK are accomplished. What these projects have in common, he argues, is a concern for transforming work and everyday life according to the principles of the free market, or what has come to be referred to as enterprise culture. According to various scholars, enterprise culture refers to both the primacy given to commercial enterprises in contemporary society as well as a set of enterprising qualities to be cultivated in its members, such as autonomy, energy, initiative, self-reliance, creativity and personal responsibility (During, 2005). Central to his argument is that the discourse of 'excellence' involves a cultural reconstruction of identity in the workplace, which involves the production of entrepreneurial organizational cultures and

work-based identities. As a management discourse, “excellence” requires a shift from “reactive to proactive postures” and from “bureaucratic to entrepreneurial styles of management” (Wood, 1989, p. 387). As Du Gay describes, “This ‘enterprising self’ is a calculating self; a self that ‘calculates about itself, and that works upon itself in order to better itself’” (quoting Rose, 1987, pp. 7-8). While research on enterprise culture has largely emerged as a UK issue in response to Thatcherism, scholars have noted how enterprise is a broader discourse and set of practices that is shaping economic life more widely (Sturdy & Wright, 2008). What the discourses of “excellence” and “innovation” have in common is that both can be seen as part of new developments in management thought within the last 40 years, which strive to govern economic and organizational life in a more entrepreneurial fashion.

In this dissertation, I will focus on how the discourse of creativity/innovation functions as a form of governmentality by activating the enterprising properties of organizations “at a distance” through the circulation of the innovation imperative and its regimes of practices. Furthermore, I will emphasize how the discourse shapes the self-actualizing properties of organizational members through the production and regulation of organizational identity. Given the importance of this concept in this study, let me now discuss organizational identity in greater detail.

### **Organizational Identity**

The concept of “organizational identity” receives a lot of attention in both popular and academic discourse, yet there is significant debate about what it actually means. Popular conceptions often associate “organizational identity” with the public image espoused by



organizational leaders and spokespeople and represented in the names, logos and insignias of corporate branding. On the other hand, academic discussions cover a range of theoretical perspectives from realist arguments (e.g., organizations are concrete entities with identities, just like people) to social constructionist (e.g., organizations are sets of collective action that produce narratives) (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994). Given the diversity of meanings associated with the concept of organizational identity, it is important to define its various uses within the literature and how scholars have approached the subject.

Traditionally, research on corporate and organizational identity has been conducted within separate disciplinary tracks and has concentrated on two different sets of literature (Schultz, et al., 2000). The corporate identity literature has focused on how brand identity creates customer value by promoting an organization's products and services. This literature has highlighted the role of strategy and marketing in communicating identity to an external stakeholder group. In contrast, organizational identity has traditionally focused on the internal culture of an organization by highlighting the experience of organizational members. More recently, scholars have attempted to promote greater interdisciplinary study by highlighting common concerns across the organizational identity literature.

Goia, Shultz and Corley (2000) identify three areas of research within the organizational identity literature: 1) concerns with the identity of individuals within organizations, 2) concerns with individuals' identification with organizations, and 3) concerns with the identity of organizations. Each of these areas of concern – “identity within,” “identification with” and “identity of” – represents an important domain of research. Although there is significant overlap between these categories, I will use this three-fold schema to organize the literature.

### **Studies of Individual Identity Within Organizations**

The first area is individual identity within organizations. This area relates to the concern for how individuals construct social selves by adopting different organizational roles or narrative identities. Analytical focus is placed on the processes of identity construction and maintenance, or identity work (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004; Collinson, 2003). Research has focused on female engineers (Jorgensen, 2002), knowledge-intensive workers (Alvesson, 2001; Deetz, 1998), managers (Knights & Willmott, 1989; Svenningsson & Alvesson, 2003), professional women (Holmer-Nadesan & Trethewey, 2000; Trethewey, 1999), “enterprising subjects” (Du Gay, 1996; Du Gay, et al., 1996), personality-testing (Holmer-Nadesan, 1997), Alcoholics Anonymous (Holland et al., 1998), and work relationships in Japan (Kondo, 1990). Many of these studies emphasize how dominant discourses construct the subjectivity of individuals. However, they also highlight the tensions and contradictions of personal identity construction in organizational contexts.

### **Studies of Individuals’ Identification With Organizations**

The second area focuses on individuals’ identification with organizations. These studies place analytic focus on the individual-organization relationship and how individuals come to adopt various positions of identification, dis-identification, schizo-identification and neutral-identification (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). As Cheney (1983) describes, identification is an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene. Specifically, it relates to the process of how individuals come to identify with the interests, values and symbols of an organization. These studies can be placed within two

general streams of research: identification processes and corporate culture programs.

Examples of identification processes include the identity construction of university service workers (Holmer-Nadesan, 1996), the cynicism of employees (Fleming & Spicer, 2003), and identity struggle within a university system (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). Examples of identification within corporate culture programs include: shopfloor culture (Collinson, 1992), high-tech corporate culture (Kunda, 1992), self-managing teams (Barker, 1993), and culture management (Casey, 1995; Willmott, 1993).

### **Studies of the Identity of Organizations**

The last area focuses on the identity of organizations. According to Albert and Whetten (1985), organizational identity arises whenever organizations ask the questions, “Who are we?”, “What do we stand for?” and “Where are we going?” It is what is central, distinctive and enduring about an organization. This literature explores the collective sense(s) of an entity and how organizations produce and maintain a shared sense of “we-ness.” However, these studies also highlight organizational identity as multiple, contradictory and adaptive to change (Gioia, et al., 2000). Thus, a central theme in many of these studies is the struggle over different accounts of identity. While some studies focus on an organization’s internal struggles, others emphasize the relationship between the organization and its environment and how companies respond to external stakeholders. Examples of internal struggle over organizational identity include studies of Disney (Boje, 1995; Smith & Eisenberg, 1987). Studies that emphasize the organization-environment relationship include the NY Port Authority (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991); hybrid identities of

professional services firms (Albert & Whetten, 1985) and narrative identities of Swedish public sector organizations (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1994).

Recently, scholars have begun to theorize a more dialectical approach to organizational identity research. They highlight the interrelationship between internal and external organizational processes. For example, Hatch and Schultz (2004) argue that organizational identity can be understood as a dialectical process between internal culture and external image, representing organizational analogues of Mead's "I" and "Me." Cheney and Christensen (2001) argue that organizational identity is best conceived not as an internal or external phenomenon but as an integral feature of the organizing process in which "meaning is created, negotiated and managed" (p. 241). They suggest that the term refers broadly to "a system's representations by/to itself and by/to others" (Christensen & Cheney, 1994, p. 224).

In this study, I will explore the dynamics of organizational identity using all three of the meanings described above. However, I will place special emphasis on the last conception of organizational identity as the collective sense of an entity. This conception helps to explain how organizations attempt to govern organizational life by managing a shared sense of "we-ness." Through corporate branding and other organizational communication efforts, companies attempt to convey a strong sense of shared purpose and values. However, I will also highlight how the production of organizational identity is shaped by the larger cultural context of business discourse. In particular, I will examine how creativity/innovation has become a dominant ideology and set of practices that shapes the identity practices of organizations, constructing specific relations of power/knowledge.

In summary, this chapter has outlined some of the major themes within the literature on innovation as a management discourse and how it functions within contemporary capitalism. In particular, I have argued that creativity and innovation must be understood not simply as an economic imperative but also as a cultural practice that is shaped by discourse and the production of knowledge. This discourse is generated and distributed by the cultural circuit of capitalism, a vast network of management gurus, consulting companies, business schools and media outlets. Furthermore, I argued that creativity and innovation operates as a central discourse within the contemporary spirit of capitalism, which functions to stimulate and regulate the enterprising capacities of workers. I then highlighted the value of adopting a Foucauldian perspective for understanding creativity and innovation as a form of power in organizations, which shapes organizational cultures and work-based identities. In the following chapter, I will discuss my research design and methodology for analyzing the discourse of creativity and innovation. In particular, I describe the ways in which my research design incorporates two distinct methodologies – Foucauldian discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork – to examine the dialectic of management discourse and everyday organizing processes.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline my research design and methodology for analyzing the discourse of creativity and innovation. My research design is inspired by the work of Gubrium and Holstein (2000) who propose a framework for interpretive practice based on the interplay of discourse-in-practice (or discursive formations) and discursive practice (everyday talk and text). In their view, discursive formations constitute the “what” of social interaction, while discursive practice constitutes the “how.” To reflect this dialectical approach, my methodology is organized into two main components: 1) a Foucauldian discourse analysis of popular management writings about creativity and innovation, and 2) an ethnographic study of an Internet technology company undergoing significant change and innovation. Before discussing these two components of my methodology, let me briefly describe their different approaches to the study of discourse analysis.

#### **Two Types of Discourse Analysis**

Communication scholars generally distinguish between two types of discourse analysis in social science research: *Discourses*, which refers to general and enduring systems of thought, and *discourse*, which refers to the study of talk and text in social practices (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004). Foucauldian discourse analysis

embodies the first type of discourse analysis. It examines language practices as they appear in historically-emergent discourse formations. According to Fairhurst and Putnam (2004), *Discourses* are “general and enduring systems for the formation and articulation of ideas in a historically situated time” (p. 8). In this view, power/knowledge relations are established in culturally standardized discourses, which order and naturalize the world in particular ways. Ethnographic fieldwork, on the other hand, focuses predominantly on the second type of discourse analysis. It involves the observation and writing of culture at the level of everyday discourse; *discourse* involves the “study of talk and text” in social practices. Fairhurst and Putnam (2004) elaborate:

Viewed as a local accomplishment, discourse is a medium for social interaction, in which the details of language in use and interaction processes are central concerns of analysts. Talk-in-interaction encompasses the processes of sending and receiving messages, that is, conversing. It is “the doing” of organizational discourse, whereas text is “the done,” or the material representation of discourse in spoken or recorded forms. (pp. 7-8)

While these two types of discourse analysis can be difficult to approach in one study, I negotiate these tensions by organizing my research into two distinct chapters, yet showing how they are linked by a common discourse. Through the course of my analysis, I highlight how the managerial discourse of creativity/innovation shapes systems of meaning at the level of business culture and how these meanings are taken up and/or resisted by the organization at the level of local practice. Now let me turn to a discussion of my methods in greater detail.

### **A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Creativity/Innovation**

In the first part of my research, I conduct a Foucauldian discourse analysis of popular management writings about creativity and innovation by analyzing key texts from the

cultural circuit of capitalism. As discussed in the previous chapter, the cultural circuit of capitalism is the discursive apparatus responsible for producing and distributing the vast amount of knowledge and beliefs about the economy, especially as it relates to change and innovation. In selecting texts for analysis, I have chosen representative writings from each of the four main stakeholder groups: management gurus, management consultants, business schools and the media.

### **Four Stakeholder Groups**

For management gurus, I selected texts by individuals who are considered prominent experts or leading authorities in the field of business creativity, innovation, management and economy and who have published bestselling or noteworthy books on the subject. For example, I analyzed texts by Thomas Friedman and Richard Florida, who have both contributed substantially to the creativity/innovation zeitgeist with their bestselling books on the economy, *The World is Flat 3.0* (2007) and *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) respectively. In addition, I also selected texts from gurus on organizational innovation, such as Gary Hamel (London Business School Professor), John Kao (consultant/former Harvard professor), Robert Tucker (consultant), and A.G. Lafley (former CEO of Procter & Gamble). Hamel has written extensively on the topic of management innovation and is considered a leading authority on management best practices. Likewise, the other individuals represent a cross-section of leading voices in the area of creativity and innovation. For example, A.G. Lafley is the former CEO of Procter & Gamble, who is well regarded as an innovation leader. He has written a bestselling book on innovation and is featured regularly in television and



print magazines sharing his story of how he transformed P&G into an innovation powerhouse.

In regard to management consulting companies, I analyzed the writings of influential firms in management and technology consulting such as McKinsey, Accenture, Boston Consulting Group and IBM. These firms represent the leading players in the industry, which provide advice to business leaders in the areas of strategy, technology, finance and operations. For example, McKinsey & Company is one of the world's top management consulting firms with roughly 90 offices in more than 50 countries around the globe. It serves three of the world's five largest companies and about two-thirds of the *FORTUNE* 1000. Likewise, IBM is an influential player in the area of computers and technology, which is expanding its consulting services in the area of innovation and enterprise management.

Collectively, these firms produce a vast amount of information and knowledge for the business world about management and innovation. In fact, many of these companies have research arms or institutes that specialize in analyzing future and emerging trends. The main output from these research arms is the production of reports, analyses, and outlooks about the changing economy. Given the impact of these companies on emerging business trends, my research involved reviewing research reports and articles from each of their company websites to analyze the key messages about creativity and innovation, such as IBM's 2008 *Global Innovation Outlook 2.0* (2008).

For business schools, I focused much of my analysis on the writings from Harvard Business School, and its publication arm, the Harvard Business School Press. HBS Press is a major producer and distributor of the innovation discourse for the business world. It publishes a diversity of authors from both inside and outside the university and functions

very much as a clearinghouse for management thought on the topic of creativity and innovation. Examples of texts from this stakeholder group include Clayton Christensen's *The Innovator's Dilemma* (2003), Teresa Amabile's *Managing for Creativity* (2006), and Hamel's *The Future of Management* (2007). I also analyzed a variety of other popular management texts written by business school faculty, such as Bessant and Tidd's *Innovation and Entrepreneurship* (2007) and Robinson & Stern's *Corporate Creativity* (1997). The former is a popular textbook on innovation that is widely used in undergraduate and postgraduate studies, while the latter is a bestselling management book written for a business audience. These texts highlight how the creativity/innovation discourse is increasingly forged by a close partnership between business and academic institutions.

Lastly, in regard to media outlets, I analyzed texts from several popular business magazines that focus on creativity and innovation, including *Newsweek* and *Fast Company* magazine. I selected *Newsweek* as a primary source because it features an annual ranking of the world's most innovative companies compiled by Boston Consulting Group, along with an analysis of management trends. I included *Fast Company* magazine because it is a leading business magazine that celebrates the innovative spirit of contemporary business leaders and organizations. As such, it serves as an excellent source of stories and narratives about the promise of innovation in the global economy. In sum, I collected and analyzed well over 50 books, articles, magazines and research reports produced by the cultural circuit of capitalism.

## **Research Methods**

In conducting my analysis, I attended to several important methodological points. First, consistent with Foucault's theory of discursive formations, I examined important

“statements” made about creativity and innovation. According to Foucault, statements are not propositions, utterances or grammatical features of sentences. Statements are speech acts that represent significant and consequential knowledge claims within a social domain. As Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) explain, statements are “serious speech acts” that have passed certain institutional tests for validation and are recognized as serious truth claims by a community of authorities or experts. As serious truth claims, statements are regarded as “objects to be studied, repeated and passed on to others” (p. 48). In analyzing the discourse of creativity/innovation, I attended to significant knowledge claims made by the cultural circuit of capital, paying attention to the construction of “objects” and “subjects” of knowledge. In addition, my analysis went beyond knowledge claims to highlight the role of narrative and emotion in the construction of the discourse. A simple example is the statement, “Innovate or die,” which is a pervasive knowledge claim in the discourse. I first analyzed its meaning as a form of knowledge, and then determined that it had an emotional imprint as well. Furthermore, the statement functioned to construct employees in particular ways, as enterprising subjects driven by the excitement and anxiety of innovation.

Second, drawing upon key principles of critical discourse analysis, I emphasized the multi-dimensionality and the multi-functionality of discourse. As Fairclough (1992) explains, critical discourse analysis (CDA) involves analyzing discourse at three levels – texts, discursive practice and social practice – in order to understand the link between discourse and social change. In my analysis, I attended to the detailed features of texts as well as the production, distribution and consumption of discourse by the cultural circuit of capital in order to explain larger transformations in work, organizations and economy. Furthermore, I emphasized the multi-functionality of discourse by highlighting the ways in

which language performs three functions in constituting social reality: ideational, relational and identity. The ideational function describes how discourse constitutes systems of knowledge and belief about the world and is seen to construct social reality for members. The relational function highlights how discourse constitutes social relationships and forms of organization, such as the current shift toward more flexible and entrepreneurial work structures and organizational cultures. Third, the identity function emphasizes the role of discourse in producing subjectivities and social identities. As Fairclough (2002) argues, these three functions operate simultaneously in discourse to produce or transform systems of power and domination in society. In examining the discourse of creativity/innovation, I highlighted how the formation functions as a form of power by constituting worldviews, organizing practices and social identities.

### **Ethnographic Study of an Internet Company**

For the second part of my research, I conducted an ethnographic study of an Internet company based in the Southeast region of the United States. To maintain the confidentiality of the organization, I will use the pseudonym Orange Planet (OP).

#### **Organizational Site**

Orange Planet (OP) is a leading Internet service provider (“ISP”), providing nationwide Internet access and related services to its individual and business customers. Its primary service offerings are narrowband, broadband or high-speed, and wireless Internet access services. It was founded in the mid-1990s during the technology boom driven by the rise of the Internet. In 2000, Orange Planet merged with another company, creating the

second largest Internet Service Provider in the United States. At the time of this study, the organization had approximately 2,200 employees in six locations, serving over 5 million customers.

I secured access to the company through a friend and colleague of mine who worked for the organization. She was a manager of leadership and talent development, and had been an employee with the company for four years. I had always been impressed by her commitment and enthusiasm for the organization and excited to hear her many stories about its culture. I visited the organization several times to meet some of her colleagues and get a sense of what life was like at an Internet startup company. During this period, the organization was undergoing significant change and transformation, and was exploring many opportunities for innovation. It seemed like an ideal time to study the organization and its evolving identity. In 2006, I submitted a proposal for research to the VP of Human Resources to study the identity and culture of the organization, with a particular focus on its innovation efforts. Given the strong alignment between the purpose of my research project and the organization's changing strategy, the Chief People Officer approved my study in May of that year.

Orange Planet was selected as an ideal organization for several reasons. First, the company is a knowledge-intensive organization that fits the characteristics of a new economy company. As an Internet Service Provider ("ISP"), Orange Planet provides leading edge technology services, employs a diverse workforce and is progressive in its management practices. This is important because I wanted to study the changing experience of work in the post-industrial economy characterized by the excitement and uncertainty of change and innovation. Second, the company operates in a highly competitive business environment and

therefore must differentiate itself through continuous innovation and brand identity. In addition, as a knowledge-intensive organization, the company must compete to attract and retain the most talented employees. Therefore, the organization provides an interesting and dynamic site for studying the intersection of innovation, work and communication processes. Third, in response to declining revenues, the company has undertaken a major program of organizational change and innovation in order to reposition itself for future growth. For example, as part of its change efforts, Orange Planet has made strategic decisions to outsource its call centers, standardize its operations, and enter into new business ventures. This provides an excellent opportunity to study the innovation efforts of the organization and, in particular, how popular management discourses about creativity and innovation shape the way that organizations manage their businesses and workforce.

## **Research Methods**

To study the organization, I used ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative research techniques as my primary methods of inquiry and data-collection. As Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) describe, ethnographic research involves “*immersion* in others’ worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important” (p. 2). It inevitably involves “consequential presence” in which the field researcher develops substantial relationships with those studied and uses this experience as a source of deeper understanding of the everyday lives of participants. The purpose of ethnography is “describing and interpreting the observed relationships between social practices and the systems of meaning in a particular cultural milieu” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 16). Ethnographers emphasize the importance of providing “thick” description, or detailed accounts, of the lives of cultural members

(Geertz, 1973). Specific, detailed accounts of social interaction give readers a deeper understanding of cultural practices from an insider's perspective. One of the key benefits of ethnography is that it provides a holistic description of cultural membership, in which the researcher documents many different aspects of a culture's symbolic and material world.

In conducting my analysis, however, I want to emphasize that I am not employing ethnography only to describe and interpret the meaning of organizational life. As I have highlighted, this research project involves the use of both critical theory and ethnography to conduct a critical analysis of work in the new capitalism. Therefore, this project incorporates many of the assumptions and ethics of critical ethnography, which attempts to disrupt the status quo and challenge taken-for-granted assumptions that mask underlying forms of power and control (Madison, 2005). In this study, I employ ethnography to provide a detailed account of the social practices of Orange Planet and how work life was shaped by the discourse of creativity and innovation, constructing specific relations of power/knowledge that served to constrain the experience of work. Therefore, this project uses a combination of critical and ethnographic methods to describe the complexity of organizational power relationships at Orange Planet.

For this project, I engaged in extensive observation, interviewing, and background research of the organization for a period of one year, from May 2006 to May 2007. During this time, I visited the organization 22 times and logged in approximately 175 hours of observation/interviewing time. In gathering information about the organization, I conducted the following research activities: 25 individual interviews, 4 focus groups, review of external and internal communication materials, and extensive participant observation. Individual and focus group meetings were conducted using a stratified random sampling of employees based

on experience level in the organization. This process involved obtaining a complete listing of employees from the Human Resources department, which included information about each employee's job title, department, email address and talent zone.

Unlike traditional job classification systems, Orange Planet was organized according to five color-coded talent zones. Employees in the yellow talent zone were the most junior members of the organization such as Accounts Receivable representatives while employees in the red talent zone were the most senior members, such as the CEO and Executive Vice Presidents. Based on this information, I randomly selected employees from the list while simultaneously accounting for talent zone level and cross-departmental representation. As a result, study participants included a broad cross-section of employees from many different job functions, such as accounting, human resources, marketing, engineering, computer programming, sales, and operations. I then sent employees an email requesting their voluntary participation in the study. In my selection process, I also made efforts to obtain a representative sample of personnel based on gender and ethnicity. In total, I interviewed 53 individuals across the organization, comprised of 27 males, 26 females, 8 African-American/Asian/ Hispanics and 45 Caucasians. The organization gave me full permission to contact employees directly via email and to schedule the meetings without oversight or control.

The purpose of conducting a stratified sampling of employees was to understand the unique perspective of each experience level within the organization, especially as it relates to issues of power and identity. Therefore, I conducted interviews at six levels in the organization: 5 new hire interviews, 5 staff/product manager interviews, 4 senior manager interviews, 5 director interviews, 5 vice president interviews and 1 executive vice president



interview. Ideally, it would have been useful to conduct additional executive interviews, but these meetings were more difficult to schedule.

Focus group sessions were intended to gain the benefit of employee interaction and understand the degree of consensus or disagreement on issues. I found these interviews to be extremely beneficial in gauging the level of support or opposition to organizational changes. I conducted these meetings based on three experience levels in the organization: 1 new hire session (8 participants), 2 staff sessions (10 and 6 participants respectively), and 1 director/manager session (4 participants). Participation in both the individual interviews and focus group sessions was voluntary and conformed to the ethical standards of social science research, including informed consent and confidentiality. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the Invitation to the Interviews and Focus Groups. Refer to Appendix B for a copy of the Participant Consent Forms.

Interview and focus group meetings were conducted using a structured interview guide. Each focus group was conducted for approximately 1.5-2 hours and covered the following topics: 1) participant introductions and background, 2) general perceptions of the organization, 3) organizational culture and values, 4) creativity & innovation, 5) organizational vision and mission, and 6) brand, reputation and marketing. Each interview was scheduled for approximately 45-60 minutes and covered similar topics as the focus groups. Some examples of interview and focus group questions included:

- How long have you worked at Orange Planet? What attracted you to the organization?
- What is unique or distinctive about the company?

- The following attributes have been used to describe the culture of Orange Planet. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them? Why?
  - Fun
  - Casual/Informal
  - People-oriented
  - Results-oriented
  - Creative/Innovative
  - Autonomy to do your job
  - Chaotic/fluid/changing
  - Conservative (financially)
- How do you feel about the new vision of the company as a “total communications provider?”
- What is the relationship between management and employees? Give a specific example.
- How would you describe the reputation and the public image of Orange Planet?

Each meeting was digitally recorded and transcribed for analysis. Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the Interview and Focus Group Guides.

The interview and focus group data were analyzed using Grounded Theory (or the constant-comparative method), which grounds theory “in the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010, p. 218). To facilitate analysis, I used HyperRESEARCH 2.7, a software package for qualitative research. In developing coding categories, I paid close attention to the language of participants, attending to issues of meaning, repetition and forcefulness. In total, I generated 71 different coding categories using the software. Examples of codes include: new vision, fun culture, organizational change, public image, stress-turnover, cool company, Google, casual-informal, organizational identity, and core values and beliefs. Once I coded the data based on the language of participants, I also generated larger categories of thought based on my

analysis of the discursive formation in Chapter 4. This enabled me to begin organizing my data into meaningful themes. However, my analysis involved a constant back-and-forth process of working from grounded discourse to theoretical constructs and back again.

In addition to interviews and focus groups, I also conducted a review of internal and external communication materials produced by the company. One major source of information in this area was the company's intranet site called Playbook. Playbook contains current news and press releases about the company and also features special projects and topics of interest to the organization. For example, one topic highlights the company's "world of talent." Another includes an internal communications campaign called Kaleidoscope, which informs employees about the company's new vision and entrepreneurial businesses. Playbook also includes an archive of the company's marketing campaigns on television. Beyond this research, I also conducted an analysis of the company's 2005 marketing campaign, entitled "Do you believe anything is possible?" which was featured in magazines and television ads. For each of these documents, I took detailed notes and coded them using the software package described above.

The final area of data collection involved conducting extensive participant observation of the organization as it went about its normal business. This included observing the organization's new hire orientation program called Get Connected, which is a one-day training event designed to give employees an introduction to the company's business, culture and people. I also participated in a variety of informal gatherings during and after work hours, such as employee lunch meetings and celebrations. To record my observations, I took detailed fieldnotes both during and after key events and expanded upon them later in greater depth. In general, I followed the note-taking guidelines of Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995),

who discuss a variety of strategies for writing, organizing and translating fieldnotes into ethnographic texts. One of the most helpful strategies for writing fieldnotes was separating observation notes (ON) from personal commentaries (CN) and theoretical insights (TN). Once fieldnotes were recorded, I coded and analyzed them using the same process as described above.

### **Methodological Limitations**

Before I conclude this chapter, I want to discuss several potential limitations of my research methodology. The first limitation concerns the issue of representativeness. Specifically, to what extent are the selected texts representative of the popular management discourse of creativity and innovation? Certainly an argument can be made that there are other texts that could or should have been included in my analysis. However, since the topic of creativity and innovation includes such a vast collection of writings, one of the challenges of this project was limiting the scope to a manageable set of texts. Therefore, I do not make the argument that this is a definitive list of texts on management innovation, only that it is typical or exemplary of the body of contemporary writings on the subject. For example, many of the publications from the Harvard Business School Press are highly credible texts that are considered staples of the industry. As a result, I included them in my list because they receive broad circulation in the business world as key sources of management knowledge. I also selected texts based on their popularity and influence within contemporary business culture. For example, I selected Thomas Friedman and Richard Florida because their writings have attracted considerable attention in the press and, as a result, have shaped the contemporary ethos of business in significant ways. Lastly, some of my selections were

informed by my own knowledge of the field of creativity and innovation. As an independent consultant, I have worked in the area of management innovation for many years and am familiar with many of the core writings in the discipline. As a result, I drew on my background knowledge to select texts that represent leading voices in the field, such as John Kao and Gary Hamel.

Another limitation of this study involves the issue of generalizability. Specifically, to what extent are the findings generalizable to other organizations and the business world overall? My answer to this question is that ethnographic research by design is grounded in the concrete experience of specific communities. As such, it provides a snapshot of organizational life at a specific point in time. I examined the communication practices of an Internet startup company during a period of intense change and transformation for the organization as it struggled to compete in a highly competitive telecommunications industry. In this sense, my findings are not generalizable to other organizations. However, in the first part of my research, I also argue that the discourse of innovation is part of a new management ideology that shapes organizing practices more generally. So while the findings at Orange Planet cannot be generalized to other organizations, I believe the rhetorical force of the innovation imperative has broad application to many settings.

In this chapter, I discussed the design and methodology for this research project. I highlighted how this project was structured to examine the dialectic between management discourse and everyday organizing processes. I then described the two specific components of this study: a Foucauldian discourse analysis of creativity and innovation, and an ethnographic study of an Internet technology company. I outlined in specific detail the activities, process and methodological considerations for my project. I then concluded with a

discussion of several potential limitations of this study, focusing on issues of representativeness, utilization and generalizability.

In the following chapter, I conduct a critical analysis of the managerial discourse of creativity and innovation by drawing on Foucault's theory of discursive formations. I highlight how the discourse shapes the production of meaning and identity in the business world and constructs specific relations of power/knowledge.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **THE DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

In this chapter I examine creativity and innovation as a powerful management discourse that shapes the production of meaning and identity within contemporary capitalism. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, I argue that creativity/innovation is a large-scale discursive formation that orders and naturalizes the world in particular ways, constituting worldviews, organizing practices and social identities. By analyzing key texts from the cultural circuit of capitalism, I describe how the discourse constructs a business imperative in which organizations must compete on the battleground of constant creativity and innovation or die. As I will describe, the discourse is intimately linked to historical and material transformations in the mode of production but also exercises its own rhetorical force, shaping global business in its own image. I locate this discourse within the historical emergence of the cultural circuit of capitalism, which has been the chief architect of the creativity/innovation discourse since the 1970s (Thrift, 2005).

This chapter is organized into two sections. First, I briefly revisit my theoretical framework for analyzing the creativity/innovation discourse using the concept of discursive formations, and then explain my rationale for placing creativity and innovation together as a single formation. Second, I analyze the content and form of the formation and examine how the innovation imperative constructs specific relations of power/knowledge, constituting worldviews, organizing practices and social identities.

### **Discursive Formations**

According to Foucault, a discursive formation is a collection of “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” – a “system of formation” – and “the relation that is established between them . . . by discursive practice” (as quoted in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, pp. 62-63). In its simplest terms, a discursive formation is a group of statements that construct “objects” and “subjects” of knowledge. “Objects” of knowledge are the constructs and entities that comprise a discipline or social field and become the targets of investigation and elaboration by its adherents. “Subjects” of knowledge, on the other hand, are the ways in which individuals are discursively positioned and tied to constructions of the self through conscience or self-knowledge.

In analyzing the discourse of creativity/innovation, I attend to the significant knowledge claims made by the cultural circuit of capitalism and how they construct a distinct domain of management expertise and practical wisdom in the business world. This domain of knowledge contains its own set of truth claims, prescriptions and injunctions about the importance of innovation in the global economy, which shapes the ideology of managers and the business community in general. I highlight how the chief architect of this discourse is the cultural circuit of capitalism, which includes business schools, management consultants, management gurus and the media. These stakeholder groups have forged substantial ties and levels of collaboration within the last 40 years, resulting in a powerful formation. In this chapter, I analyze how the cultural circuit of capitalism constructs the domain of creativity and innovation as a form of management knowledge, and how this discourse shapes the conduct of business.



I locate creativity and innovation together as a single discourse formation based on the natural affinities and similarities between the two terms. In the words of Wittgenstein, creativity and innovation exhibit a “family resemblance.” This can be seen most directly in the way creativity and innovation operate as a couplet in managerial discourse. One glance at book titles on the subject reveals their close association: *Managing Creativity and Innovation* (Harvard Business Essentials, 2003); *Closing the Innovation Gap: Reigniting the Spark of Creativity in a Global Economy* (Estrin, 2008); *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity from IDEO, America’s Leading Design Firm* (Kelley, Littman & Peters, 2001). More substantially, the two terms are often used interchangeably to describe the process of “value creation.” For example, Kao (1996) writes: “I define creativity as the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed, and transformed into value. It encompasses what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship” (p. xvii).

Yet, while creativity and innovation are strongly complementary, they also have important distinctions. According to management writers, creativity is the starting point for innovation. It is conceived as the process of discovery or invention in which individuals generate new and useful ideas for solving problems. It is often taught as a process of ideation with specific skills and steps that can be learned and practiced (i.e., the creative problem solving process) (Firestien, 1996; Mauzy & Harriman, 2003). Instead of waiting for inspiration to strike, creativity is approached as a competency or discipline, albeit an artful discipline. Kao (1996) describes the creative process using a jazz metaphor, which he calls “jamming.”

Innovation, on the other hand, is defined as the process of implementing new ideas within organizational contexts, resulting in the creation of significant change or new value.

For example, Drucker defines innovation as “change that creates a new dimension of performance” (as quoted in Hesselbein, Goldsmith & Somerville, 2002, p. xi). Alternatively, Tucker (2002) defines innovation as “bringing new ideas to life” and making them “a marketplace reality” (p. 18). In these conceptions, innovation is more than ideation; it is the process of implementing creative ideas to effect change or realize new value. As Amabile et al. (1996) describe, “All innovation begins with creative ideas . . . we define innovation as the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization. In this view, creativity by individuals and teams is a starting point for innovation; the first is necessary but not sufficient condition for the second.” Lastly, many conceptions of innovation implicitly or explicitly involve a financial component. Lafley and Charan (2008), for example, define innovation as “the conversion of a new idea into revenue and profits” (p. 21).

As these definitions highlight, creativity and innovation are complementary terms that designate different stages in the process of “value creation.” While creativity is the dynamic human process of coming up with new ideas, innovation is the organizational process of implementing those ideas to realize marketplace value. As I will describe later in this chapter, understanding creativity and innovation as a single formation helps to explain how the discourse functions to link the creative aspirations of workers to the demands of innovation capitalism.

### **The Innovation Imperative – “Innovate or Die!”**

Now I want to turn to an examination of the content and form of the creativity and innovation discourse. I begin my analysis by highlighting a single, dominant and overriding feature of the formation. In the global economy, innovation has become a business

imperative. Innovation is no longer considered a “nice-to-do” activity or a supplemental goal of organizations. It is now the decisive criterion for success and a strategic objective for every organization and economy. According to the discourse, the companies and countries that will survive and prosper in the twenty-first century are those that consistently create and innovate. Creativity and innovation are heralded as the keys to growth, profitability and competitive advantage. As Florida (2002) writes, “Creativity . . . is now the *decisive* source of competitive advantage. In virtually every industry, from automobiles to fashion, food products, and information technology itself, the winners in the long run are those who can create and keep creating” (p. 5). What is most distinctive about the discourse is its dire and urgent tone. In the knowledge economy, innovation has become a matter of life and death. Companies are exhorted to innovate or risk survival. In the vernacular of business, companies must “Innovate or die (out)!”

The innovation imperative arises from a multitude of texts and appears in everything from economic policy reports to popular business magazines. While the imperative takes many different forms, its message is the same. Let me share a few examples. A management guru on creativity proclaims: “Companies that aren’t willing to take risks are not long for this fluid, protean, constantly changing world. Companies that shun creative risks may be undercut by competitors not only with better products and services, but also with better processes and ways of perceiving new opportunities . . . . The choice is stark. Create or fail” (Kao, 1996, pp. xix-xx). A popular business article warns: “‘Innovate or die’ is not an idle threat. It’s the harsh reality of the modern, fast-forward economy” (Tischler, 2001, p. 1). The innovation imperative has now become a fundamental tenet of business and economic knowledge in the global economy and a passionate refrain from the cultural circuit of capital.

Given the broad circulation of this statement, it is important to examine its meaning and effects in greater depth. To do this, I will examine several examples of the innovation imperative in business texts and discuss how they function as discourse in greater depth.

In *Making Innovation Work*, Davila, Epstein & Shelton (2006) capture the spirit of the innovation imperative. In the following example, the authors highlight the importance of innovation to corporate survival. They write:

According to Peter Drucker, “Innovation is the effort to create purposeful focused change in an enterprise’s economic and social potential.” That statement very accurately positions innovation as the agent of change and a crucial tool for every CEO. True enough, but it does not capture the fundamental importance of innovation to competitive survival.

More recently, James M. Kilts, then chairman and CEO of The Gillette Company (currently co-chairman of P&G after the acquisition of Gillette), summed up innovation this way: “We created a simple vision two years ago: Build total brand value by innovating to deliver consumer value and customer leadership faster, better and more completely than our competition.”

He also observed: “You need to encourage risk-taking. One of the themes of our company is to remember that the opposite of success is not failure but inertia.” That puts innovation in the right context; innovation is critical to growth in a competitive environment. Without innovation, you stall, your competitors take over, and you die. (pp. 5-6)

As these authors attest, innovation is much more than a management tool; it is a matter of survival. In a competitive world, innovation enables companies to grow and prosper while failure to innovate means they lose ground to their competitors and die out. The power of this statement comes, in part, from the reality of global competition. But I also argue that it derives from the power of the cultural circuit of capitalism to construct a narrative of global competition and economic threat. In this narrative, organizations are faced with the constant threat of “competition” and the imminent prospect of “dying” as a business. To survive in this environment, companies must battle the forces of inertia by

actively pursuing risk-taking and innovation. As is apparent in this brief example, the innovation imperative gains its rhetorical force by drawing on the potent metaphor of life and death. In this view, organizations must compete on the battleground of innovation or risk their own survival. The discourse works not only at the level of meaning but also emotion. The threat of competition and corporate death carries an emotional currency of fear and anxiety that is substantial. As I will describe, the emotional logic of survival and growth is a central feature of the innovation imperative.

Let me share another example from a university textbook on innovation and entrepreneurship. In *Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, Bessant and Tidd (2007) provide a more complete description of the innovation imperative and its logic of survival/growth. In the introduction, the authors write:

You don't have to look far before you bump into the innovation imperative. It leaps out at you from a thousand mission statements and strategy documents, each stressing how important innovation is to "our customers/our shareholders/our business/our future" and most often, "our survival and growth." Innovation shouts at you from advertisements from products ranging from hairspray to hospital care. It nestles deep in the heart of our history books, pointing out how far and for how long it has shaped our lives. And it is on the lips of every politician, recognizing that our lifestyles are constantly shaped and reshaped by the process of innovation.

This isn't just hype or advertising babble. Innovation does make a huge difference to organizations of all shapes and sizes. The logic is simple – if we don't change what we offer the world (products and services) and how we create and deliver them, we risk being overtaken by others who do. At the limit it's about survival – and history is very clear on this point; survival is not compulsory! Those enterprises which survive do so because they are capable of regular and focused change. It's worth noting that Microsoft – currently one of the biggest and most successful companies in the world – takes the view that it is always only two years away from extinction! Or, as Andy Groves, one of the founders of Intel points out, "Only the paranoid survive!"

On the plus side innovation is also strongly associated with growth. New business is created by new ideas, by the process of creating competitive advantage in what a firm can offer. Economists have argued for decades over the exact nature of the

relationship but they are generally agreed that innovation accounts for a sizeable proportion of economic growth. In a recent book William Baumol pointed out that “virtually all of the economic growth that has occurred since the eighteenth century is ultimately attributable to innovation.”

The survival/growth question poses a problem for established players but a huge opportunity for newcomers to rewrite the rules of the game. One person’s problem is another’s opportunity and the nature of innovation is that it is fundamentally about entrepreneurship. The skill to spot opportunities and create new ways of exploiting them is at the heart of the innovation process.

Entrepreneurs are risk-takers – but they calculate the costs of taking a bright idea forward against the potential gains if they succeed in doing something different – especially if that involves upstaging the players already in the game. (pp. 4-5)

In this passage, the authors highlight the ubiquity of the innovation imperative.

Innovation is everywhere: in company mission statements, in advertising, in our history books and in political rhetoric. Furthermore, we see a fuller description of the innovation imperative and its emotional logic of survival and growth. The survival question highlights a world of constant competition and economic threat in which “only the paranoid survive” while the growth question promises the excitement of new ideas, risk-taking and the opportunity to rewrite the rules of the game. The discourse works rhetorically to stimulate the anxieties and insecurities of established companies by raising the specter of survival and competition. Companies who fail to change and innovate risk being overtaken by competitors. At the same time, however, the discourse presents innovation as the “solution” to the problems of growth and competitive advantage. Through innovation and entrepreneurship, companies are able to “exploit” and “upstage” the competition. Thus, we see how the cultural circuit of capitalism constructs a distinct rationality of economic warfare in which innovation represents the new currency of global competition. As I describe throughout this chapter, the emotional logic of survival/growth helps explain the broad circulation and impact of the innovation imperative in the business world. Yet, in order to

understand its full effects, the imperative must be understood within the larger context of the discourse formation.

In the next sections, I describe how the cultural circuit of capital constructs a dominant narrative of creativity/innovation as both *promise and peril*, in which innovation represents the hope of a new age of creative production and empowerment but also the threat of increasing global competition and economic threat. Furthermore, I highlight how this worldview actively transforms organizations and identities in accordance with its own image.

### **Constructing Worldview – “The Age of Creativity”**

The creativity/innovation formation constructs a distinct worldview about the emerging knowledge economy in the twenty-first century. According to the discourse, we are moving from an industrial age to an “age of creativity” in which human imagination, creativity and thinking are the primary sources of value (de Geus, 2002; Florida, 2002; Friedman, 2007; Kao, 1996). Driven by globalization, information technology and the expansion of knowledge work, this new age is fundamentally transforming the economic and social landscape. Just as the shift from an agrarian society to industrial capitalism produced dramatic changes in the force of production, there is a similar shift happening today as Western economies move toward a globally connected, knowledge-based economy. In this new age, it is argued, human creativity and innovation are the main sources of value and competitive advantage.

This discourse emanates from many corners of the cultural circuit of capitalism but has been popularized by the works of Friedman and Florida. In his bestselling book *The World Is Flat 3.0*, Friedman (2007) argues that advances in technology have created a “flat

world” which has leveled the playing field for all people, enabling individuals worldwide to participate and share in the prosperity of global enterprise. Central to his argument is that the world has entered a new stage of globalization, “Globalization 3.0,” which is defined by widespread access to technology and individual empowerment. As Friedman states, “the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 – the thing that gives it its unique character – is the newfound power for individuals to collaborate and compete globally” (p. 10). In this flat world, everyone is free to participate in the marketplace of ideas and innovation, including those who have traditionally been excluded from the global economy.

In more complex fashion, Florida (2002) argues that human creativity has become the driving force of our time, transforming the global economy and society in dramatic ways. In this new era, creative talent is the most highly prized resource in industry and the engine of economic growth. Florida describes the emergence of a new “creative class” that is reshaping work, leisure and everyday life along the dimensions of their values and lifestyles. In contrast to Friedman, Florida argues that this world is not “flat” but “spiky.” He contends that while the age of creativity is exciting and liberating for some, it exacerbates inequalities and economic disparities for others.

Despite these differences, Friedman and Florida both construct a world in which “the age of creativity” offers great promise for empowering workers, improving living standards and fostering economic growth. Their work contains a clear utopian element, contending that the rise of human creativity is a liberating force in the global economy if only we can realize its full potential. In the preface to the paperback edition, Florida states:

We live in a time of great promise. We have evolved economic and social systems that tap human creativity and make use of it as never before. This in turn creates an unparalleled opportunity to raise our living standards, build a more humane and



sustainable economy, and make our lives more complete. But there is no guarantee.... (p. xiii)

Yet while these authors emphasize the tremendous opportunity for creative production in the global economy, they also highlight a new competitive reality. What begins as the promise of a new creative age quickly turns into an urgent call-to-action for bolstering American competitiveness.

The cultural circuit of capital has written extensively about American competitiveness at risk. Both Friedman and Florida highlight the rising challenge of globalization to American economic leadership, such as increasing competition from developing countries, the global war for talent, and America's outdated education system. But these two authors are just the most visible proponents. Another significant source of the innovation rhetoric is former Harvard professor John Kao. In the work of Kao, the threat of competition reaches its emotional zenith. Building on the work of Friedman, Kao (2007) describes the rise of global competition as a "silent Sputnik" that threatens the security and leadership position of the United States. In the introduction to *Innovation Nation*, he writes:

Only yesterday, we Americans could afford to feel smug about our preeminence. Destiny, it seems, had appointed us the world's permanent pioneers, forever striding beyond the farthest cutting edge. . . . That was yesterday. Today, things are vastly different. Innovation has become the new currency of global competition as one country after another races toward a new high ground where the capacity for innovation is viewed as a hallmark of national success. These competitors are beginning to seriously challenge us as magnets for venture capital, R&D, and talent, and as hot spots of innovation from which future streams of opportunity will emerge. (p.1)

Meanwhile, our own national capacity for innovation is eroding, with deeply troubling implications for our future. (p. 2)

Though we still enjoy the lead position, other parts of the world are moving ahead at a rapid pace. (p. 2)

It is a crucial moment in time, a historic tipping point perhaps. Just as we are beginning to slack off, others are stepping on the gas. And, at some point – sooner than we might think – the curves of our decline and the rest of the world’s ascent will cross. In tomorrow’s world, even more than today’s, innovation will be the engine of progress. So unless we move to rectify this dismal situation, the United States cannot hope to remain a leader. What’s at stake is nothing less than the future prosperity and security of our nation. (p. 3)

I see a crisis brewing, and it makes me angry. (p. 3)

Today we face a challenge without the obvious pain points of Sputnik, a “silent Sputnik” one might say, whose symptoms are eclectic and might be ignored if viewed piecemeal. Taken as a whole, however, they tell a story of grave challenge to our nation’s future health and prosperity. (p. 30)

In this example, “the age of creativity” quickly becomes “a story of grave challenge” that threatens the prosperity and security of the United States. I highlight how this discursive construction of a “crisis” resembles the rhetoric of many periods in American history in which the threat of competition is used to stimulate the productive apparatus of society and spur technological innovation. We see this most clearly in the analogy of a “silent Sputnik” used by the author to recall the start of the space race between the United States and Soviet Union during the Cold War. The space race represented both an ideological and technological contest for supremacy, which initiated significant investments in political, military and scientific work. This discourse also emerged in the early 1980s with the threat of economic competition from Japan. Management gurus such as Peters and Waterman (1982) and Deal and Kennedy (1982) drew on this “crisis” in American business to issue a rallying cry to organizational leaders for greater forms of creativity and empowerment in the workplace. However, these efforts also instituted new forms of management control through corporate culture programs.

The works cited above highlight a fundamental characteristic of the creativity/innovation formation. While it promises new forms of empowerment and creative

production, the discourse also constructs a world of constant peril in which global competition and rapid change threaten our economic and national security. In order to survive in this world, individuals, organizations and entire economies must compete on the global stage of innovation or die. It is this *narrative of promise and peril* that is at the center of the innovation formation.

### **Innovation: The New Currency of Global Competition**

The narrative of promise and peril circulates at many levels within the innovation formation. Beyond the works of Friedman, Florida and Kao, the narrative is produced and disseminated by a vast network of management consultants and gurus who strive to provide their clients with leading research and advice on the changing global economy. In particular, consulting companies such as IBM, McKinsey, Accenture and Boston Consulting Group (BCG) have developed potent analyses of globalization for their clients that highlight both the opportunities for collaboration and the increasing threats of competition.

In its 2008 Global Innovation Outlook 2.0, IBM states that innovation is increasingly “global,” “multidisciplinary,” and “collaborative and open.” The new global order is driven by the “widespread adoption of networked technologies and open standards,” which is “removing barriers of geography and accessibility. Anyone and everyone can participate in the innovation economy” (p. 2). With the death of distance, a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of collaboration. In a global and connected world, people must work together in new and integrated ways, capitalizing on a diverse mix of talent and expertise in order to solve problems. Since the world is much too complex for individuals working alone, innovation must be approached by teams of talented people working together across

geographic and disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, organizations must look beyond their own borders for innovative ideas by collaborating with customers and business partners worldwide. This is the essence of “open innovation” (Chesborough, 2005). As a result, the ability to foster social networks inside and outside the organization becomes paramount.

Yet while technology and globalization provide newfound opportunities for collaboration worldwide, the new era also presents significant challenges – specifically the threat of increasing global competition. Most consulting companies have research arms or institutes that specialize in analyzing future and emerging trends, or what some refer to as “prognostication” services. The main output from these research arms is the production of reports, analyses, and outlooks about the changing economy. In analyzing discourse from these sources, many chronicle the dramatic shifts taking place in the balance of economic power between developed and developing countries. For example, Accenture writes about a “multi-polar world” in which “large multinational companies from emerging markets have started to assert their clout, fundamentally altering the shape of globalization” (Nunes & Purdy, 2008, p. 1). In this more integrated global economy, emerging and developed economies compete for the same resources in five “battleground areas”: 1) the globalization of talent, 2) the flow of capital, 3) the battle for resources, 4) the emergence of new consumers, and 5) the new map of innovation.

In more dramatic fashion, Boston Consulting Group (2008) has declared that “globalization is over!” We now live in an era of “globality” – “a new and different reality in which we'll all be competing with everyone, from everywhere, for everything” (Sirkin, Hemerling & Bhattacharya, 2008). The authors go on to describe how competition from developing countries has rapidly become a “tsunami” wave that challenges the dominance of

established companies in the developed world. In particular, they describe how rapidly developing economies (RDEs) in Asia are fast becoming significant challengers to established players in the West. These companies have learned from their outsourcing experiences and have developed their own innovation capabilities. As a result, these “global challengers” pose a significant threat to established “incumbents” in the West. These examples illustrate how consulting companies have contributed substantially to the production of a distinct worldview where innovation is “the new currency of global competition.”

### **Transforming Work and Organization – “Innovation as a Way of Life”**

Given the narrative of global competition, innovation has become a battle cry and a passionate call-to-action for organizational reform from the cultural circuit of capital. It is no longer just about developing new products and services. Innovation is now a broad mandate for transforming every aspect of work and organizations, from strategy and operations to leadership and culture. As Lafley and Charan (2008) write, “Innovation is the key idea that is shaping corporate life” (p. 23). Companies are exhorted to remake themselves into dynamic enterprises where innovation is “a way of life” and “part of the DNA” of the entire organization (Tucker, 2002).

Yet, while the cultural circuit proclaims the necessity of innovation, it also decries the current state of innovation efforts in organizations. For example, Tucker (2002) whimsically compares current innovation efforts to the mating of exotic animals:

In most companies today, the practice of innovation can be likened to the mating of pandas: infrequent, clumsy and often ineffective. Its practice is largely unchanged from 20 years ago. While the world has changed drastically, the practice of innovation remains ad hoc, unsystematic, piecemeal, and ‘seat of the pants.’ (p. 2)

He emphasizes that organizations must move beyond innovation as exceptional or ad hoc and make it a discipline with specific systems and practices in place. In similar fashion, management guru Gary Hamel (2008) compares current innovation efforts to the early stages of the Quality movement, in which responsibility for Quality was initially isolated in separate departments and administered by specialists. He writes:

If it was possible to make something as ethereal and elusive as Quality a broad-based capability, why, we wondered, couldn't we do the same thing for innovation? ... If, as we believe, innovation is the only way to deliver peer-beating results over the long term, then it is impossible to be satisfied with a management model in which creative thinking is sequestered in innovation ghettos or is the occasional, heroic act of those with the patience of Job and the courage of Richard the Lionheart. Innovation is too important to be a function, or a department, or a one-time initiative, or an exceptional act. And it will only become more critical in the years to come. (p. xviii)

With the emergence of the innovation “movement,” the cultural circuit has championed the need to take a “systemic and comprehensive approach” to innovation and make it “an integral part of the business” (Davila, Epstein & Shelton, 2006; Tucker, 2002). Within the last 10 years, a wealth of management books have come out that provide “blueprints” for turning organizations into systematic, serial innovators. In *Innovation to the Core*, Skarzynski and Gibson (2008) argue that organizations must “build a deep, enduring capability for innovation – one that consistently drives profitable revenue growth and that enables the company to maintain a competitive advantage over the longer term” (p. 5). They give the examples of General Electric and Procter & Gamble as two “innovation powerhouses” that have transformed their organizations by championing a comprehensive approach to innovation. Likewise, in *Making Innovation Work*, Davila, Epstein & Shelton (2006) provide seven “Innovation Rules” for executing innovation as a “management process that requires specific tools, rules and discipline” (p. xviii). These rules include: 1) Exert

strong leadership on innovation direction and decisions; 2) Integrate innovation into the business mentality; 3) Match innovation to company strategy; 4) Manage the natural tension between creativity and value capture; 5) Neutralize organizational antibodies; 6) Cultivate an innovation network beyond the organization; and 7) Create the right metrics and rewards for innovation.

What these approaches have in common is the effort to systematize creativity and innovation and control the labor process at every level. As Lafley and Charan (2008) state, “For innovation to have a payoff – for it to generate sustainable organic sales and profit growth – it must be integrated into how you run your business: its overall purpose, goals and strategies, structure and systems, leadership and culture” (p. 10). Many of these innovation “blueprints” provide detailed strategies for developing and assessing leaders, establishing metrics and performance measures, creating incentives and rewards, and managing organizational culture and values. The result is that “innovation” has become the latest form of cultural control. This becomes more apparent when we examine a dominant metaphor used by the cultural circuit to describe the ideal innovative organization: the “factory.”

The cultural circuit has written extensively about the need to turn organizations into idea and innovation factories. In “Building an Innovation Factory,” Hargadon and Sutton (2001) write, “Businesses that constantly innovate have systematized the production and testing of new ideas, and the system can be replicated by practically any organization” (p. 55). A.G Lafley, Chairman and CEO of Procter & Gamble, explains the value of the metaphor even further: “[At P&G] We began thinking about innovation in new ways. We started from the premise that it is possible to run an innovation program in much the same way we run a factory. There are inputs; these go through a series of transformative

processes, creating outputs. It is possible to measure the yield of each process, including the quality, the end product, and the financial and market results” (Lafley & Charan, 2008, p. 7).

In more philosophic terms, Kao (1996) writes about his hope of creating the “post-industrial factory” of the future in which “the ‘products’ of this factory are ideas.” He continues:

And yet it’s essential that we keep the old ‘hard’ imagery of the factory along with the ‘soft’ imagery of [creativity]. We must keep it . . . because in the business context, *those* opposites work together, or they don’t work at all. We’ve got to have creative ideas and the value they represent. And, for all the business reasons – reasons of measurement, discipline, purposeful planning, efficiency at deploying limited resources, legacies of scale, and division of responsibility – we’ve (still) got to have factories. (p. 150-152).

In using the metaphor of the factory, we see the driving impulse of the cultural circuit: to transform organizations into innovation machines. As such, innovation has become the latest discourse of workplace reform and a new form of control over labor.

In remaking organizations, the cultural circuit emphasizes two important areas of reform: strategy and culture. Strategy is important because organizations must conceive new opportunities and ways to grow their businesses. The discourse highlights the need to take greater risks and manage a portfolio of projects. For example, management gurus Breen & Hamel (2007) advocate that organizations “think like venture capitalists” who allocate funds and manage risk across a diversity of experimental projects with the expectation that some initiatives will succeed while others fail. This is a dominant knowledge claim within the formation and circulates as a “best practice” for all organizations pursuing innovation.

As part of the emphasis on strategy and risk-taking, the discourse emphasizes the importance of radical innovation. Radical innovation involves developing products, processes or technologies that dramatically change the competitive context of a market or



industry and transform the economics of a business. In *Radical Innovation*, Leifer et al. (2000) differentiate between incremental and radical innovation and emphasize the importance of radical innovation for business survival. Without radical innovation, they argue, organizations risk their ability to compete in the long term with younger, more entrepreneurial companies who may develop “disruptive technologies.” As they warn, “Failure to develop and introduce breakthrough innovations puts established firms at risk of being knocked out of the game by the entrepreneurial newcomers” (p. 1). They emphasize that “every corporate leader should be pounding the drum for projects aimed at producing breakthrough innovations” (p. 7).

In a similar vein, Skarzynski and Gibson (2008) write about the limits of “incrementalism” as a business strategy. They write:

Most companies are under intense pressure to meet relentless growth targets. Yours is probably no exception. But what do you do if your organization is experiencing deteriorating growth rates, as current business models mature and consolidation runs its course? ... The hard reality is that “incrementalism” is not going to solve any of these problems. Companies can no longer hope to significantly grow revenues by coming up with a slightly improved version of the same old thing and then selling it to the same old customers through the same old channels in the same old way.... If you’re in a mature industry, the only way to meet radical top-line growth targets is by stimulating demand with products, services and business models that are truly radical.... What we are arguing, in short is that the only way to meet today’s formidable growth challenges is not through incrementalism but through radical, game-changing innovation. (pp. 127-128)

These examples illustrate a central theme of the discourse of innovation: companies must not only innovate, they must innovate *radically*. Incrementalism will not suffice; only radical or breakthrough innovation can change the rules of the game and reinvigorate corporate growth. But while radical innovation may provide advantages to some organizations, I highlight how the discourse works rhetorically to induce all organizations to pursue projects that are bold, aggressive and filled with high risk. Furthermore, the discourse

draws on the emotional logic of survival/growth by highlighting the threat of competition to companies who fail to pursue radical innovation while emphasizing the tremendous opportunities for economic growth for those who do. By circulating the emotional currency of fear, the discourse of radical innovation shapes organizational decision-making processes in substantial and potentially detrimental ways.

### **Cultures of Innovation**

In addition to strategy, the cultural circuit of capital emphasizes the need to manage organizational cultures to support innovation. As McGregor (2006) writes: “Innovative companies build innovation cultures. ‘You have to be willing to get down into the plumbing of the organization and align the nervous system of the company,’ says James P. Andrew, who heads the innovation practice at BCG” (p. 66). Alignment is the degree to which the behaviors of every employee support the organization’s key goals and philosophy. As Robinson and Stern (1997) state, “Corporate creativity is more sensitive to alignment than any other aspect of business or management. A company has to be strongly aligned in order to be consistently creative” (p. 104). As a result, the cultural circuit circulates a vast amount of knowledge and information for aligning both the technical and social systems of an organization.

The formation is filled with advice for how organizations can systematically “rewire” their cultures and operations for creativity and innovation. This includes efforts to “re-route reporting lines,” “create physical spaces for collaboration, “team up people across the org chart,” and “link rewards to innovation” (McGregor, 2006, p. 66). In addition, the formation emphasizes the need for organizational leaders to manage the social dynamic. Harvard

Professor Teresa Amabile (1996) has written extensively on the importance of controlling the “stimulants and obstacles to creativity.” As she states, “social factors may be responsible for only a small part of the total in creative behavior, but they may account for the lion’s share of the variance that managers can do anything about” (p. 3). In its totality, the discourse of creativity and innovation can be seen to transform work and organizations in substantial ways. As I’ve outlined, the formation functions to systematize the work process and exercise new levels of control over workers. In the following section, I highlight how the discourse also produces distinct forms of identity.

### **Producing Identity – “Innovation Leaders and Creative Talent”**

As part of the transformation of work, innovation has become a central discourse in the production of work-based identities, both organizational and individual. This can be seen in the extent to which organizations and its members derive significant meaning and purpose from engaging in creativity and innovation. Many organizations devote a significant amount of time and effort developing strategic visions, mission statements and core values that highlight their commitment to innovation. Likewise, innovation has become important to the public image and reputation of many companies. In today’s competitive environment, organizations develop resonant corporate brands and marketing campaigns that center on creativity and innovation in an effort to differentiate themselves in the marketplace. On an individual level, many employees find excitement in the prospect of developing leading edge products and services and take pride in being part of an entrepreneurial organization. Given the power of innovation to shape individual and organizational identities, it is important to

explore how this is accomplished through the discursive apparatus of the cultural circuit of capital.

### **Organizational Identity**

According to Albert and Whetten (1985), organizational identity refers to what is central, distinctive and enduring about an organization. It highlights the collective sense of an entity and how organizations attempt to produce and maintain a shared sense of “we-ness.” Christensen & Cheney (1994) suggest that the term refers broadly to “a system’s representations by/to itself and by/to others” (p. 224). In today’s economy, organizations increasingly build their corporate identities around the importance of creativity and innovation. Creativity and innovation represent both symbolic and material success for companies, signifying growth, profitability, status and competitive advantage. Yet I highlight how the drive for innovation does not come ready-made, but must be reproduced through discourse. I argue that the cultural circuit of capitalism shapes the ambitions of the business world by circulating specific images, forms of knowledge and narratives about the promise of innovation in the global economy, which organizations take up as part of their corporate brands and organizational identities.

One of the ways that the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes the identity of organizations is through the production and circulation of innovation rankings and stories about innovation leaders. In many business magazines, there are annual rankings of the most creative/innovative companies based on survey results. Since 2002, *Businessweek* magazine and Boston Consulting Group have compiled a highly publicized annual ranking of “The World’s 25 Most Innovative Companies.” In these issues, the magazine describes the current

group of companies that have made the list and provides a snapshot of their financial performance. One strong message from these rankings is that “creativity pays.” The linking of creativity and financial return is an important element of the innovation formation. It communicates the promise of innovation and emphasizes the rich rewards that await those companies that innovate. A second message from these rankings is that innovation determines the “winners” and “losers” in the global economy. For the past several years, Apple and Google have topped the list as the world’s most innovative companies (Andrew et al., 2008). As technology leaders, both companies have become legendary for creating innovative products and services that excite the imagination of users. Their corporate brands emphasize the importance of both innovation and revolutionary change. For example, on its employment website, Apple states: “Part career, part revolution. Don’t expect business as usual. Prepare to be inspired” (Apple website, 2010). Likewise, Google’s corporate identity emphasizes “smart people with the potential to change the world.” (Google website, 2010). As a result of their innovative brands and tremendous success, both companies are reported continuously in the media, describing how they have transformed their organizations and industries through innovation.

A key characteristic of the discourse is the lavish praise and excitement used to describe the accomplishments of innovation leaders, reflecting a form of hero worship. For example, in *Wired* magazine’s 2007 innovation ranking, Google is described as follows: “The masters of the universe are busily converting ad dollars into a global network of fiber lines and data centers. A planetary computer crunching ever-larger mountains of bits is an invention of historic import. Google’s power to inspire both awe and fear continues to

grow.” Likewise, *Fortune* magazine announced its most admired company for innovation in 2010: Apple Computer. Apple was described this way:

Steve Jobs does it again: Apple is keeping its Most Admired crown for the third year in a row. With 250 million iPods, 43 million iPhones, and 32 million iPod touches sold to date, plus the promise of a game-changing iPad, Apple won this year’s vote by the highest margin ever for a No. 1. ... Its track record for innovation and fierce consumer loyalty translates into tremendous respect across business’ highest ranks. As BMW CEO Norbert Reithofer puts it, “The whole world held its breath before the iPad was announced. That’s brand management at its very best.” (Fortune website, 2010)

These examples highlight how both companies are described in exceptionally powerful terms: “masters of the universe,” “most admired crown,” and “the whole world held its breath.” They are revered not only for their innovation but for their global dominance in conquering markets, which inspires both “awe” and “fear.” While Apple and Google have earned much of their praise, I highlight how the constant circulation of innovation rankings and stories in the media functions to shape the aspirations and identifications of managers, stimulating the entrepreneurial drives of the business world. This is just one example of how the promise of innovation contributes to the production of entrepreneurial organizational cultures and identities.

### **Individual Identities**

On an individual level, the discourse contributes to the production of distinct work-based identities. As du Gay (1996) contends, discourse “makes up” new ways for people to be at work. In analyzing the discourse of the cultural circuit, there is a general celebration and affirmation of human creativity. The formation is filled with numerous passages that extol the intrinsic creativity of workers and the importance of creativity to everyday life. For

example, Mauzy and Harriman (2003) write: “creativity is not reserved for artists, inventors, creative professionals, and the handful of visionaries who in other venues change the way everyone understands their lives .... Everyone is born with innate creative ability, and creative ability responds to exercise like a muscle. And although not everyone may be a natural Olympian of creativity, anyone who gets into shape can surely run and jump and bounce the ball” (pp. 12-13).

Beyond the celebration of the creative subject, the formation constitutes the identities of knowledge workers in specific ways. In examining media representations, knowledge workers are constructed around a broad set of characteristics such as passion, initiative, creativity, customer focus, mobility, and speed. Above all, they are represented as creative talent who are passionate about their work and strive to make a difference through their initiative and imagination. What is most noteworthy is how these media representations link creativity and capitalist enterprise to produce a compelling figure of the creative/innovative professional in the global economy.

Let me share an example from *Fast Company* magazine to illustrate this point. Founded in 1995, *Fast Company* is a leading business magazine that celebrates the ingenuity and innovative spirit of contemporary business leaders and organizations. According to the company’s website, *Fast Company* “illuminates the evolution of business through a unique focus on the most creative individuals in the marketplace. By uncovering best and “next” practices, the magazine helps a new breed of leader work smarter and more effectively” (Company website). As Thrift (2005) argues, *Fast Company* is a prime example of the production of work identities in the era of soft capitalism. He highlights how the magazine discursively positions managers as “creative, fast subjects” (p. 137). I expand on this insight

by examining how *Fast Company* constructs a portrait of a “new breed of leader” that provides an exemplar of the creative and entrepreneurial knowledge worker. I have selected the “creativity issue” from December 2004 as a representative text.

In this issue, a “Letter from the Editor” introduces readers to a young marketing director from Bang & Olufsen who is featured in the cover story:

Meet the quintessential fast person in a fast company: Zean Nielsen, director of marketing for Bang & Olufsen America Inc. He’s on this month’s cover because he’s a prolific idea champion who’s helping his organization grow rapidly. . . .

When we began contemplating this special issue on creativity, Nielsen was exactly the sort of person we had in mind. Creativity drives growth, and creative people drive every great enterprise. It’s not too trite to say that. These days, we’re all too easily caught up in the tactics of competition. We can forget that sustainable advantage is ultimately a function of a company’s ability to consistently generate, develop, and sell valuable new ideas. Which is to say, creativity is at the heart of work and business. And as long as there are new ideas, we all have plenty to learn about where they come from and how they’re brought to life. That’s why this issue of *Fast Company* is so important.

Zean (pronounced Shawn) landed his big job three years ago at the age of 23, becoming the youngest marketing director in Bang & Olufsen’s history. Just to win an interview with the Danish company, he had to endure eight hours of exams that tested his IQ and his personality, as well as his English and math skills. Two years later, he was sent to Chicago, where he eventually helped plot strategy to crack the North American market. Nielsen has since helped plan and open 43 of Bang & Olufsen’s 60 stores in the United States and Canada.

Think about that. Nielsen is just 26. The fact that he’s been given such responsibility so young says a lot about Bang & Olufsen. It is an organization that encourages and supports creativity, a flat and lean company where young, talented people are empowered to make a difference. There’s little hierarchy and no top-down management. . . . Bang & Olufsen’s culture helps Nielsen realize his creative promise. That’s why he works 70 hours a week, and loves it. “I find myself leaning forward on the wheel in the morning to get to work quicker,” he says. “I don’t see it as work. It’s a passion.”

. . . One thing for sure: Our economy needs more organizations that value and encourage the creative spirit. And we need more people like Zean Nielsen who bring passion, energy, and an abundance of ideas to their work every day. (Byrne, 2004, p. 16)



In this example, the editor explains why Neilsen represents the perfect example of a “new breed of leader.” He is the epitome of a creative, enterprising professional. As an individual, he brings “passion, energy and an abundance of ideas to work every day.” He is also deeply committed to helping his organization grow. After enduring a rigorous recruitment process, he now works 70-hour workweeks to help his company expand in the U.S. market. Organizationally, Bang & Olufsen is depicted as a new breed of company, one that “encourages and supports creativity, a flat and lean company where young talented people are empowered to make a difference.” This is in contrast to many organizations that stifle the innovative spirit with too much bureaucracy. Finally, the editor goes on to describe the vision of a dynamic creative economy: “Creativity drives growth, and creative people drive every creative enterprise.” By weaving together themes of personal creativity, organizational innovation and global capitalism, this example constructs a compelling image of the contemporary knowledge worker. Moreover, it illustrates how creative identity is systematically linked to innovation and the fulfillment of capitalist enterprise.

One final example further illustrates the production of the creative and enterprising knowledge worker. In 2006, BlackBerry launched a high profile marketing campaign focusing on the personal narratives of creative professionals who talk about why they “love” their BlackBerrys. In these stories, creative professionals and entrepreneurs share their passion for work and describe how Blackberry devices help them live more creative and empowering lives. Each story highlights the personal testimonial of a creative knowledge worker in the dynamic global economy. In one example, Nina Garcia, Fashion Director for *ELLE Magazine*, shares her story:

I am Nina Garcia. I am the fashion director for ELLE Magazine. I love fashion. This is my life. I think you really have to find something you like and give it 200%. I’m

passionate about this industry. I love the newness every season, and the opportunity to be able to see such beautiful things.

I travel a lot, and [when] a photo shoot comes up, before I would have to wait until I got to a computer and logged in. This way I get a picture of it on my BlackBerry. I get a J-peg of the image. This already gives me a very good idea of what's going on with the layout, with the cover, with what we need to shoot. You need to be first; you need to have the news first; you need to go see that designer before the competition goes there and sees it. So it's a way of very quickly getting the information that you need.

BlackBerry to me is freedom; it helps me keep connected to the magazine. I can communicate what needs to be done. I really use my BlackBerry for everything: it's my phone, it has all of my scheduling, it has everybody's numbers, New York, Milan, Paris, London. When I'm going from show to show, I usually have a BlackBerry and a little notebook. If something amazing comes down the runway, yes, I'm BlackBerrying all my editors.

This story illustrates how knowledge workers are constructed in distinct ways: passionate, creative, fast-paced, connected, global, and competitive. Again, we see the specific linking of creativity and capitalist enterprise to produce an exciting portrait of the enterprising professional. This professional represents a new type of hero in the global economy, fulfilling their personal dreams for creativity while participating in the global pursuit of business innovation. As I highlighted earlier, the cultural circuit of capitalism shapes the motivations and identifications of the business world by circulating specific images and forms of knowledge about the promise of innovation in contemporary capitalism. These forms of knowledge stimulate the self-actualizing properties of individuals and collectives, contributing to the production of the enterprising subject at work. What remains to be seen is how this discourse is taken up and/or resisted by individuals at the level of everyday organizing processes. This is the subject of the next chapter.

In this chapter, I examined creativity and innovation as a large-scale discursive formation that constitutes worldviews, organizing practices and social identities. I

highlighted how the discourse constructs an “innovation imperative” which mandates that companies compete on the terrain of constant innovation or perish. Central to the imperative is the emotional logic of survival/growth, which works rhetorically by circulating a currency of fear. Furthermore, I tried to show how the imperative is part of a larger narrative of promise and peril, in which creativity and innovation represent the promise of a new age but also the peril of increasing global competition. It is this dominant construction that animates the formation and gives it its rhetorical force within the business world. In the following chapter, I examine how the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes meaning at the level of an individual organization. Specifically, I describe the efforts of a leading Internet company to survive in a highly competitive telecommunications industry, and how the innovation imperative shape organizational life in significant ways.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **GOVERNING ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE THROUGH CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION**

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which the managerial discourse of creativity and innovation shapes work and identity at the level of an individual organization. Using ethnographic, focus group and interview data, I describe the efforts of a leading Internet Service Provider (ISP) located in the United States to transform itself into a more competitive and entrepreneurial organization by taking up the discourse of creativity/innovation, and how the mandate to “innovate or die” shapes organizational life in significant ways. I introduce the concept of governmentality to highlight how the discourse shapes the conduct of the organization “at a distance” by circulating specific images, forms of knowledge, and social technologies organized around the promise and peril of innovation. I argue that organizational leaders take up the discourse as a way to make sense of the many challenges facing them due to increasing competition and economic threat. Central to my argument is that innovation has become an “art of government” for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of organizations to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy.

In the case of Orange Planet, I describe how creativity and innovation became a central discourse in the production of organizational meaning, identity and performance, shaping the company’s entire approach to work. Since its founding as a startup company, the

organization had cultivated a distinct corporate identity centered around the “promise” of creative freedom and the endless possibilities of the Internet. However, as the organization began to experience economic challenges, there was a marked shift toward a management discourse characterized by the “peril” of innovation. According to this discourse, the organization was faced with rapid change, increasing competition and the imminent threat of “dying” as a business. The only way to survive in this environment was to take greater risks and compete on the battleground of innovation. Guided by the logic of the innovation imperative, I describe how executives introduced a bold new vision for the company designed to stimulate the creative aspirations of their people. Furthermore, this was accompanied by the implementation of a regime of practices to regulate the enterprising capacities and dispositions of their workforce. In particular, I highlight two technologies for managing the identifications and commitments of employees: the brand and the spreadsheet. Despite these efforts at government, however, the company’s innovation efforts were met with various degrees of skepticism, dissatisfaction and forms of resistance from employees due to the growing disjuncture (or “gap”) between the promise of innovation and the reality of work for organizational members. This chapter illustrates how the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes the conduct of organizations and the production of the enterprising subject at work, yet is increasingly prone to rupture.

This chapter is organized into three sections. First, I revisit the concept of governmentality and describe how the discourse of creativity and innovation functions as an art of government for managing the conduct of organizations. Second, I provide an introduction to the history, growth and challenges of the Internet Service Provider, which I refer to as Orange Planet (OP). I describe its founding as an Internet startup company during

the 1990s to its current position as a mature ISP struggling to innovate and survive in a highly competitive telecommunications industry. Third, I examine the ways in which the discourse of creativity/innovation shapes the conduct of the organization through the production of organizational meaning, identity and performance.

### **Governmentality**

According to Foucault (1980), governmentality is a form of power concerned with the “conduct of conduct” – that is, “to govern . . . is to structure the possible field of actions of others” (p. 221). It involves distinct ways of thinking and includes clear, systematic efforts to manage conduct. Above all, government is conceptualized as an “art” – an activity that involves “craft, imagination, shrewd fashioning, the use of tacit skills and practical know-how, the employment of intuition and so on” (Dean, 1999, p. 18). In this chapter, I describe how the discourse of creativity and innovation has become an “art of government” for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of organizations. As an art of government, innovation shapes the conduct of organizations in several specific ways.

First, it circulates a well-defined body of knowledge and beliefs about how to manage organizations in the twenty-first century. Central to this body of knowledge is the logic of the innovation imperative, which mandates that organizations compete on the terrain of constant creativity and innovation or perish. At Orange Planet, I highlight how the innovation imperative constructed a dominant rationality – a “regime of truth” – in which the organization had to “innovate or die.” This discourse works not only at the level of meaning but also emotion. It circulates an emotional currency of both anxiety and excitement about the future, which shapes the actions of organizational members.

Second, the discourse of innovation disseminates specific strategies, technologies and “best practices” for transforming organizations into disciplined innovators. In particular, I highlight how human resources and finance have become important disciplines for the management of the enterprising organization. At Orange Planet, I describe how the human resources function enacted a regime of practices designed to recruit and manage employees as creative “talent.” In addition, the organization placed increasing emphasis on financial measurement and controls, which was intended to manage the risks and rewards of innovation. Together, these disciplines functioned as two key elements in a system of government that regulated the entrepreneurial capacities of employees.

Third, the discourse of innovation elicits the self-actualizing properties of individuals and organizations. As I will describe, innovation “makes up” new ways for people to be at work by circulating new images and forms of knowledge that shape the enterprising capacities and dispositions of workers. Employees are constructed as creative, fast-paced and driven talent who are comfortable with change and ambiguity. In addition, I also highlight how the innovation imperative shapes the collective identity of organizations in powerful ways. As Cheney and Christensen (1994) write, organizational identity refers broadly to “a system’s representations by/to itself and by/to others” (p. 224). In today’s economy, organizations spend a significant amount of time and money in constructing images and narratives that convey a strong sense of shared identity. At Orange Planet, I highlight how the promise of creativity was an important part of the brand identity of the organization, which was used to manage and regulate employee performance. However, I also highlight how the identity of the organization changed over time as the company struggled to innovate in an increasingly competitive telecommunications industry. Now that

I've highlighted the theoretical framework for this chapter, let me introduce the background, history and challenges facing the organization.

### **Welcome to Startup, Inc.**

The main headquarters of Orange Planet is located on a bustling street in an upscale neighborhood of a large cosmopolitan city. At the top of the office building, there is the characteristic orange logo of the company, a communications “halo” encircling the planet. As one of the leading independent Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Orange Planet is known for its award-winning customer service and support for the Internet. Its core business is providing Internet access through dial-up, broadband and wireless technologies. It was founded in the mid-1990s by a technology entrepreneur from Southern California and later merged with another independent ISP, forming the second largest Internet Service Provider in the United States. As the story goes, both founders were frustrated by the difficulty of connecting to the Internet in its early days and therefore wanted to start companies that would make it easier for customers to get online with a minimum of hassles. The merger of the two companies was considered a perfect match between two independent ISPs that were seen as intelligent, progressive and outside the mainstream of the large Telecommunications companies.

Like many of the companies born in the dotcom era, Orange Planet experienced tremendous growth in customers and revenue during the initial boom period of the Internet, from 1994 to 2000. But as Internet access became a commonplace service, the organization began to experience decreasing subscribers and revenues. Its most lucrative business, dial-up Internet service, was quickly being replaced by high-speed broadband. Since Orange Planet



did not own any of its own communications networks, it had to negotiate agreements with the large telephone and cable companies (“Telcos”) to use their “pipes.” This created significant problems for the company since, with the emergence of broadband, the Telco’s were not legally required to give the company access to their new technologies, such as fiber-optic cable. As a result, Orange Planet was limited in its ability to grow its business through broadband services. In order to survive and grow as a company, executives felt they had to take bold steps to minimize their cost structure and invent new business lines and sources of revenue. In 2003-04, the company outsourced its entire call center operations overseas, which involved laying off 1300 workers. This was a painful process for the organization and began a period of continuous change and uncertainty for employees. In addition to outsourcing, there were annual reorganizations of business units, with the inevitable loss of jobs at year-end.

In 2005, Orange Planet began to aggressively pursue new opportunities for growth and innovation. It launched three new entrepreneurial business units as well as a joint venture with a South Korean telecommunications company to form a new wireless company. The three new business units included a Voice Services group, which provided phone service over the Internet (or VoIP); a Value-Added Services group, which sold the company’s proprietary software and toolbar to other businesses; and a Municipal Networks (“Muni”) group, which partnered with municipal governments to offer wireless access to city residents, businesses and government personnel. During this same period, the organization launched a bold new vision for the company: to become a “total communications provider.” The new vision represented the company’s desire to move beyond its simple roots as an ISP and transform itself into a more competitive and innovative technology company. As I will

describe, this was a significant shift for the organization given that it had traditionally been a financially conservative company. Now, with the launch of its new business initiatives, Orange Planet was attempting to reinvent itself. As one executive stated excitedly, “We are back on an entrepreneurial path!”

Within this dynamic context, Orange Planet struggled to manage both organizational performance and employee morale. While the image of innovation is exciting in the abstract, the reality of organizational innovation is extremely challenging, stressful and, at times, chaotic. For Orange Planet, the launch of its new business units required struggling through a lot of things they had never done before: developing new businesses, reorganizing people and departments, dealing with cross-organizational jealousies and competition, and implementing new accountability and financial reporting. In addition, each of its new business units involved a significant amount of risk. Orange Planet was investing hundreds of millions of dollars in its entrepreneurial businesses, yet it was experiencing significant problems and delays in generating revenue from them. As a result, there was a lot of pressure on the organization to deliver results.

### **Meeting the Chief People Officer**

One of my first visits to the organization was a meeting I had with the Chief People Officer to introduce myself and explain the purpose of this research project. I had been working with the VP of Human Resources up to that point, but it was time to get the official “green light” from the CPO. Orange Planet is led by a small team of executives who are informally referred to as “the suits” by the rest of the organization. Despite this label, many of the executives can be seen wearing Hawaiian shirts to the office. This trend was started by

the CEO, and now has become part of the personae of the leadership team. The Hawaiian shirts symbolize the cool, creative culture of a startup company.

When I met the CPO in his office, he was friendly and welcoming, and in characteristic fashion, dressed in an orange Hawaiian shirt. But he was also very, very tired. After some initial small talk, he explained that he had just returned from a several day executive retreat discussing the strategy of the company.

“We are operating in a very tough market,” he said, “competing against large cable and phone companies, in a stiff regulatory environment. We have a lot at risk.” I could see that he was exhausted.

“It sounds stressful,” I commented.

“Yes,” he replied, “but a good stress.” He was only half convincing. He went on to explain: “If you can’t deal with ambiguity and change, this is not the place for you. Things change rapidly here. Orange Planet is not for the meek and mild.” Then, he added, “We’re at war.”

I would soon realize that the metaphor of “war” was not an exaggeration. In the mindset of the executives, the company was competing for its own survival, going up against the large cable and phone companies yet increasingly being squeezed out of the market. In this environment, the only way to survive and grow was to aggressively pursue new sources of innovation. It would mean investing hundreds of millions of dollars in new business initiatives, with no guarantees of success. It would also require a concerted effort to transform the culture and workforce of the organization to deliver on its new initiatives.

In this chapter, I argue that the discourse of innovation *both reflects and constructs the world of work*. As I discussed in the last chapter, creativity/innovation is a large-scale

discursive formation that orders and naturalizes the world in particular ways. While this discourse is intimately linked to material changes in the mode of production, it also exercises its own rhetorical force, shaping global business in its own image. At Orange Planet, I highlight how the discourse of innovation transformed organizational life in significant ways, constructing specific relations of power/knowledge. According to the discourse, the organization was faced with constant threat and imminent danger. The only way to survive in this world was to take bold risks and compete on the battleground of constant creativity and innovation. In the mind of executives, it would require transforming the organization from a creative, quirky startup company into a more mature, innovative technology organization.

However, the peril of innovation is only half of the story. I also want to highlight how the innovation imperative constructs an equally powerful narrative of promise, in which innovation represents the hope of a new age of growth, empowerment and creative production. I argue that these two elements of the discourse function together in shaping the meaning of work in contemporary capitalism and governing the conduct of organizations. Therefore, before discussing the ways in which the discourse of innovation constructed a world of peril, I want to highlight how the promise of creativity shaped the identity and work culture of Orange Planet from its earliest days as a startup company, and how this was specifically engineered to stimulate the enterprising capacities of workers.

## **Branding Organizational Identity: The Promise of Creativity**

At Orange Planet, one of the ways in which the discourse of creativity and innovation shaped the conduct of the organization was through the production of identity. Since its founding as a startup company in the mid-1990s, the organization had cultivated a distinct corporate identity centered around the promise of creativity and innovation. This included everything from the mission and values of the organization to the physical design of its office space. All of these elements worked together to construct a distinct personality of the organization as a cool, creative, high tech company. As an “art of government,” I highlight how the discourse of innovation circulates specific images and narratives about the promise of work in contemporary capitalism, which are designed to shape the aspirations of an increasingly knowledge-based workforce. The narratives highlight the power of innovation to transform organizations from boring, bureaucratic structures into creative, dynamic enterprises filled with opportunity and excitement. Above all, the discourse constructs a compelling vision of work in which individuals are super-empowered to use their talents, compete in the global economy and pursue their dreams. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) assert, the discourse of creativity and innovation is part of the stimulation of work in the new “spirit” of capitalism, which is designed to build excitement and commitment to the capitalist process.

At Orange Planet, I highlight how branding was an important technology for constructing the identity of the organization as a creative and dynamic startup company. According to Levine (2003), “Branding is the creation and development of a specific identity for a company, product, commodity group, or person. It is carefully designed to present qualities that will be attractive to the public, and it is meant to be developed and perpetuated

for the long haul.” (p. 3-4). While branding is traditionally seen as a way to market the image of an organization to external customers and stakeholders, it is increasingly used to manage the internal life of an organization as well. At Orange Planet, I highlight how the organization’s brand identity, narrative representations and cultural elements were specifically designed to attract and retain employees as creative talent.

### **Mission and Identity**

As a startup company, Orange Planet had always cultivated an identity of creative freedom, both for its customers and its employees. The company’s mission statement highlights a utopian belief in the power of the Internet to improve and empower people’s lives: “Anytime, anywhere, connecting people to the power and possibilities of the Internet.” The philosophy of the company is that it wants to give customers a better Internet experience without controlling the content: “It’s your Internet; you make it what you want.”

Employees pride themselves on giving users complete freedom to navigate the Internet. This was often contrasted with one of its main competitors, America Online (AOL), which was criticized for providing a “walled garden.” A “walled garden” is a web portal that controls the content of what users are able to access. In contrast, Orange Planet emphasized that it was technology “agnostic.” As one employee stated, “We’ve always had the technology agnostic tag, and we’ve always had the ‘we will let you connect to the Internet any way you want.’ We’re just going to give you the tools, and you make the Internet experience what you want it to be.” As such, the organization’s identity attracted customers who were more independent-minded and tech-savvy than the typical subscriber.

Much of the company's identity is rooted in its early beginnings as an entrepreneurial startup. It had a reputation for being a "rebel" and an outsider, going up against the large telecommunications companies. As Carrie, a manager of corporate communications, described: "We've always been the rebel. You know, we're not the large AT&T behemoth company. We're sort of more the scrappy boxer that is going to get ahead by sheer force of tactics and will and determination." Gary, a Director of Sales, echoed these remarks: "Orange Planet was the Internet company that you wanted if you were smart and edgy, if you didn't want the walled garden with AOL. ...It was also viewed as the non-conformist. And we've always been known as not forcing our software and products on you. We give you the Internet connectivity and it's your Internet, you go out there...."

The identity of the organization was very attractive to employees as well. They often commented that they liked working for a small entrepreneurial startup that was different from the large Telecommunications companies. Unlike the large corporations, Orange Planet was seen as fun and rebellious, with an employee-friendly culture. A new hire stated:

I had people excited for me when I told them I was coming here. You know, people identify Orange Planet as unique, a little rebellious, a little individualistic, not in a negative way but in a fun sort of outside-of-the-big-mainstream-telephone-company way. ... I think people perceive OP as still very much the try-new-things, high-tech Internet company. It's got that same sort of fun image, like you always hear about Google and eBay and Yahoo.

In its public image, Orange Planet has long been associated with its people, who are seen as "creative, quirky, smart and fun." Its early commercials featured hard working Orange Planet employees dedicated to giving customers a better Internet experience. In one commercial, two employees compete for votes from the audience regarding the best Internet security program: virus blocker or spam blocker. While the voting injected a bit of humor into the commercials, the main message was the employees: "Hi I'm an Orange Planet

employee, and I'm working hard for you." In 2005, Orange Planet launched another high-profile advertising campaign to reaffirm its identity as a company committed to endless "possibilities." The campaign was titled, "Do you believe anything is possible?" It appeared in television commercials, popular print magazines and on the web. The campaign featured mythical creatures such as giants, trolls and fairies walking around the office, bringing a sense of possibility to work. One print ad read:

Do you believe anything is possible? We do. We believe High Speed Internet should be knock-your-socks-off fast and your personal information should be more secure than Fort Knox. We believe that when customers need support, it should be there. 24/7. Maybe we're crazy, but we believe your High Speed Internet can be something wonderful again. We've got the tools to make that dream come true. With a little imagination and a lot of hard work, we're making unbelievable things happen every day. Call 1-866-XXX-XXXX and start believing today.

This campaign illustrates how creativity and the dedication of its employees was an important part of the brand messaging of Orange Planet. In today's economy, many companies attempt to cultivate a creative or "counter-cultural" identity as a way to engage the imagination of customers and employees. Within the technology industry, this marketing strategy was popularized by the tremendous success of Apple Computer and its iconic advertisements. For example, Kahane and Reitter (2002) describe how Apple Computer stitches together narratives of "reality" and "fiction" – such as stories of Gandhi – to construct its identity as a creative organization fighting against the enemies of conformity and oppression. Unfortunately, Orange Planet's campaign was not well received by customers or employees. Customers did not know what services the commercials were trying to sell, and employees hated the image of fairies flying around the office.



## Core Values and Beliefs

An important part of the culture at Orange Planet is its Core Values and Beliefs, or CV&Bs. On the company's website, the CV&Bs are described as follows: "What's important at Orange Planet? We are convinced that the key to creating a truly great organization is an intense focus on the values that guide its people's actions. These are Orange Planet's 'Core Values and Beliefs.' If we don't seem to be living them, call us on it!" (2006). Some examples of the CV&B's include:

- *Respect for the Individual*: "We respect the individual, and believe that individuals who are treated with respect and given responsibility respond by giving their best."
- *Fun*: "Work is an important part of life, and it should be fun. Being a good businessperson does not mean being stuffy and boring."
- *Best Effort/Risk-taking*: "We insist on giving our best effort in everything we undertake. Furthermore, we see a huge difference between "good mistakes" (best effort, bad result) and "bad mistakes" (sloppiness or lack of effort)."
- *Competition*: "We love to compete, and we believe that competition brings out the best in us."

While many companies have values statements, the CV&Bs were an integral part of the history and character of the organization. Many long-term employees remember the early days of the startup and its cult-like devotion to its mission and principles. Employees used to read aloud one of the values at the start of every team meeting. They found the values to be inspiring statements of how a company should operate. Even recent hires commented on how the CV&Bs attracted them to work for the company. A Director who started in 2006

stated: “I still remember the day I interviewed for the first time. That interview, sitting on the seventh floor in the waiting room reading the CV&Bs on the wall ... that was part of what made me decide to be here.”

What is important to note is how the CV&Bs provide a seamless integration of creative/humanistic and enterprising values. While there is no explicit reference to “creativity” or “innovation,” the values highlight key themes of individuality, fun and risk-taking. These themes represent popular constructions of work in the new economy, which organizations take up as part of their branding efforts to attract and retain employees. For example, Florida (2002) has contributed significantly to the cultural construction of knowledge work in contemporary capitalism with his analysis of the “creative class.” He states:

Today’s professionals see themselves as members of a broad creative force, not as corporate officers or organization men. Thus they gravitate to stimulating, creative environments – to places that offer not only opportunities and amenities, but openness to diversity, where they feel they can express themselves and validate their identities. (p. 11)

This discourse extends to all forms of popular business press, which provide advice and tips on how to attract and retain talent. In 2007, the cover story of *Inc.* magazine announced: “Fun. It’s the new core value” (Berentson, 2007). However, while Orange Planet’s core values reinforce key themes of creative identity, there is also an infusion of enterprising discourse. Phrases such as “we insist on giving our best effort,” “being a good businessperson” and “we love to compete” position workers as enterprising subjects who are driven by the love of competition. Several values that are particularly important to the identity construction of the organization are respect for the individual, fun and competition.

**Respect for the individual.** One of the values that is most attractive to employees is respect for the individual. In the language of employees, you can “come as you are” in appearance, dress and lifestyle. This is a consistent message from executives and a long-standing principle of the organization. Executives like to emphasize that, as long as you get your work done, it doesn’t matter what you look or dress like. Historically, the organization has always prided itself on giving employees tremendous freedom to be themselves. Back in the early days, many employees were known to come into work wearing only a t-shirt, shorts and flip-flops. The CEO was a strong champion of the importance of individuality. He is quoted as saying, “What really matters is people. That people have the power to be themselves, to express themselves, to be an individual.” This message was especially resonant for new hires who joined the organization. For example, Paul, a senior manager of business intelligence, shared the following story about his orientation experience.

When I went through orientation here, the Chief People Officer came to the orientation and said, “You want to succeed here? Be who you are and we’ll reward you for doing a good job. But to be happy in the world, you’ve got to be who you are, and we want to encourage that. If you don’t think we are, come tell us.” What a fantastic message. It made a huge impact on me. I was really impressed with the willingness to say, yeah be different - we like it.

This example illustrates how individuality is an important part of the promise of work in the contemporary workplace. While employees are encouraged to be themselves and dress casually, they are also expected to work in a fast-paced, ever-changing environment with significant work demands. As one employee stated, “I think there is a personae that the culture is casual. Visually, we are casual, but there are some intense people here. So it’s not a casual way of thinking. People are really intense, they are focused.” When I asked Paul about his work/life balance, he responded: “I’m not a good person to ask about that because

I go home and work. I go home, I have dinner, and then I work until 11:30 or midnight.

There is nobody pressuring me to do that. ... But I thoroughly enjoy what I do.”

**Fun.** Another core value of the organization is fun. Fun is one of the explicit values of the organization that distinguishes it from competitors and a consistent message in its brand identity. Executives like to emphasize that fun is an important part of the work culture at Orange Planet. In its earlier days, Orange Planet was known for hosting a wide variety of events to create a fun and energizing environment for employees. This even included hosting beer and hot dogs parties on the back of its parking deck every Friday afternoon. In those days, the organization had plenty of cash to spend on celebrations. Today, while many of those extravagant expenses are gone, the organization still prides itself on creating an energizing environment for employees. This includes annual picnics, ticket give-aways to sporting events, and the annual Holiday party. However, many employees acknowledge that the culture has changed significantly over the years. Many would not describe the organization as fun anymore. As one employee stated, “I enjoy the people, but the work is the work.” Another stated sarcastically, “It’s fun in that it is a fast-paced environment, and you don’t have a choice but to smile and laugh it off, or you’ll drown.”

**Competition.** While Orange Planet’s brand identity reinforces the values of individuality and fun, it also promotes a strong culture of competition and performance. As a small startup company, it survives based on its ability to compete in a highly competitive telecommunications industry. This enterprising “spirit” is reproduced through a number of different mechanisms of culture, from its bonus and reward systems to its annual performance reviews. In its performance reviews, employees are evaluated on eight core competencies, including innovation, adaptability and drive for results. Executives also

emphasize the importance of competition through their everyday discourse. At one point, I observed an executive speaking to a group of “up-and-coming” managers during a training session. The executive began by saying, “Do you know what keeps me up at night? Our competition.” He then went on to describe how Orange Planet was operating in a highly competitive environment, competing against large players in the industry. He emphasized the importance of innovative thinking to the survival of the organization: “The big guys can outspend us but they can’t out-think us. We need to be smarter than our competitors.” This example illustrates how executives often employed stories about the competition to motivate employees and reinforce specific enterprising qualities such as innovative thinking, competitiveness and drive.

## **Office Space**

The last area that I will highlight is the design and aesthetics of the office. The office space is specifically engineered to evoke the look and feel of a decidedly cool, creative, high-tech company. When you enter the main reception of its headquarters building, you are greeted by a techno-chic interior, with dim lighting, exposed ventilation, retro modern furniture and glass-enclosed offices. As you walk from the elevators to the reception desk, you pass a series of 12-foot high, illuminated glass panels displaying the organization’s ten core values and beliefs. On the walls in the waiting area, there are numerous plaques showcasing the company’s awards for customer service and innovation.

As you walk through the office, you pass a number of conference rooms with surprisingly un-corporate names: “Gin and Tonic,” “Vodka,” “Bourbon,” and so on. This is part of the quirkiness of the organization. Every conference room in the building is named

after a different alcoholic drink. I learned that these names were part of the early culture of the organization, and provided a source of humor and symbolic importance for employees. It communicated the “fun, young, shoot-from-the-hip” attitude of a startup company. As one employee stated, “There’s always a little hint of excitement everywhere. I’ve been to other companies and it seems kind of boring. But that right there [“Gin and Tonic”] is exciting to me. It’s the name of a drink; it just makes you chuckle.” However, within the last year, Human Resources had initiated a campaign to change the conference room names to “cities of the world,” which was felt to convey greater professionalism. Needless to say, employees were not happy about the prospect of change.

One final aspect of office design is the WOW room. The WOW room is an employee break room with pool and foosball tables, flat screen television, espresso maker, and vending machines stocked with Red Bull. It was nicknamed the WOW room in the early days of the organization during the euphoria of the dotcom boom. While some employees saw it as a vestige of times past, others believed it still symbolized the company’s fun and alternative business culture. A director stated, “I’ve been here for four years, and Orange Planet has always been good about creating a kind of cool environment. We’ve got a break room right near where I sit, it’s called the WOW room. It’s got pool tables, foosball, TVs. There actually are a good number of people there.”

Overall, I have outlined how the promise of creativity shaped the identity of the organization in significant ways, circulating specific images and narratives of creative work that functioned to stimulate and regulate the enterprising capacities of employees. Furthermore, I described how this was accomplished through the technology of branding. In the next section, I describe how the identity of the organization shifted in marked ways as the

organization began to adopt a discourse of “peril” in making sense of the company’s uncertain future.

### **The Dark Side of Enterprise: The Peril of Innovation**

While Orange Planet’s corporate identity reinforced the image of creative freedom and the “unlimited possibilities” of the Internet, the organization’s internal communication increasingly reflected a management discourse characterized by the peril of innovation. This was driven by a number of factors. Since 2000, the organization had been experiencing declining growth in a challenging market. As discussed earlier, its most lucrative business, dial-up Internet service, was quickly being replaced by high-speed broadband. But since the organization did not have access to these new technologies, its ability to grow its business was limited. As a result, it was implementing a number of cost-cutting measures and organizational changes to maintain its profitability, such as outsourcing its entire call center operations overseas. In addition, Orange Planet was investing hundreds of millions of dollars in new entrepreneurial businesses, yet it was experiencing significant delays and problems in generating revenue from them. This was compounded by its failure to meet many of the earnings forecasts it had reported to Wall Street. As a result, the organization was feeling significant pressure to deliver measurable progress on its initiatives. However, while the organization faced very real challenges, I highlight how the discourse of innovation constructs the world of work in ways that are not necessarily coterminous with reality.

In this section, I describe how the innovation imperative became a dominant logic that shaped the identity and culture of the organization according to the peril of innovation. As I will highlight, the discourse constructs a world of constant threat and imminent danger,

in which the only way to survive is to “innovate or die.” Alongside these fears, however, I highlight how the discourse also fosters a logic of risk and reward that excites members with the hope of achieving significant financial rewards.

### **The Emotional Logic of Survival and Growth**

When I first met with Orange Planet in 2006, questions of survival and growth were paramount for executives. In interviews, they spoke candidly about the necessity of innovation to the company’s future. As one executive stated:

In order for Orange Planet to survive, we’ve got to reinvent our self. And coming up with other products and services that we can create a sustainable business in is absolutely something that is critical for this business. We know that providing dialup service is not something that is going to sustain us. We must either create something else, invent something else or over time we are going to be out of business.

Another executive, a Vice President of Product Marketing, described the company’s situation in more dire terms: “Our business is dying! Growth is in broadband, but because of the duopoly with the phone and cable companies, we’re stymied. Our revenue growth has been flat for the last couple of years and our stock price is depressed. We have to figure out how to grow!”

As these comments highlight, the innovation imperative was a dominant form of logic at Orange Planet. In the minds of executives, “innovate or die” was the new reality of business. To survive in this world, the organization had to invent new business lines and sources of revenue or perish. This worldview was not exclusive to the leaders and managers of the organization. Employees at every level talked about the need to innovate in surprisingly consistent terms using the language of “survival.” Ken, a systems administrator,



stated: “It’s absolutely necessary if this company is to survive. Dialup is dying. That was our identity before, but it’s not our identity anymore. We’ve got to do something.”

One way that the discourse shaped the conduct of the organization was through the potent metaphor of life and death. I highlight how executives actively took up the metaphor as a way to convey the urgency of the organization’s situation and to shape the motivations and commitments of their workforce. Sophia, a financial analyst, stated:

Management told us straight up, ‘What you’re doing right now is bringing in money to fund our new [innovative] initiatives because our old business is dying. You are making the money that we are spending on new products/services so that we don’t die tomorrow.’ Now we’ll see if it works, I hope it works. ... [but] if it doesn’t work and the company folds years down the road, I’m not going to be shocked. I understand what we’re doing because we have to.

In this example, management circulated the metaphor of “dying” as a way to communicate the direness of the company’s situation and to motivate employees to pursue organizational goals with renewed intensity.

As I have stated, the innovation imperative does much more than reflect a preexisting world; it exercises its own rhetorical force by creating a world of constant threat and imminent danger. Furthermore, the discourse works not only at the level of meaning but also emotion. It circulates a currency of fear and anxiety that works on subjects in direct and palpable ways. As a form of government, the discourse of innovation regulates the conduct of employees by structuring an “affective economy.” According to Wissinger (2007), an affective economy involves the “expansion and contraction of affective capacities” whereby “value is produced through enlivening, capacitating and modulating affect” for the realization of profit (p. 234). As an affective economy, the discourse of innovation works through the circulation of linguistic signs, images and objects at the level of a population. As these signs

and objects of emotionality circulate, they acquire more and more affective value and, thus, work economically to direct the energies of employees.

At Orange Planet, the emotional weight of the innovation imperative became more pronounced over time as the organization approached an uncertain future. Through the circulation of the peril of innovation, both executives and employees came to understand the urgency of the organization's situation in similar terms. At one point, the interim CEO developed a company slogan that heightened the need for urgency from all employees. The slogan was "Right.Now." The meaning of this statement was explained to me by a VP of Sales: "'Right.Now.' is the company's mantra for the year. 'Do it right and do it now. Right now.' There is some messaging around that which I think is accurate: don't take things for granted, get to work, let's do things right the first time, let's do them now, have a sense of urgency." Through the "Right.Now." mantra, executives reproduced a discourse of peril that compelled employees to "get to work."

I highlight how the discourse of peril created a climate of fear and anxiety that was substantial and shaped the behavior of employees in concrete ways. Employees often commented that they felt increasing pressure, anxiety and stress to deliver on the organization's innovation goals. In describing the company's situation, one employee responded, "This is a make or break year for us." Another stated, "It is very do or die at Orange Planet right now." When I asked one experienced manager to describe the climate at the organization, she replied, "I honestly have to say it's kind of oppressive. ... Some of it comes from the pressure of every person knows that we've got to make these new businesses work. Every single person here knows that, knows how much is riding on the success of these new business units." At Orange Planet, the discourse of peril produced a constant

stimulus of fear and anxiety that modulated and regulated the entrepreneurial capacities of organizational members. In the words of the employee, “every single person” felt the pressure to make the new innovation initiatives work.

### **The Logic of Risk and Reward**

While the innovation imperative circulated an emotional logic of fear and survival, it also reproduced a logic of risk and reward that was exciting for organization members. Employees commented that while Orange Planet had traditionally been a financially conservative company, it had adopted a strategy of greater risk-taking in recent years as part of its innovation efforts. In discussing the new identity of the organization, the VP of Human Resources emphasized the importance of innovation and risk-taking. She stated:

What words would I use to describe our company today? Well, I certainly would say innovative. I think the new businesses that we’ve launched in a very short time are clear indicators that innovation... is relevant to who this company is today. I’d also say risk-taking. We’ve laid bets at the same time. .... We are taking risks at the front edge of the industry and getting into the convergence that’s happening in the industry.

The new risk orientation of the company was reflected in a dominant metaphor used by employees: gambling. Employees consistently used the metaphor of gambling and placing bets to describe the company’s approach to innovation. Phrases such as “we laid bets,” “we’re putting down bets” and “we are making gambles” were common expressions used by both executives and employees. “Bets” referred to the new initiatives that the organization was pursuing as a way to grow the business. One employee summarized the company’s risk orientation this way: “We’re making a lot of gambles. We were conservative for a while but [not anymore]. We got this cash cow over here [i.e., the Dialup Internet

business], and we're putting down bets. We've gone to Vegas is really what we've done. Because many of these new initiatives are huge bets.”

The metaphor of gambling was a pervasive part of the sense-making practices of the organization. It is a direct outgrowth of the innovation imperative and its dominant construction of promise and peril. The discourse emphasizes the need for companies to take bigger risks in order to grow the business and realize new sources of revenue. Even more so, the discourse emphasizes that innovation will be richly rewarded by the markets. The equation of innovation and financial reward is a strong message in the formation. Getz and Robinson (2003) argue that the innovation imperative with its mantra of “Innovate or die” fosters a “jackpot mentality” within the business world. It is “a belief that everything would be made right with a handful of ‘homerun’ innovations – innovations that would change the very terms of the competition in their industries” (p. 131).

This was certainly the mentality at Orange Planet. Employees were motivated by the prospect that if only one or two of their “bets” paid off, the future of the company would be assured. This is reflected in a comment made by a Director of Sales, who responded somewhat defensively when I asked him about the gambling metaphor:

I think if you candidly have a conversation with executive management and asked if every one of these businesses is going to hit, they would probably say no – they're probably not all going to hit. But if we can get one or two or three or whatever the number is to hit, I think we have a future, I think this company steps into this total communications provider role and becomes much bigger than we are today. I mean, I don't know that I would relate it to a gamble. I think there were probably some pretty intelligent people who spent the time on strategy to try and create these businesses. But do they all hit, I don't know. Some so far have been more successful than others.

As this comment highlights, the logic of risk and reward was a dominant logic at Orange Planet, which shaped the motivations and commitments of organizational members. It is part

of the larger cultural construction of innovation in the business world, which compels organizations to pursue innovation in the hopes of achieving growth and financial rewards.

**Google.** While the metaphor of gambling provided a potent way to make sense of the risks and rewards of innovation, employees also drew upon another dominant image: Google. For employees, Google symbolized the risks and rewards of innovation in concrete form. Since its founding in 1998, Google has become one of the most successful companies in the world. While the popularity of its search engine is well known, it also continues to innovate new products and services every year, such as G-mail, Google Earth Maps, etc. Since 2004, it has been selected repeatedly as one of the “Most Innovative Companies in the World” by *Businessweek* magazine. For Orange Planet, Google symbolized the power of an Internet company to transform business practices. It was cool, innovative and highly successful. Most of all, Google was a company that continued to take risks and was rewarded for its efforts. With annual revenues approaching 22 billion and a 500 percent increase in its stock prices since its IPO date in 2004, Google provided a powerful model of success for the organization.

Rose (1999) argues that increasingly the media offer representations of “styles of existence” by which individuals come to understand and act upon themselves. He especially highlights the power of images in popular culture to construct ethical vignettes that shape the subjectivity of persons. This includes the proliferation of commercials and corporate branding efforts that construct ideal images of work and organization in society. At Orange Planet, the image of Google provided a powerful representation of the entrepreneurial organization that shaped the desires of employees.

The aspiration to be like Google was a common theme among employees. As a VP of Operations commented, “I think we’re searching for what our culture is right now. With all the change, people are asking, what is our identity? Are we still going to be optimistic? Are we going to be very pragmatic? Are we going to be super creative and innovative, in the same way you see a Google or other smaller companies doing? I think that’s what we aspire to. Most of the people here if you look at role model type companies, we want to be a Google.” Many employees admired Google’s ability to remain creative and “dotcom-ish” while making the necessary corporate changes to be financially successful. A Director stated:

You look at some companies that you perceive as kind of changing with the wind and being very successful. And a lot of characteristics or qualities seem to be dotcom-ish. Like the Googles of the world seemingly have this company mantra that is more dotcom-ish. And yet they’ve been able to make the changes that are necessary to go forward and be hugely successful. So it’s hard to say you don’t want to go that way because you follow their path and it has been amazing.

While employees admired Google’s success, they were also critical of its excesses. Most employees were familiar with Google’s culture and extravagant amenities from media reports. But employees were also influenced by a long-standing business relationship with Google. As two Internet companies, Orange Planet and Google often collaborated on specific projects together to cross-market their products and services. As a result, some employees had a first-hand experience of the organization, its culture and how it operated. One VP of Software Sales talked enthusiastically about how much he enjoyed working with Google in a deal-making capacity. He also described many of the unique amenities and perks of the organization, including how it had a former chef of the Grateful Dead who cooked gourmet meals for employees in its corporate dining hall. However, he was skeptical that this kind of corporate excess could continue. He stated:

Google offers plenty of stuff and they are legendary because of it. And they certainly used to do it on a much larger way, and they've actually scaled back. There have been all kinds of articles written about them about their legendary list of perks. You can go to the website and it gives you a list of perks. But a lot of the stuff is carefully designed. They hired the Chef from the Grateful Dead to be their head chef, and they will fix you almost anything you want. You walk in and they say, "What do you want?" "I want blackened salmon over couscous and ribeye as a side cart." Done. They'll cook anything. Fly it in at any expense. But then again they can afford it. They are the exception, they are such an exception that you almost can't factor it in. ... I don't think it will last forever. I mean there's going to be a day where they'll grow up like everybody else.

Despite the awareness that Google was an "exception," employees still viewed the company as a model of success. This is evident in a statement made by a Director of Web Design, who summed up Orange Planet's innovation efforts this way: "Total communications provider – [that is] high risk and high reward. In three years we can easily be the next Google or in three years we can easily be the next Lycos. And I think it's probably that stark a measure." As this statement highlights, despite the tremendous challenges facing the company, the image of Google provided a powerful model of success that shaped the logic of the organization and motivated employees to pursue a path of high risk and high reward.

### **Constructing a New Identity: The "Power" of Vision**

Now that I have described how the innovation imperative constructed a world of promise and peril in which the organization had to innovate or die, I want to describe how Orange Planet attempted to construct a new identity through the power of vision. As Foucault (1980) writes, power rarely takes the form of a prohibition; instead it creates an incitement to discourse. In the case of Orange Planet, I highlight how executives introduced a bold new vision for the company: to become a "total communications provider." The new

vision was intended to create a new direction and identity for the organization and inspire employees to pursue the organization's innovation goals with renewed intensity and commitment. Most importantly, I highlight how the vision functioned as a central steering mechanism for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of organizational members.

### **A Bold New Vision**

Since 2005, Orange Planet had aggressively pursued new opportunities for growth and innovation by launching a series of entrepreneurial business units. To articulate the new direction of the organization, the CEO introduced a bold new vision for the company: to become a "total communications provider." A Vice President explained the meaning of this statement:

The new vision, total communications provider, is meant to be just that. However you communicate, by phone, by mobile device, by laptop in the park, by traditional sitting at your computer, you can do that via Orange Planet. The catch is that it should be seamless between all of those devices..... That to me is total communications provider. But we are nowhere near that right now.

The new vision was driven, in part, by the need to survive in a highly competitive Telecommunications industry. As one employee explained, "In order for Orange Planet to compete successfully, we have to be on parity with our competitors, which means offering a triple play." A triple play referred to high-speed Internet, phone service over the Internet (or VoIP) and wireless. Since the large telecommunications companies were offering a triple play bundled together at discount rates, Orange Planet felt it had to do the same. Yet beyond the need to be competitive, the new vision also represented the organization's desire to move beyond its simple roots as an ISP and establish a new identity as an innovative technology



company. Employees were motivated by the prospect of becoming an innovative “total communications provider.” A Director stated:

I really like the total communications provider direction, and I hope we can really fulfill that promise.... We are somewhat uniquely positioned in the industry to care about all the communications forms that matter to people. So we have this ability to do something that a lot of companies don't. I think that is a very cool position to be in in a very volatile marketplace like the one we're in.

Another employee stated:

I think people are optimistic about the new direction. There's a plan for turning our growth deceleration into acceleration with [our new initiatives]. And I think there are a lot of new ideas that people are coming up with. It's the possibility of actually becoming a total communications provider that is exciting.

Employees were especially excited about regaining the entrepreneurial spirit of a startup that once characterized the company. One manager stated:

I think that we are an established company that still acts like a startup. You see it every day. We establish ourselves as one thing, and then someone has an idea ... and all of a sudden we become a startup again. And we have the ability to reinvent ourselves. It seems that we feed off of that newness and the different things we can do. ... We can BE this total communications provider.

Energized by the new vision and strategy, employees began to think of the company's new entrepreneurial businesses as “startups” inside the larger organization. One employee stated, “I sometimes say that we are like 3 or 4 startups right now.” Another employee commented, “We've created a bunch of little startup businesses inside the mothership.”

As these examples illustrate, the new vision inspired the organization to dream on a grand scale: to become a “total communications provider,” not just an ISP. The term “total” alone suggests that the organization had ambitious plans to become a bigger player in the industry. I highlight how executives at Orange Planet deployed the vision statement as a specific technology of government. According to Deetz, Tracy and Simpson (2000), an organizational vision is “a picture of the future” that helps to direct, coordinate and inspire

the actions of its members (p. 52). While vision statements are generally viewed as positive strategies for organizational change, I highlight how these same mechanisms can be used as “soft controls” for shaping the aspirations of employees and directing their behavior in systematic ways. At OP, the vision statement functioned as a central steering mechanism for stimulating the enterprising capacities of employees.

### **Cool and Cutting Edge**

Inspired by the new vision, employees began to envision themselves as a “cool” and “cutting edge” technology company. Employees constantly used the word “cool” to describe their highest aspirations for the organization. In the world of technology, “cool” is synonymous with innovation. When I asked one VP to respond to the new vision of the company, he said he found it exciting to work for an established Internet company that was also launching new entrepreneurial businesses. He stated: “That’s a cool company to work for. It has to be right from the standpoint of your risk profile but, by and large, I would say that the majority of people who are here would pick that company if they got to choose.” Another manager described how the image of “cool” would benefit Orange Planet in the marketplace: “I think the image of being a cool, scrappy company is an attribute that would serve us well. And I think it would definitely attract consumers who would gravitate toward that kind of a brand, you know, the cool, quirky, cutting edge brand.”

Many employees used the word “cool” to describe the excitement of working on new, cutting edge technologies. One employee used the analogy of a wrapped present to describe the company’s new products:

We are in the middle of making a lot of cool things. We definitely know there are cool boxes. But we still don’t know quite what’s in those boxes yet. There’s this

promise of coolness but as yet it's still an unopened present. It's a promise of goodness without actually knowing what's in them. It might be very cool; it might be another bad tie.

This statement highlights how employees were motivated by the promise of developing “cool” new technologies but also recognized that there were no guarantees of success.

Despite the risks, however, employees were driven by the desire to remain cutting edge. A manager shared this story: “I think we’re trying really hard to remain cutting edge. I think some of the things we’re trying to do with new media are promising. We’ve got a product called Reader, My Reader, which received a lot of accolades when it first launched. One of the bloggers wrote, ‘When did [Orange Planet] become cool again.’”

At one point, I asked employees to write a newspaper headline to describe what the public should know about the organization. Members consistently highlighted the image of Orange Planet as cool and innovative. One manager stated: “Orange Planet poised for cool new future.” Karen, A financial analyst, was more effusive: “It might be something like, ‘Orange Planet – You may not know it but we’re really cool,’ or ‘If you come here, you’ll find cool stuff or cool people or cool atmosphere.’” Emily stated: “I would say, Orange Planet – the only major independent ISP, now total communications provider, struggling and innovating its way to the top.” In each of these examples, innovation represented both symbolic and material success for the organization. Furthermore, it illustrates how the organization’s vision statement functioned to stimulate powerful forms of identification among employees.

## **Cultural Controls**

In an effort to align the organization around its new vision and identity, I describe how Orange Planet implemented a regime of practices for managing the culture of the organization. As Dean (1999) states, “government is not just about abstract thought. It is concerned with how thought operates within our organized ways of doing things, our regimes of practices . . . “ (p. 27). As an art of government, the discourse of innovation operates through a whole series of strategies, technologies and “best practices” for transforming organizations into systemic and disciplined innovators. While many of these practices are not exclusive to innovation, I highlight how they are deployed as part of a systematic effort to direct, develop and regulate the productive energies of employees as enterprising and innovative subjects.

In this section, I will highlight two sets of practices employed by the organization to manage its workforce: talent management and financial management. These two sets of practices reflect the increasing importance of both human resources and finance in managing the entrepreneurial capacities of organizations. As I will describe, talent management involves a whole set of activities designed to recruit, engage and motivate employees as creative “talent.” Financial management, on the other hand, involves efforts to manage the accountability of employees through the use of financial modeling, performance measures and incentives. While each of these sets of practices involves many components, I will highlight two technologies in particular that were used to manage the identity and culture of the organization: the employment brand and the spreadsheet. As I will describe, the employment brand extends the reach of the corporate brand by managing the image of the organization as “a great place to work” in the minds of current and future employees. The

spreadsheet, on the other hand, is intimately tied to managing the financial risks and rewards of innovation. Together, these two technologies illustrate how Orange Planet attempted to manage both the symbolic and material dimensions of work.

## **Talent Management**

As a knowledge-intensive organization, Orange Planet was highly dependent on the talent of its employees for success. The company prides itself on hiring smart people and creating an organizational culture that attracts “talent.” The organization sees the intelligence and innovation of its people as a distinct competitive advantage over its rivals. This is reflected in one of the company’s core brand attributes: “smart people: big brains with cutting edge experience” (company website). This was not just a marketing slogan. Employees often commented that one of the unique strengths of the company was its collection of smart and talented people. As a result, the organization actively recruited and developed its employees as “talent.” I highlight how this discursive construction of employees as “talent” both enables and constrains the experience of work. While employees are treated well and given more opportunities to contribute their talents at work, they are also expected to perform work in a fast-paced, demanding environment with significant risk.

Given the strategic importance of “talent,” the organization invested a significant amount of resources in managing its people. Much of this responsibility went to the Human Resources department. The HR group was responsible for providing a wide range of services to support the strategy of the company and manage the steady flow of talent into the organization. One of the major issues the HR group had to address was how to manage its workforce amidst dramatic change. While the image of innovation is exciting in the

abstract, the reality of organizational innovation is extremely challenging, stressful and, at times, chaotic. Executives were especially concerned about low morale among employees and high turnover among its new hires, which was at a startling 17-20 percent. In order to address these problems, the HR group undertook a project to develop an employment brand. As a form of government, I highlight how the employment brand is used to extend the reach of the corporate brand by shaping the image and expectations of the employment relationship in the mind of employees.

**The employment brand.** According to Minchington (2010), employment branding is a strategy for creating “the image of the organization as a ‘great place to work’ in the mind of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market.” It works by “consistently putting forth an image” of the employment experience that is attractive to members as well as “vertically integrating all ‘employee touch-points’ . . . with that brand position.” By managing both image and interactions (or “touch-points”), employment brands are designed to shape the identifications and commitments of current and future employees. As described in the Wiley Business Pulse, “When successfully executed, the employment brand articulates a promise that not only makes people want to work for the company, but also gives current employees a sense of pride and shared mission with their organization” (p 2). At Orange Planet, the employment brand was a tool for communicating its “promise” to employees as well as its identity as an organization. But the brand was also a technology for managing the expectations and motivations of its workforce, especially new hires. The Chief People Officer referred to this as “branding the employee experience.”

At Orange Planet, the employment brand involved an extensive process of conducting focus groups, surveys and workshops with former and current employees to identify its core

employment brand attributes. The organization then developed a succinct and consistent positioning statement, which it referred to as its Employee Value Proposition (EVP). The EVP represented the central image around which all communication and interactions with employees would be aligned. While the organization had ambitious plans for integrating the EVP into all employee “touch-points” throughout the lifecycle of an individual’s career (recruiting, new hire orientation, training, promotions, etc.), I want to focus on the content of Orange Planet’s employment brand statement and how it was designed to manage and regulate the identities of new hires as enterprising subjects

On the company’s website, the organization’s employment value proposition is articulated as an identity statement.

*Who are we?*

We are a fast-paced, ever-evolving company with challenges and opportunities for every employee to make an impact. Orange Planet is filled with smart, driven people, working together to deliver a personalized experience for our customers by creating the technology of tomorrow. We are the grown-up start-up redefining the communications industry. (Company website)

This statement contains a number of important brand elements. In particular, I highlight how the brand reinforced the excitement and stimulation of work at Orange Planet, especially in regard to innovation. Phrases such as “creating the technology of tomorrow” and “We are the grown-up startup redefining the communications industry” project an identity of a leading edge technology company engaged in the exciting pursuit of innovation. But I also highlight how the employment brand was designed to regulate and integrate employees into the work culture as well. Descriptors such as “fast-paced,” “ever-evolving,” and “challenges and opportunities for every employee to make an impact” were code words to communicate the unique challenges and demands of the work environment. Orange Planet

offered a fast-paced and constantly changing environment that demanded a lot from employees. As a result, this type of work environment was not for everyone. Employees needed to be “smart,” “driven,” and “customer-focused” in order to succeed. Therefore, the employment brand was a vehicle to ensure that new hires understood the requirements of the job and had a realistic perception of the workplace.

While the employment brand may seem inconsequential on its surface, when taken in context it articulated a system of meanings that was intended to shape and regulate the expectations and subjectivity of workers. One example of how the employment brand was used to shape employee feelings toward the organization was during its new hire orientation program, called Get Connected! Get Connected! is a one-day training program designed to introduce new employees to the strategy, products, people, culture, and benefits of the organization. Since orientation programs are a critical part of the socialization of organizations and an important employee “touch-point” in the career of a new hire, organizations go to great lengths to create positive experiences for employees. This was also true at Orange Planet. The organization specifically designed the orientation program to communicate the organization’s changing business strategy as well as its employment brand. This included emphasizing both the promise and peril of innovation.

During the session that I observed, the HR manager emphasized the excitement of the organization’s new entrepreneurial businesses as well as its unique identity and cultural values. Employees were especially intrigued by the CV&Bs. When the manager asked, “Which one stands out for you?” the group replied unanimously, “Fun!” She responded by saying, “Fun is definitely part of our core values, but it’s also a dynamic and stressful time for our organization.” Later in the program, the HR manager introduced an expert panel



comprised of leaders and experienced employees from different parts of the organization. Each panelist introduced him/herself and spoke briefly about the interesting things going on in his/her side of the business. The general theme of the presentations was informative yet motivating. One executive began her presentation by saying, “There is always something new and exciting in Muni!”

Perhaps the most telling part of the panel discussion was the Q&A session at the end. Employees asked a variety of questions about the new business units and how well the organization was dealing with change. One panelist emphasized that “constant change and upheaval” are a normal part of business life in the industry. He stated, “Anyone in telecommunications knows that reorganizations happen.” Another panelist stated that she “survived eight reorgs” at her former employer. However, the conversation then shifted to the excitement of working for a startup. The first panelist asked the group, “How many of you have worked for a startup before? Well, we have the same spirit of a startup, but the maturity of an established company. We are starting to refer to ourselves as a ‘grownup startup.’” The concept of being a mature startup was a constant theme for remainder of the discussion, with panelists emphasizing the excitement, speed, openness to new ideas, and the entrepreneurial spirit of the organization. This example highlights how the organization drew upon the key elements of the company’s employment brand to communicate the unique value proposition of the company as a “grownup startup.” By the end of the program, employees came out feeling excited and motivated to become a part of the organization.

Despite its branding efforts, however, the organization continued to experience problems with high turnover among its new hires. This was a growing concern among management, who began to interpret the problem in terms of the “promise” of the

organization. As a Director of Corporate Communications explained to me, he felt that there was a “gap” between the promise of the organization and the actual experience of new hires.

He stated:

We’re not delivering on the employee promise. There’s a huge gap from Day 2 to Day 90. I went through it myself last summer. The recruitment phase and the on-boarding process is probably the best I’ve ever experienced in my career. From the recruiters, they make you feel wanted. ... And then when you come on board the first day, we have this program called Get Connected, it’s a full day orientation ...that makes you feel really good about the place that you’re joining. And then something happens on Day 2.

What happens is, the feeling that you had, the promise that you had about the company is not translated to the day-to-day activities. ... Employees don’t have the experience we said the company should deliver to them in terms of culture about friendly people and exciting work. And so it’s something that we’re looking at.

This statement highlights that while the employment brand was designed to create an attractive image of the company, the actual experience of work at Orange Planet was less than satisfying for many employees. In the final section of this chapter, I will highlight how issues of constant change, stress and job insecurity contributed to this situation.

## **Financial Management**

In addition to Talent Management, another powerful form of cultural control within the organization was financial management. Financial management was seen as a way to manage the risks and rewards of innovation and hold employees accountable for results. I highlight how the “spreadsheet” became a pervasive technology for managing and regulating the enterprising capacities of workers. In order to implement its innovation efforts effectively, the organization had to become more disciplined in managing and monitoring its financial performance. I highlight how a focus on the financial performance of the

organization was driven in large part by the need to manage the expectations of the investment community. A VP of Procurement stated:

We're very focused on the financials, much more so than in the past. We have that investment community out there, and so we're very conscious about making sure we are hitting our revenue and earnings forecasts – the things we're telling our external investors. So I think that is a change in philosophy from our old culture. When we created the company, most people saw the stock go whoosh, up. Well now the stock is way back down, and how do you get it to go back up again. The process for doing that is different from back in the dotcom era. I think that is what is tough for many people to swallow is that we are more financially driven now.

As this statement highlights, innovation became a way of seeing that placed increasing importance on financial return and the markets. If the company was going to grow its revenues and lift its stock price, then it had to meet the targets and projections that it set with Wall Street. A Director of Sales commented that the company had become much more oriented toward Wall Street in recent years. He stated:

Part of me says this company has become much more Wall Street than dotcom. . . . And part of it can be we used to be in a position where we weren't spending the money that we were making. The numbers were not as important because you were making budgets and you were coming into a lot of cash. Now it's much more scrutinized because you are throwing things into these new business units and trying to build them. But I do feel like this company is very tied to what we are either going to report or what we just reported to the street and so it is very metrically driven.

**Financial models.** In order to manage the expectations of Wall Street, financial measurement and reporting became an important part of managing the day-to-day operations. The organization began to hire a significant number of employees with specializations in financial analysis, business intelligence and forecasting to build sophisticated financial models for the company. These models were used to help the organization prepare budgets, project sales and, above all, build in greater accountability for results.

Alex, a financial analyst who had been with the company only two months, was hired to build financial models for one of the divisions. He described his work this way:

I build financial models to improve the budgeting process in my department. They brought me in to bring some accountability to the line in terms of, hey, if we're down in revenue, why are we down, I mean what are the factors, where do we stand year to date, where are we off? Where are we on? ...

It's an accountability system, in which the user will be able to pick all these factors to generate the revenue forecast for going out a period of 5 years. ... So when they have a meeting and they are showing a graph, when the CEO says "what's this spike?," they can say it's from this promotion. Before they didn't have anything like that.

As Alex continued to explain, budget projections are important because they directly impact the financial targets that are reported to Wall Street. When I asked Alex "What happens if you miss your numbers?" he responded:

It doesn't really affect me. But my boss and people who are sitting in the line of fire when they are presenting their budget, they're the ones who are really held accountable. When they say, we're dropping our forecast from last year by 2M and the CFO asks why? They have to be the ones to answer them. And from what I've seen, and I've been in a couple of those meetings, it's pretty intense. They don't tolerate unanswered questions.

This example highlights how financial modeling functions as a form of "control at a distance" in entrepreneurial organizations. While they help managers prepare more accurate and powerful forecasts, they also hold employees accountable for meeting the projections they give to upper management.

**Metrics.** In addition to financial modeling, the organization also made extensive use of metrics to measure the productivity of employees. A business metric refers to any type of measurement used to gauge some quantifiable aspect of a company's performance, such as return on investment (ROI), employee and customer churn rates, and revenues. As a VP of Technology stated, "What we are managing our business by is literally hundreds of metrics." He commented that one of the things he liked about the culture of the organization was its openness to new ideas. As a former IT consultant, he was especially pleased that executives were open to the use of metrics to track the performance of different business initiatives. He

believed it enabled executives to track and measure the performance of different innovation initiatives in order to make better business decisions. But metrics also provided another level of control for directing the entrepreneurial behavior of the organization, especially in the case of financial metrics. When used as the basis for quarterly reporting, financial metrics created a significant amount of pressure for employees to meet their revenue goals.

Shawn, a director of sales, talked about the pressures associated with the financial metrics employed by the company. He stated:

It definitely puts a lot of pressure on me. I mean we've got numbers for the month and it directly correlates to what we report out to the streets. In prior lives when I was at private companies, you had numbers and you had goals but it wasn't devastating. But because we are the size company that we are, there's a direct impact. Oh, I'm definitely more stressed than in prior jobs, absolutely. But in my case it's what I signed up for.

Another VP of sales had a similar comment: "My life balance? I really like working here, and that being said, since I took this new role in March, it has been pretty stressful because what I'm doing has never been done before. I have a definite revenue number for myself, my group, for 2007. It's a pretty aggressive number. I got it, I better reach it or else. So yeah, it adds a level of stress to things."

**Incentives/Bonuses.** Alongside the use of models and metrics, the organization also made extensive use of financial incentives. In addition to salary and stock options, employees received a bonus at the end of the year based on the performance of the organization. To help employees see how well their department was performing relative to their bonus, the organization had created an online tool called a Bonus Tracker. One employee explained how the Bonus Tracker worked:

They have an online bonus tracker, so people can just get on there and see what percentage we are to our goal to hit our bonus. And its neat how they do that [because] they do it for departments. So for my department they would say we're

94% to our goal. And we need to hit that 100% in order to get the maximum impact from our bonus. So people can constantly be checking the status of bonuses, and its good motivation for people within their own department to get the job done because you can directly see the results.

These examples highlight how financial measurement functioned as a pervasive technology for regulating the entrepreneurial energies of employees at Orange Planet. While, in some instances, employees were critical of these financial mechanisms, most of the time employees consented to their use (e.g., “It’s what I signed up for”) or saw them as motivating (e.g., bonus tracker). Overall, I have described how Orange Planet implemented a regime of practices to manage the productive energies of workers as enterprising subjects, and how these practices involved regulating both the symbolic and material aspects of work.

### **Personal Identity**

In this final section, I describe how the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes the personal identities of organizational members in complex ways. As Du Gay (1996) writes, management discourses “make up” new ways for people to be at work. It involves a cultural reconstruction of identity in the workplace. At Orange Planet, I highlight how employees were increasingly constructed as creative, fast-paced, and entrepreneurial talent who were comfortable with change and uncertainty. Many employees reported that they enjoyed working for the company and supported the organization’s new vision. However, I also show that while many employees identified with the organization and its challenges, they were also increasingly critical of its negative aspects. Given this complex articulation of meaning, let me describe some of the general themes that shaped employee identity and resistance at Orange Planet.

## **Challenge/excitement**

One common theme among employees, especially among higher-level executives (i.e., VPs and Directors), was the challenge and excitement of working in an entrepreneurial environment. When I asked a VP of Sales what he enjoyed about Orange Planet, he emphasized the challenge of work.

I get a kick out of it. I'm forty-one, so at this point in my career I've been around the block long enough to know what a good situation is for me, and at this point being one of the people to help the company transform itself, change the mix of revenues, I'm up for the challenge, I'm up for the task. I believe in it, so let's go. Change is not as comfortable for many people but if you work long enough you go through some change, you realize it's not necessarily a bad thing.

Another Director was equally motivated by the challenge of work at Orange Planet.

He stated:

I'm not in this for money. Money to me is always there. What is most important to me is my manager, my colleagues and the company/culture and where is this company going. I've got to have a fight. There's got to be some sort of battle involved for me to really get excited. If we're not fighting for anything, I really don't want to be here. Every company that I've been with, there's been a goal in mind.

When I asked him what the goal is for Orange Planet, he exclaimed: "3 billion! 3 billion in 2009! That is the prize." He was speaking about the organizational goal of achieving 3 billion in total revenues by the end of 2009. As these comments illustrate, executives were motivated by both the intellectual and competitive challenge of entrepreneurial work but also the financial rewards that awaited success.

Below the VP and director levels, employee motivations were more complex. While many commented that they enjoyed the variety, autonomy and opportunity to do interesting work at Orange Planet, they were also critical of some of its negative elements. In particular, three areas of concern were constant change, fast-paced work and stress/burnout.

## **Constant change**

Employees at all levels emphasized that comfort with change was an important attribute for working at Orange Planet. An employee stated:

I think there is definitely a lot of change and if you are a person that is uncomfortable with change, this is probably not a good environment for you because it is definitely changing quickly and you have to be able to respond to what's happening in the market. It borders on chaotic at times. There are a lot of fire drills, a lot of "let's evaluate this scenario and have it done in two days," and things of that nature. You have to be willing to respond quickly and know that it's kind of going to be crazy. I think not everybody is real comfortable with that type of environment."

Speaking in more philosophical terms, another employee drew an analogy between Orange Planet's work environment and the qualities of "air."

If I were to describe OP's environment, I'd say it's like air. It's not like water and it's not like earth, it's like air.... It has currents, some of which are fast, deadly; others of which are charming and delightful. Some of which can soothe you; others can basically harm you or bring fear into your heart. Air is invisible; you don't know where these currents are coming from or when they're going to hit you. But it is ever changing and it is different at every layer.... That is very much what the environment here has always been for me, constantly changing. You have to adapt, and if you don't like that kind of adaptability and if you don't like the fact that you're not going to see what's coming, then it's not an atmosphere for you. You're either a person of the earth or a person of the water; you're not a person of the air. And that's the key of Orange Planet.

These examples illustrate that constant change was a pervasive feature of work life at Orange Planet, often bordering on chaotic, and employees had to learn to adapt quickly in order to be successful. They also highlight that if you were not a person comfortable with change, then Orange Planet was not an environment for you.

## **Fast pace of work**

Alongside the constant change, there was the fast pace of work. Employees consistently commented that the work environment at Orange Planet was fast-paced,



sometimes to a fault. One new hire stated: “Every single thing we do is behind the deadline, everything. You are running so fast and so hard and there’s so many people screaming at you, you don’t have time to do anything creative or innovative. You’ve got to get something out the door.” Another employee commented: “It’s very quick. It’s very fast. I think in the support side especially... Once a product is launched, we’re really tasked with making things right, answering reps’ problems: how do we fix this, etc. From the support side, we are really full tilt all the times which can become exhausting.”

A number of employees felt that the company’s fast pace was hurting its product quality. One manager stated: “It’s fast-paced to a fault, and we end up getting stuff out the door before its ready. In some cases, we’re hurrying to get it out the door because we are already a little bit late to market. At that point, you’re an also-ran. But you’ve hurried it out the door so that it doesn’t work right.”

Despite the fast pace of work and the constant change, many employees learned to adapt to these conditions. One employee stated:

The most important thing about change is how you handle it because change is going to happen anywhere... . We had another reorganization in March and about 2 or 3 people in my group were laid off. For the first day or two after that, everyone is kind of in a tailspin. And then as the dust starts to settle and the pieces fall back into place, everyone realizes, “Well, we can either let this kill us or we can keep going.” And before you know it, everyone is in new roles, they’ve redefined their relationships and moving along.... I guess a company like this is just accustomed to that. Yeah, it hurts. We’ll mourn change for 48 hours or whatever, and then people kind of naturally move on.

As this example highlights, many employees learned to adapt to the constant change and pace of work, and even come to expect it. However, others chose an alternative route: leaving the organization. In the next section, I highlight how turnover was a constant feature of the work environment at Orange Planet and a point of resistance among employees.

## **Turnover, Stress and Burnout**

As I highlighted earlier, high turnover and low morale were constant problems at Orange Planet. While the organization attempted to engage and retain its top talent, turnover among its new hires was at a startling 17-20 percent and employee morale was extremely low. Some of this can be attributed to the nature of change itself. However, I also highlight how employee turnover was a form of resistance to the experience of work at the company. With increasing pressures to deliver on its innovation efforts, employees were disillusioned with the work experience and commented on the high levels of stress, burnout and dissatisfaction within the organization. One employee stated: “It’s a really stressful place, I think, depending on what group you’re in and where exactly you are. We’re always busy and there’s always a lot of stuff going on, and you know, fifty million projects. I know a lot of people, especially people who have been here a long time, who kind of end up burning out and leaving because of that.”

At OP, there was a cultural norm of talking about working until you couldn’t “take it anymore.” Employees would share stories of colleagues who had left the organization due to stress or burnout. For example, an employee in the training department commented:

I’m surprised at the turnover in the training department. There are lots of people that have been here less time than I have and have already checked out and found some other places. People who have been here 3 or 4 years who just said, “I’ve had enough” and didn’t have anything lined up and left. Like our director, she said, “I’ve done all I can; I can’t take this any more,” so she’s gone. She just resigned with nothing lined up. Something about the environment or something, she’s like, “I can’t take this anymore.” It was surprising to see this happening again and again with people. And so that’s kind of surprising and disconcerting when people say, “I just can’t take it anymore” or “This is not what I expected and I’m out.” Within six months they’re gone. People here 6 or 7 years, they’re like, “Forget it, I can’t take it,” which is weird. Because when you see the commercials and whatnot, it’s like a fun environment. One of the guys who just left was here 10 years, just celebrated his

10 year anniversary, and just said, “Well! I’ve had as much as I can take and I can’t take it anymore!” So he’s gone!

This statement is powerful because it highlights that employees would reach a breaking point and just decide: “I can’t take this anymore.”

While it is difficult to speculate about the exact cause of this reaction, often times it would come down to the issue of burnout. Employees would experience mental and emotional exhaustion from dealing with the frenetic pace, the constant change, and the pressures of the work environment. In a highly dramatic incident, the Chief People Officer announced his resignation, citing stress and burnout. It was reported that he cleared out his things and left the very next day, quite abruptly. I asked one of his staff for a further explanation. She said it was not due to knowledge about the business or a fallout with other executives, but he simply was burnt out. I reflected back on the earlier conversation I had with him at the start of this research project. “We are at war,” he had said. Apparently, he had become a casualty of “war” in the hypercompetitive communications industry. This reflects the most common form of resistance to organizational power: exit.

While there are many factors that contributed to the high turnover among employees, I highlight the increasing “gap” between the promise of innovation and the actual experience of work for organizational members. While Orange Planet’s brand identity reinforced the promise and excitement of entrepreneurial work, the actual experience of work was stressful, chaotic or alienating. As a result, an increasing number of employees chose to leave the organization.

For those employees who stayed, the new direction of the organization was filled with increasing uncertainty and job insecurity. In recent years, the organization had undertaken major efforts to restructure and align operations around its new innovation initiatives. This

led to a constant stream of changes, reorganizations and downsizings of jobs. As a result, there was an increased feeling of job insecurity among employees. The director of employee communications stated:

Orange Planet has been a company, like many companies in this space, where there is going to be some layoffs at the end of the year. We are communicating to employees that this is going to be a constant thing. It started a couple of years ago when we were about 6,000 employees, and they did an entire outsourcing of customer service and call center activities. That was a major undertaking. And really from an employee perspective, it was a body blow and then a nice little right hook. So I think there is always this feeling that there's going to be company-wide layoffs.

This statement highlights how reorganizations and company-wide layoffs were a common part of the work experience at Orange Planet, creating uncertainty and insecurity for employees.

Overall, while the discourse of innovation shaped the personal identities of employees in complex ways, I want to emphasize that employees were not passive subjects of the discourse. Rather, I have tried to show that employees were very aware of their circumstances and choices. While many employees strongly identified with the organization and its challenges, they also were critical of its negative aspects. And still others chose to leave the organization altogether. This illustrates that employees had significant insight into the power relations that defined their work. In fact, in discussing the demands and pressures of the job, several employees made that comment, "that's what I signed up for." Other employees, however, were more provisional in their response. When I asked one employee if Orange Planet was a place where he wanted to stay, he stated, "I will stay as long as it seems like I have a future here.... I like the job and I like the company. But it's the kind of thing where I'll stay on until I see the writing on the wall that says it would be best if I went somewhere else."

In this chapter, I discussed my ethnographic analysis of an Internet company undergoing significant change and innovation, and described how the management discourse of creativity/innovation shaped the identity, culture and power relations of the organization in significant ways. According to the discourse, the organization was faced with increasing competition, rapid change and the imminent threat of “dying” as a business. The only way to survive in this environment was to take greater risks and compete on the battleground of constant creativity and innovation. I introduced the concept of governmentality to highlight how the discourse shaped the conduct of the organization “at a distance” by circulating specific images, forms of knowledge and social technologies organized around the promise and peril of innovation. In the case of Orange Planet, I describe how organizational leaders took up the discourse as a way to manage and regulate the entrepreneurial dispositions and capacities of their workforce in order to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive marketplace. However, despite these efforts at government, I highlight how the discourse of creativity is increasingly prone to rupture due to the growing disjuncture between the promise of innovation and the experience of organizational members.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the key findings and implications of this study and highlight directions for future research. I will organize my discussion along the three dimensions of this research project: discourse, power and identity.

#### **Discourse**

I begin with my most fundamental conclusion: In contemporary capitalism, the discourse of creativity and innovation *both reflects and constructs the world of work*. As I have argued, while innovation is intimately linked to material changes in the mode of production, the discourse also exercises its own rhetorical force, shaping business in its own image. At Orange Planet, I describe how the innovation imperative shaped the strategy and identity of the organization in significant ways. In order to attract customers and employees, the company cultivated a distinct brand identity organized around the promise of creative freedom and the unlimited “possibilities” of the Internet. This included managing the organization’s corporate culture to reflect and construct the values of creative professionals, such as individuality, fun and risk-taking. I highlight how the core values of the organization were designed to provide a seamless integration of creative/humanistic and enterprising values. While this was a strategic decision on the part of organizational leaders, I also highlight how the company’s identity was shaped by the larger ideology of the innovation

imperative and the cultural construction of employees as “talent.” As I highlighted in Chapter 4, the construction of employees as “talent” is a dominant knowledge claim in the formation, which emphasizes the importance of harnessing the full commitments and capacities of employees as enterprising subjects.

In addition to the promise of innovation, I also describe how the innovation imperative shapes the world of work in much darker ways as well. At Orange Planet, as the organization began to experience economic difficulties, I highlight how organizational leaders adopted a discourse of peril to make sense out of the many challenges facing them. According to this discourse, the organization was confronted by rapid change, increasing competition and the imminent threat of “dying” as a business. The only way to survive in this environment was to take greater risks and compete on the terrain of innovation. This also required that employees become more innovative, adaptable and enterprising in order to make the new businesses work. I describe how this discursive construction created intense pressures on employees “to get to work” and provided a constant stimulus of fear and anxiety that regulated the productive energies of employees.

This research illustrates how the innovation imperative shapes the world of work in distinct, and sometimes contradictory, ways. While the promise of innovation celebrates and nurtures the creativity of employees, the peril of innovation creates greater demands for performance, accountability and revenue generation. In accordance with Du Gay (1996), I argue that the management discourse of creativity and innovation involves a cultural reconstruction of identity in the workplace, in which managers and workers are increasingly expected to operate as creative, fast-paced and driven talent.

I also want to highlight how the innovation imperative functions not only as a dominant logic but also as a narrative framework for motivating employees. Employees were repeatedly told that “our business is dying” and that the organization would have to change dramatically if it were to survive. At the same time, employees were encouraged to embrace the vision of becoming a cool and cutting edge “total communications company.” Through the peril and promise of innovation, executives attempted to motivate and persuade employees of the necessity of change and innovation. I highlight how this framing of the challenges and opportunities facing the organization was designed to stimulate the entrepreneurial capacities of workers and build commitment to the capitalist process. I relate this to Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2006) work on the “spirit” of capitalism.

According to the authors, the “spirit” of capitalism is the ideology that justifies people’s commitment to capitalism, and which renders this commitment attractive. In order to build commitment, the spirit of capitalism must respond to three key questions: what is stimulating about it, how does it provide security, how does it assure justice? In this study, I argue that a significant part of the stimulation of capitalism is the promise of creativity and innovation that it offers to people in terms of the chance to use their talents and participate in exciting work. However, the study also reveals that the stimulation of capitalism is based in equal measures on the “peril” of innovation, which highlights the many threats that organizations face due to increasing competition and economic threat in the global economy. At Orange Planet, these two logics existed side-by-side in constructing the meaning of work for organization members. Yet, what is noteworthy is that while the peril of innovation functioned to stimulate and regulate the productive energies of employees, it also undermined the second dimension of the “spirit” of capitalism, the promise of security for



individuals and their families. This would eventually create many problems for the organization in terms of employee morale and turnover. This leads me to my next point of discussion.

At Orange Planet, the promise of innovation often came at odds with the experience of work for many organizational members. While employees were promised exciting work in an empowering environment, they often experienced high levels of stress, change and job insecurity. As I highlighted in the last chapter, the increasing disparity between the promise and experience of innovation at Orange Planet led to significant skepticism and forms of resistance among employees, especially among new hires. I relate this to the inherent instability of the new managerialist discourse, which creates an environment of massive change and uncertainty. In this environment, employees often experienced a “symbolic-material rupture.” According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), a “symbolic-material rupture” occurs when subjects encounter a discursive failure, or gap, between the idealized images of the discourse and the materiality of embodied performances. At Orange Planet, the contradiction between the symbolic and material worlds created space for resistance and rearticulation of the self on the part of workers. Instead of becoming more committed to the entrepreneurial goals of the organization, many employees became more skeptical and critical about the changes. As a result, a significant number of new hires chose to leave the organization. In general, then, we see a fracturing of the capitalist imaginary at Orange Planet, in which the stimulation of innovation and entrepreneurship was increasingly overshadowed by the frustrations and insecurity of work at the company.

**Risk-taking.** Another important finding raised by this research is how the discourse of innovation shapes the risk-taking orientation of companies. While Orange Planet had traditionally been a very conservative company, the innovation imperative demanded that the organization take considerable risks to invest in new entrepreneurial businesses. While a certain risk orientation is a normal part of business enterprise, what is noteworthy is how it was accompanied by a distinct rationality of gambling. As one employee stated, “We’ve gone to Vegas is really what we’ve done. Because many of these new initiatives are huge bets.” As I highlighted earlier, the innovation imperative with its mantra of “innovate or die” encourages a “jackpot” mentality in the business world. It is “a belief that everything would be made right with a handful of ‘homerun’ innovations – innovations that would change the very terms of the competition in their industries” (Getz & Robinson, 2003, p. 131).

This was certainly true at Orange Planet. Coupled with the drive for innovation was the thrill of risk-taking. If one of the organization’s new business ventures “hit,” the company would be assured of a bright future, with a substantial financial return. The gambling metaphor is a product of the logics of markets, and especially of the stock market. If the company was going to please the financial community and lift its stock price, it had to take risks at the front edge of the industry. While I emphasize that Orange Planet was a highly ethical company, it adopted a mentality of greater risk-taking in order to realize the rewards of innovation. This finding raises a number of important ethical and pragmatic questions about how the discourse of innovation shapes the culture of work in many sectors of the economy, especially Wall Street and the financial community. While this discussion is beyond the purview of this research, it bears important consideration as an area for future research.

**Innovation and Emotion/Affect.** Let me now talk about the emotion/affect work performed by the innovation imperative as a form of discourse. At Orange Planet, organizational leaders drew upon the discourse to construct a world of promise and peril. I highlight how this particular construction of discourse worked not only at the level of meaning but also emotion. It circulated an emotional currency of both excitement and anxiety about the future that shaped the subjectivity and commitments of employees. On one hand, employees were excited about the vision of becoming a “total communication provider” and regaining the entrepreneurial spirit of a startup company that once characterized the company. On the other hand, they felt great pressure and anxiety to “get to work” and to deliver demonstrable results to the bottom line. Through the circulation of both excitement and fear, the discourse structured an affect economy that served to regulate the productive energies of workers.

As I describe in Chapter 5, an affective economy involves the “expansion and contraction of affective capacities” whereby “value is produced through enlivening, capacitating and modulating affect” for the realization of profit (Wissinger, 2007, p. 234). At Orange Planet, the management discourse of promise and peril functioned to enliven and modulate the emotional/affective states of employees to get them to work more diligently toward organizational goals. This study highlights how organizations are not only sites of rational decision-making but also of emotional expression, incitements and management. Thus, while innovation is typically thought of as a rational process, I describe how discourses of creativity and innovation function to elicit the self-actualizing and self-preservation properties of organizations through the production and regulation of emotion and affect.

## **Power**

Now that I have addressed some of my findings related to discourse, I want to move to a discussion of power. In particular, I want to highlight how the discourse of creativity and innovation functioned as a form of governmentality to shape the conduct of the organization “at a distance.” This occurred through a variety of mechanisms at the level of both business culture and organization. At the level of business culture, the discourse worked through the circulation of specific images, forms of knowledge and social technologies. Since I’ve already discussed the innovation imperative as a form of management knowledge, let me address the role of images and social technologies in governing organizational life.

**The Power of Images.** Images played a significant role in the exercise of power at Orange Planet. While images may not fit the traditional conception of governmental rationality as enumerated by Foucault, I argue that media images play an increasingly important role in shaping the aspirations of the business world as well as the subjectivity of knowledge workers in today’s economy. As Rose (1999) writes, “Our habitat is already inscribed with images, norms, evaluations and injunctions – from the architecture of our homes...to the flashing neon signs urging us to ‘Drink Coca-cola’ as it is the ‘real thing.’ Increasingly these disseminate repertoires of the self in terms of ‘identities’: relatively standardized forms of individuality and personality, each equipped with a set of habits, dispositions, tastes and aspirations” (p. 270). Within the business world, I argue that the cultural circuit of capitalism disseminates a wealth of images and norms about the world of work which shape the enterprising dispositions and capacities of its members.

One of the dominant images that shaped the culture of work at Orange Planet was the romance of the “new economy.” According to Thrift (2005), the “new economy” was an attempt by the cultural circuit of capitalism to construct “a new kind of market culture” through “mass motivation” (p. 113). It was a combination of rhetorical flourish and financial framing that became “a kind of brand, compounding in one phrase the attractions and rewards of a new version of capitalism” (p. 114). For many technology companies, the “new economy” represented a new style of doing business that combined a passion for entrepreneurship with the drive for new levels of growth and prosperity. At Orange Planet, the image of the “new economy” shaped the identity and conduct of the organization in powerful ways. As I have described, the company’s mission and values symbolized a new way of doing business that was different from the large, mainstream corporations. Rather than being stuffy and boring, Orange Planet was fun, creative, rebellious and employee-friendly. Employees were attracted to its promise of creative freedom and the unlimited “possibilities” of the Internet. Furthermore, organizational members were driven by the excitement of entrepreneurship and the prospect of great financial rewards if only the company could come up with the next market innovation.

The allure of the “new economy” was also instantiated through the image of Google. As a product of the dotcom boom, Google symbolized the risks and rewards of innovation in concrete form. As I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the story of Google is continuously circulated in the media, along with its top ranking as one of the “most innovative companies in the world.” As a result, it has become a powerful model of success in the business world. At Orange Planet, many employees talked about their aspiration to be like Google – a cool, creative and cutting edge technology company. As one employee stated, “Most of the people

here if you look at role model type companies, we want to be a Google.” Rose (1999) argues that images do not produce a relation of domination or manipulation of the subject; rather, they cast “a grid of visibility over existence” by which individuals come to interpret and manage their conduct. I argue that the discourse of innovation shaped organizational life in significant ways by circulating powerful images about the promise of creativity and innovation in the new economy, which cast “a grid of visibility” over the world of work. These images received their power to persuade through a type of branding of the “new economy” and its promise of excitement and financial success.

Images do not function alone, however. As a form of power, they operate within a larger complex of social practices that direct behavior in concrete ways. At Orange Planet, the organization employed a number of social technologies to shape the meaning and conduct of work. This included the corporate and employment brands, the physical design of the office space, the new vision statement, the performance appraisal system, training and development programs, and the pervasive use of the financial controls. All of these mechanisms worked together to construct a system of government. These technologies reflect how organizations attempt to manage both the symbolic and material aspects of work. I especially highlight the pervasive use of the corporate and employment brands to shape the meaning of work for employees. At Orange Planet, the vision and identity of the organization as a “total communications provider” and a “grownup startup” was a powerful corporate brand for members. It symbolized the hopes and ambitions of the organization in compact form. One marketing guru has described branding as “arguably the most powerful business tool since the spreadsheet.” Its purpose is to “bridge the gap between logic and magic to build a sustainable competitive advantage” (Neumeier, 2003). However, as I have

described, while the brand is a powerful tool, it is also susceptible to rupture. Members increasingly experienced a disjuncture between the promise of the brand and the reality of work life at Orange Planet. What is most interesting is the extent to which organizational leaders were aware and articulate about the failure of the organization to deliver on its “promise.” This highlights the depths to which corporate branding has become a commonplace technology and vocabulary among managers for regulating the productive capacities of workers.

**Financial and Bureaucratic Controls.** In addition to the brand, I also highlight how the organization made extensive use of financial and bureaucratic controls to regulate the enterprising capacities of employees. One irony of the innovation discourse is that while it promises greater forms of autonomy and empowerment, it often brings greater forms of control over workers. This is evidenced by the pervasive use of the “spreadsheet” to manage and monitor the accountability of workers. Workers were subjected to a variety of financial controls to manage the performance of work, including models, metrics and incentives. Most consented to their use without complaint since financial controls are seen as an integral part of managing the risks and rewards of innovation. However, employees were more vocal about bureaucratic controls. They often complained that the company had become increasingly bureaucratic in its management practices. For example, an experienced new hire stated,

For a company of two thousand people, we are the most bureaucratic organization I think I’ve ever worked for. I worked for MCI, seventy thousand people, and we could crank things out and get things done quicker than I see us getting things done here, and there is only two thousand of us. Here’s what I liken it to: you have a small company that says “I want to grow up,” and so I’m going to put all these bureaucratic process-driven controls in place that just add layers and layers of delays into getting things done. It just seems a little odd to me because I didn’t quite expect it.

While employees agreed that the organization needed to implement some controls in order to improve quality and coordinate their innovation efforts, many believed Orange Planet had implemented them in problematic ways. One employee stated, “I think change control is a good thing and we need it. But we have implemented it completely wrong in this company! We have implemented change control that is solely there to check off a bunch of boxes.” These comments highlight how bureaucratic measures often accompanied the implementation of innovation at Orange Planet. Instead of giving employees more freedom, innovation necessitated that the organization manage its business and workforce with greater controls.

## **Identity**

Let me now address the last dimension of this research project – identity. At Orange Planet, executives drew upon the discourse of creativity and innovation to shape the identity and culture of the organization in strategic ways. Alvesson (1990) identifies four types of identity regulation in organizations: corporate identity, cultural control, normalization, and subjectification. In Chapter Five, I described at length how corporate identity and cultural controls functioned to stimulate and regulate the identity of organizational members. These controls were designed to manage the conduct of the organization at the level of a population. However, let me now address the personal dimension of identity regulation in the workplace by discussing the issue of subjection.

According to Foucault, subjection describes how individuals become tied to identity through conscience or self-knowledge. As Knights and Willmott (1989) elaborate, subjectification occurs “where the freedom of a subject is directed narrowly, and in a self-



disciplined fashion, towards participation in practices that are known or understood to provide the individual with a sense of security and belonging” (p. 350). At Orange Planet, the freedom of employees was increasingly directed toward the enterprising goals and values of the organization. Employees were expected to display enterprising qualities and dispositions such as innovation, adaptability, competitiveness and drive for results. The enterprising identity of the organization also included greater demands for revenue generation and profitability. For example, a manager of customer support described the financial mindset of the organization this way:

Everything we are trying to do, we’re trying to see how we can make a buck. It may sound bad but that’s basically what we are in business for, is to make money and to keep going. While some of our new products are neat and cool and really a good thing, we need to make money. We didn’t go into them because it was a neat and cool thing to add on to our service. There was a plan to make money.”

This statement highlights how the demands for innovation required employees to adopt an increasingly “bottom line” orientation to work. However, while the concept of subjection provides a useful heuristic for describing the workings of power, I also find it problematic in many ways. Most importantly, it treats identity construction as an outcome or “power effect” of discourse rather than an active, contradictory and conflictual process. At Orange Planet, while many employees participated in practices that gave them a sense of shared identity with the organization, they were also critical of many of the cultural changes at the company. This highlights how the production of subjectivity is never complete or totalizing, but involves a complex articulation of meaning. In fact, as I have described, employees were increasingly critical and skeptical about changes at the organization while also expressing affinity for the company. I want to examine this process in greater depth in the remainder of this section.

Research suggests that individuals position themselves in a variety of ways in relation to dominant organizational discourses. Studies in this area place analytic focus on how individuals come to adopt various positions of identification, dis-identification, schizo-identification and neutral-identification (Elsbach, 1999; Humphreys & Brown, 2002). As Cheney (1983) describes, identification is an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene. It highlights how individuals come to share the interests, values and symbols of an organization. However, scholars also highlight how individuals take up various oppositional positions in relation to dominant organizational discourses, which involve positions of dis-identification and schizo-identification. Dis-identification highlights how individuals can express an active, negative relationship between the self and dominant organizational discourses. Alternatively, schizo-identification describes how individuals can simultaneously demonstrate identification and dis-identification toward organizational discourses. I argue that, within this study, employees increasingly adopted positions of dis-identification and schizo-identification as they experienced a growing disparity between the promise of innovation and the reality of work at the Orange Planet. This can be seen most directly in the difference between VPs/directors and managers/below.

Directors and above tended to express strong identification with the dominant organizational discourse. They were generally excited about the challenge of the work, and were motivated by the prospect of helping the organization transform itself into a mature, technology company. They gained a strong sense of identity from being entrepreneurial actors. For example, one VP stated, “At this point [in my career], being one of the people to help the company transform itself, change the mix of revenues, I’m up for the challenge, I’m

up for the task. I believe in it, so let's go." Likewise, a director stated, "There's never a day that is similar here. I like that we are in this space where we're really a very small company compared to the AT&Ts and Comcasts of the world. I like being the underdog. It puts us in a position where a lot of things are much more difficult, but it gives us some targets out there and you have to go after it every day. It makes it exciting to come to work." In these examples, the VP/directors were motivated by the entrepreneurial goals of the organization. They expressed little doubt or frustration with the experience of work.

Below the director level, however, employee identifications were much more complex. While many supported the new vision of the organization and its challenges, they were also more likely to voice criticism and skepticism about the direction of the company and some of the cultural changes taking place. This included employees who strongly disidentified with the dominant organizational discourse. Carl, a systems administrator, stated angrily,

This company has become a barren wasteland compared to what it used to be. Based on how innovative and cool and how much fun everybody had back in '94, '95 and '96, what it's become now is very corporate, very structured, very narrow. Everybody has their own little functional thing that they do and communication falls apart.

Carl felt the organization had become much more corporate and bureaucratic compared to the young, dynamic startup that it used to be. Another employee used the term "meat-grinding assimilation" to refer to recent cultural changes at the company. He believed that the "very human strengths and virtues, faults and foibles" of an entrepreneurial environment that used to characterize the company were being replaced by a "Stepford, inhuman" corporate culture. Other employees, however, were more mixed in their feelings about the organization. While many reported that they liked the company and understood the need for change, they also

expressed frustration and skepticism about the changing direction and values of the organization. These employees demonstrated a combination of both identification and dis-identification toward the organization simultaneously, or schizo-identification. For example, Bonnie, a senior manager of IS Strategy, stated,

I think Orange Planet is a great company, but trying to be a total communications provider, that's some pretty big pants. I mean ... that's a big statement. Do you want to do two things really well or do you want to try to do ten things but have customers just get by or have really horrible experiences. We talk about customer service a lot, but it seems like we are very much the 80-20 rule, almost the 70-30 rule. Just get that 70 percent working, and the rest are ultimately screwed from the beginning.

In this example, Bonnie is expressing skepticism about the organization's new vision and direction. While she still thought Orange Planet was a "great company," she believed the organization was sacrificing its customer service for the sake of innovation.

I highlight how these examples of dis-identification and schizo-identification often arose due to the growing disparity between the promise of the organization and the reality of work for organizational members. While employees were attracted to the brand image and historical identity of the company as a creative, fun and entrepreneurial startup that valued its people and customers, the new identity of the organization placed increasing emphasis on innovation, corporate structure and revenue generation. In this context, employees experienced a "discursive failure" between the idealistic images of the organization and the realities of working in an increasingly stressful, fast-paced and corporate environment. This resulted in significant frustration and disillusionment for many employees.

## **General Discussion**

Now that I have summarized my findings along the three dimensions of discourse, power and identity, let me initiate a broader discussion of the literature. In Chapter 1, I

introduced several different arguments regarding the emergence of creativity and innovation as a management discourse and how it shapes the world of world. First and foremost, I discussed the writings of Richard Florida. According to Florida (2002, 2005), the rise of human creativity represents a liberating force in the global economy. Just as the shift from an agricultural to an industrial capitalist economy produced significant change and transformation, we are experiencing a similar shift today as creativity and problem-solving skills become the new force of production. As a result, he argues that knowledge workers are enjoying greater forms of empowerment and creative production than ever before, shaping their work lives along the varied dimensions of their creativity. This is a compelling argument because there are dramatic shifts in the world of work toward greater creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in the workplace, especially within knowledge-intensive organizations and the new economy. As a result, organizations are cultivating environments of greater participation, collaboration and empowerment for employees. We only need to look at companies like Apple and Google to confirm some of the benefits of the new economy.

Yet I have tried to show how this seemingly more exciting and humane form of capitalism also masks deeper forms of power and inequality in the workplace. In the case of Orange Planet, while workers were treated well and given more opportunities to contribute their talents, they were also expected to work in a fast-paced and ever-changing environment with significant demands. Furthermore, the demand for innovation placed greater pressures on workers to be more enterprising and productive while affording them less job insecurity. As Alvesson and Willmott (2004) contend, discourses of innovation allow opportunities for creative work and “micro-emancipation”; however, they are more often used to engineer

consent. This is perhaps the great weakness of Florida's argument. While he highlights the great promise of creativity in the emerging knowledge-based economy, he neglects the power dimensions of the new managerialist discourse and how it enacts new forms of control. Let me discuss this new managerialism in greater depth.

In Chapter 2, I highlighted how the discourse of creativity and innovation is part of a new managerialism that has become hegemonic in the global economy. According to scholars, the new managerialism (or new wave management) is predicated not on stability and bureaucratic control but on change, adaptability and creativity toward the marketplace. In this view, the world is characterized by increasing ambiguity, complexity and change and, therefore, requires that business managers adopt more flexible and entrepreneurial forms of work as well as embrace principles of nimbleness, adaptation and creativity toward the marketplace. According to Thrift (2005), the new managerialism instantiates a new version of capitalism, or "soft capitalism," which signifies the "formation's adaptive characteristics and its supposedly caring, sharing ethos" (p. 11). More importantly, he argues that the new managerialist discourse shapes the world of work as much as the world of work shapes it. Quoting Nohira and Berkley, Thrift (2005) states: "In other words, the new managerialist discourse must be 'understood primarily as a form of rhetoric ... spoken by managerial professionals not to mention professors of management – in ways that are not necessarily coterminous with organizational practice itself' (p. 30).

In this dissertation, I extend Thrift's thesis by highlighting the particular influence of the creativity and innovation discourse on the production of organizational meaning, performance and identity. I highlight how the new managerialism has become a defining feature of organizational life, which actively shapes social reality and makes up new ways for

people to be at work. Consistent with Du Gay (1996), I maintain that the discourse is not simply an ideological distortion or “false” knowledge. Instead, the discourse actively makes up a new social reality with material consequences. This new social reality can be seen most clearly at Orange Planet. I highlighted how the new managerialism constructed a distinct rationality and worldview about how to compete in the new capitalism. A Director of Sales explained this rationality most explicitly:

We are a company that has to become innovative and adaptive to survive; that if this company is going to metamorph, change or whatever you want to call it from being a pure ISP to being a total communications provider, that it’s really got to happen with my group or my business. And when I say ‘my group’, I mean every group has to feel this way.

This statement highlights how the new managerialism required the organization to become more innovative and adaptive in order to survive. It necessitated that each part of the organization work harder and maximize its entrepreneurial skills in order to make the new businesses work. More importantly, I argue that the new managerialism has serious consequences for workers. As Thrift contends, “soft” capitalism has a hard edge. He outlines several damaging consequences of the new managerialism, which I also found to be significant features of worklife at Orange Planet.

First, the new discourse has “material consequences” for knowledge workers in terms of direct downsizings, layoffs and other forms of stress and strain associated with organizational change. In my research, I noted how the company’s innovation efforts were followed by a constant stream of job changes, “reorgs” and workforce layoffs. This created an environment of massive uncertainty, job strain and insecurity all levels of employees, including management. I described how even the Chief People Officer was forced to leave the organization due to stress and burnout. As Thrift (2005) states:

In other words, this new form of the exercise of corporate power is not necessarily any ‘nicer’ than what has gone before; for all the caring rhetoric, lean can just as easily be mean and learning can mean stomach churning. The sword of management is, as always, two-edged: economic success is, now as then, brought at the cost of the workforce, as much as its benefits” (p. 47).

The new managerialism, then, embodies a deep contradiction in its management practices.

While it offers a seemingly more participative, creative and humane environment for workers, it nonetheless is deeply driven by its own logics of financial growth and competitive advantage. This often meant sacrificing the security of workers for the ambitions of the market.

The second consequence of the new managerialist discourse is the extent to which it constrains and limits the subjectivity of workers. While the discourse promises new forms of human creativity and individuality, it forces workers into a narrow conception of personhood as entrepreneurial subjects. As Thrift (2005) states:

...for all the commitment to an open-ended view of subjecthood [advocated by the new managerialism], *in practice* the conception of the person (and the model of action) that is presumed is, more often than not, a narrow one which involves super-exploitation of both managers (who are expected to commit their whole being to the organization) and workers (who are now expected to commit their embodied knowledge to the organization’s epistemological resources as well). (p. 47)

In the case of Orange Planet, employees were attracted to the company’s mission of creative freedom and its core value of “respect for the individual.” Yet increasingly, they were expected to operate as fast-paced and driven talent fully committed to the organization’s innovation goals. Thus, while employees were promised an environment where they could “come as you are” in dress, appearance and lifestyle, it was rapidly being transformed by a dominant model of work defined by corporate innovation and entrepreneurship. This included the implementation of a variety of measures for bureaucratic and financial control over employees. Again, we see a deep contradiction in the



discourse of the new managerialism between the promise of individuality and pressures toward conformity.

Let me now turn to a discussion of discursive formations and governmentality. This project began with the premise that the management discourse of creativity and innovation is a discursive formation (i.e., a group of statements) that systematically forms “objects” and “subjects” of knowledge. Furthermore, I argued that the discourse functions as a form of governmentality by directing the conduct of organizations “at a distance” through the production and circulation of specific images, forms of knowledge and technologies. Given their grounding in the work of Foucault, these concepts provide a compelling theoretical framework for understanding the exercise of power in modern society. However, I also want to think critically about the limitations of a Foucauldian framework by addressing several criticisms of poststructuralist organization studies.

Newton (1999) argues that many poststructuralist studies tend to convey a linear relationship between discourse and the subject, as if power operated in a straight line to construct the individual. In many of these studies, the tendency is to describe how a powerful discourse “interpellates” a vulnerable subject in a seemingly direct causal relationship. Newton cautions many Foucauldian scholars about presenting discourse as “programmatic prescriptions” that produce fully compliant subjects—what he refers to as “agency as inscription” (p. 429). Instead, he emphasizes the complex interplay between discourse and the subject and how developments in discourse shape the formation of identity, but also how individuals construct identities that are often multiplicitous, contradictory and fragmented.

In this study, I highlighted how the discourse of creativity and innovation shaped the subjectivity of managers and workers in significant ways, but also how employees enacted various forms of resistance to the discourse. For example, I described how the experience of identification among employees was often filled with conflict and contradiction, in which individuals expressed both strong identification and dis-identification simultaneously, or schizo-identification. However, other employees chose to leave the organization altogether, especially a high percentage of new hires. Yet, overall, I highlighted how employees were not passive subjects of the discourse but very aware of their circumstances and choices, with some stating “that’s what I signed up for” while others concluded, “that’s it, I can’t take it anymore.”

This brings me to a second criticism of a Foucauldian framework, which concerns the concept of governmentality. While governmentality research provides valuable insights into the workings of modern power, a number of scholars have identified important limitations of this concept. During (2005) argues that we must understand enterprise culture as more than the exercise of governmentality; we must understand what attracts individuals to this type of work. As he states, enterprise culture has “its own utopianism since it proposes a society of energetic individuals both supportive of (as consumers) and competitive with (as producers) one another, fulfilling their personal dreams” (p. 16). Likewise, Thrift (2005) argues that the concept of governmentality fails to account for emerging forms of power in global capitalism, such as new commodity relations, new spatial forms, and new types of “expressive organization” (p. 10).

In regard to organizational life, Schultz, Hatch & Larson (2000) argue that “emotional expressiveness” and corporate identity have come to play an important role in managing

organizational life. They state that “increasingly organizations compete based on their ability to express who they are and what they stand for. Emotional and symbolic expressiveness is becoming part of the experience of doing business” (p. 1). Thus, we see an increasing role of corporate branding and marketing efforts as technologies for managing the identifications and motivations of a knowledge-based workforce.

These criticisms highlight how traditional conceptions of governmentality are insufficient to address the emerging forms of power in the world of work. As a result, in this study I have examined how the exercise of governmentality operates not only through bureaucratic administration or statistical calculation of a population, but through a wide variety of management knowledges, images and mechanisms that stimulate and regulate the entrepreneurial capacities of the business world. Furthermore, these forms of knowledge shape conduct by stimulating the affective states (both aspirations and anxieties) of managers and workers through various forms of brand, identity and culture management.

### **Implications**

This research raises a number of important implications for the study of innovation and management discourse. These can be organized into three main categories: theoretical, methodological and pragmatic.

#### **Theoretical**

One key implication of this research is how creative/innovative identity has become a powerful form of control within the world of work. According to Alvesson & Willmott (2004), “Identity regulation is a significant, neglected and increasingly important modality of

organizational control, especially in larger corporations and the New E-conomy, as well as the long established province of the professional services sector” (p. 438). In today’s economy, organizations actively shape employee subjectivity and meaning by deploying discourses of innovation that construct workers as creative and enterprising subjects. I highlight how this specific linking of creativity and capitalist enterprise offers a compelling vision of work for many professionals, yet also leads to powerful forms of self-management. For example, McRobbie (2002) argues that “the couplet ‘creativity/talent’ has recently come to represent the most desired of human qualities, expressive, indeed synonymous with, an ‘inner self,’ and hence a mark of uniqueness, and particularly resonant for young people poised to enter the labour market” (p. 109). This is an important issue because it not only regulates employee identities but it politically reconstructs a large segment of society.

A related implication of this research is how the discourse of creativity and innovation has become a significant part of the “promise” of work in the new capitalism, which is designed to attract and retain talent. I use the word “promise” in two specific ways. As I have shown, the management discourse of innovation works rhetorically to construct a “promise” of growth, prosperity and creative production. However, on a more specific level, the term “promise” is used in marketing circles to highlight the symbolic meanings conveyed by brands. Brand gurus talk about how brands “articulate a promise” of benefits, pleasures, rewards and attractions. Thus, I use this term to reflect these two meanings, which increasingly are one and the same.

This can be seen most directly in the pervasive use of corporate and employment branding to construct the identity of organizations as creative, exciting and filled with possibility. Many organizations today attempt to project desirable images of the employment

relationship centering on the promise of creativity and innovation. While some organizations can fulfill this promise, the vast majority cannot. As Naomi Klein (2000) writes, organizations have become “meaning brokers” instead of product producers, where marketing the identity of the organization has become a significant part of the experience of doing business (p. 21). This includes efforts to shape both the symbolic and material aspects of the employment relationship. Foucault’s concept of technologies of power explains how organizations attempt to exercise control by engineering workspaces and deploying other social technologies to shape employee perceptions. However, my research also highlights how issues of identity management run much deeper than corporate branding efforts. Organizations also engage in the intense use of management communication to shape the motivations and commitments of workers. This includes constructing powerful vision statements to tap into the creative aspirations of organizational members and elicit the self-actualizing properties of workers.

In many ways, the promise of creativity and innovation has become a part of the new social contract between employers and employees in the new capitalism, in which workers are promised exciting work in a stimulating environment in exchange for longer hours and less job security. While this is a disturbing trend, many knowledge workers have come to accept this condition. As I highlight in Chapter Five, employees at Orange Planet were often very aware of their circumstances and choices. Most employees knew that the organization offered the promise of both high risk and high reward. However, what many employees could not foresee was how the innovation imperative would create a pressure-filled, stressful and uncertain environment. In this context, many employees became dissatisfied or

disillusioned with the changes at the organization, causing many new employees to quit within their first year.

## **Methodological**

This research project also has implications for studying the relationship (or dialectic) between management discourse and everyday organizing processes. In particular, I argue that the integration of Foucauldian discourse analysis and ethnographic fieldwork provides a rich intersection of meaning for the analysis of organizational communication. While these two methodologies reflect distinct approaches to the study of discourse and organizing processes, I argue they both are essential for understanding communication processes. As I noted earlier, Foucauldian discourse analysis examines language practices as they appear in historically-emergent discourse formations. Ethnography, on the other hand, involves the engagement with and writing of culture at the level of everyday discursive practice.

While these two approaches to discourse do not always sit comfortably together, I have tried to negotiate these tensions by organizing my research into two distinct chapters, showing how they are linked together by a common discourse. I believe this approach allows for rigor in my analysis as well as depth of insight into organizing processes. Conceptually, I draw from the work of Gubrium and Holstein (2000) who propose a framework for interpretive practice based on the interplay between discourse-in-practice and discursive practice. In their view, discursive formations constitute the “what” of social interaction, while discursive practice constitutes the “how.” In my research, I try to show how the discursive formation of creativity/innovation shapes systems of meaning at the level of business culture and how these meanings are taken up and/or resisted by organizational

members at the level of local practice. From this process, I have gleaned several important insights.

First, the analysis of discursive formations enables researchers to construct a clear picture of the object of knowledge and how it constructs specific relations of power/knowledge. In my research, I was able to delineate a well-defined body of knowledge that was generated and distributed by the cultural circuit of capitalism. This type of project provides a valuable contribution to the field of communication studies by identifying how discourse constitutes social formations within a given historical period. However, I think this approach to management discourse is incomplete without being placed in relationship to everyday organizing processes. Therefore, the second part of my research was an effort to examine how the discourse shapes organizing processes.

Second, the discourse of innovation shapes organizing processes in complex and sometimes partial ways. One of the important lessons from this project is that local practice rarely adopts the content and form of the discourse in direct ways. At Orange Planet, the sense-making practices of the organization took many different forms. Members often used the words “innovative,” “creative” and “entrepreneurial” interchangeably to describe the aspirations of the company. However, since Orange Planet began as a small startup technology company, the word “entrepreneurial” was particularly resonant for members and encompassed many of the desires of the organization. At the same time, though, the promise and peril of innovation infused and informed the entire identity of the organization in both its brand identity and organizing processes. Therefore, ethnographic fieldwork revealed how the discourse of innovation was taken up in complex ways, often intermingled with other

discourses and practices. In some instances, the purity of the discourse formation had to be modified in favor of social relevance.

Third, and lastly, the dialectic of discursive formations and discursive practice challenges the researcher to integrate the findings from the two approaches to develop a more insightful view of organizing processes. For example, my analytic framework of innovation as both promise and peril was a result of juxtaposing the intellectual insights from the textual analysis of the discourse formation (Chapter Four) with the emotional insights gained from my fieldwork (Chapter Five).

### **Pragmatic**

Along with theoretical and methodological implications, I also gained a number of practical insights into the subject of innovation and management discourse. My main insight relates to the very nature of innovation itself. As Joseph Schumpeter (2008) wrote over 60 years ago, capitalism necessarily involves a process of “creative destruction” – a process of “industrial mutation that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroys the old one, incessantly creates a new one” (p. 82). The concept of creative destruction relates not only to economic structures but also human cultures. In the case of Orange Planet, the introduction of organizational change and innovation created sharp divisions within the culture between the old and new business areas. As one Director stated, “There are a lot of invisible walls going up, and it’s creating a lot of tension in the organization.”

In particular, the introduction of innovation created conflicts in priorities, competition for scarce resources and cross-organizational jealousies that were persistent problems for the



organization. This has significant practical implications for managing organizational change efforts. For example, in regard to priorities, the new business areas (such as voice and municipal networks) were trying to be innovative and entrepreneurial and therefore required processes that were more agile, loose and “shoot from the hip.” This was in stark contrast to the old business unit (dialup Internet access), which required planning, structure, and efficiency in its operations. As a result, the businesses were often “moving at different rates of speed,” creating conflicts in goals and priorities across the organization. In addition, the new business units were accused of raiding people from the old business units to gain much needed skills and expertise. This led to turf wars within the organization. As a director stated, this created “a lot of uncomfortableness” between managers and raised the question, “who is this business unit going to steal next?” Lastly, the new business areas were often talked about as the future of the company while the old business unit was considered a “dying” service line. This was despite the fact that the old business was still generating huge profits for the organization. This created cross-organizational jealousies among employees to the extent that product managers for the old business unit posted a giant sign above their cubicles that read, “Dial-up isn’t dead!” These examples highlight how organizational change and innovation is as much a political process as a technical one, which involves competing goals, interests and identifications. Managing these tensions is part of the struggle of innovation as organizations attempt to implement cultural change.

### **Future Directions for Research**

This study raises a number of interesting questions to be explored in future research. In particular, one important area is the influence of corporate and employment branding as

specific technologies for constructing the enterprising subject at work. Fairclough (2002) contends that the technologization of discourse has become a pervasive form of power and control in modern society. He cites the examples of interviews, teaching, counseling and advertising as common discourse technologies. As he explains: “In calling them discourse technologies, I am suggesting that in modern society they have taken on, and are taking on, the character of transcontextual techniques, which are seen as resources or toolkits that can be used to pursue a wide variety of strategies in many diverse contexts” (p. 215).

As a discourse technology, branding has the power to shape the employment relationship and the subjectivity of workers in sophisticated ways. In the example of Orange Planet, employees were constructed as smart, driven and innovative subjects. These core competencies were built into the culture of the organization through a variety of discursive and non-discursive practices. Whether these technologies are completely successful or not is another matter, but they merit further inquiry due to their pervasive influence in the business world.

Another area for further research is how the discourse of innovation shapes the emotional context of work. As I have shown, innovation constructs a narrative of promise and peril, which circulates an emotional currency of both excitement and anxiety about the future. At Orange Planet, while employees were excited about the prospect of innovation and entrepreneurship, they were also worried and anxious about the future of the company. I highlight how executives deployed the discourse in strategic ways to stimulate and regulate the enterprising capacities of the organization. Additional research studies should address how the discourse of innovation intersects with emotion management and affect studies. Many scholars have noted the importance of emotion and affect to the performance of work

in the postindustrial economy. While emotion involves the “narrativized” production of meaning, affect works at the level of “pre-individual bodily forces” or sensations (Wissinger, 2007, p. 234). Both shape the exercise of power by managing the interior state of employees for the realization of profit. This study has addressed how the discourse of innovation has the capacity to both generate excitement and induce fear in a workforce. Future studies of innovation would benefit from examining the emotion management of labor in greater depth.

A final direction for future research is the role of resistance to innovation and entrepreneurial discourses and practices. In this study, I highlighted how employees engaged in various acts of dissent and resistance to cultural change and the experience of work, including leaving the organization. However, many of these acts were not directed at the logic of innovation per se but at dissatisfaction with the work experience itself, such as increasing bureaucracy, control, stress or change. However, in a few instances, individuals questioned the very foundation of the innovation imperative. For example, at one point a training manager satirically summed up the company’s outsourcing strategy for its call centers this way: “Orange Planet is re-colonizing the Commonwealth – Kenya to Nigeria to South Africa. Wherever the English accent is crispest, we’ll go there.” This comment reflects a deep form of resistance to the goals of capitalist expansion as embodied in the innovation imperative. While most employees were unable or unwilling to make this bold pronouncement, he made this statement triumphantly. Future studies might examine how employees engage with and/or resist the discourse of innovation and entrepreneurship directly, especially in regard to questionable labor practices and ethical issues.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, let me summarize the main thesis of this project and then discuss how the discourse of innovation may shape the world of work moving forward. In this dissertation, I argue that creativity/innovation is a powerful management discourse that shapes the production of meaning and identity within contemporary capitalism. As I outlined in Chapter Two, the discourse is part of a new managerialism that has become hegemonic in the global economy, predicated on the values of constant change, adaptability and creativity toward the marketplace. While the discourse is often seen as a liberating force in the postindustrial economy, I highlight the ways in which the discourse constructs specific relations of power/knowledge that function to stimulate and regulate the enterprising capacities of workers to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive marketplace.

In Chapter Four, I describe how the discourse is produced and distributed by the cultural circuit of capitalism, which is the main group of stakeholders responsible for its widespread circulation in the business world. This group includes management gurus, consulting companies, business schools and the media. Through analysis of a wide variety of texts produced by the cultural circuit, I highlighted how the discourse constructs a dominant narrative of promise and peril, in which innovation represents the promise of a new age of empowerment and creative production but also the peril of increasing competition and economic threat. The discourse circulates at the level of business culture and is taken up by organizations in pursuit of business transformation.

In Chapter 5, I examine the ways in which the discourse of creativity and innovation shapes meaning and identity at an Internet company struggling to survive in a highly competitive telecommunications industry. I describe how organizational leaders take up the

discourse as a way to transform the company into a more competitive and entrepreneurial organization, and how the imperative to “innovate or die” shapes organizational life in significant ways. I introduce the concept of governmentality to highlight how the discourse shapes the conduct of the organization “at a distance” by circulating specific images, forms of knowledge, and social technologies organized around the promise and peril of innovation. Overall, I argue that innovation has become an “art of government” for stimulating and regulating the entrepreneurial capacities of organizations to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive global economy.

Now that I have summarized my overall argument, let me address how the innovation discourse may shape the world of work and the culture of the new capitalism moving forward. I begin by drawing on the title of this dissertation: the promise and peril of innovation. In many ways, this phrase captures the essence of the new “spirit” of capitalism. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) assert, the “spirit” of capitalism is the “human face” of capitalism affixed to an otherwise inhuman and abstract process. The authors argue that the ideology of capitalism cannot be mandated from above but must gain legitimacy from the public through the persuasiveness of its moral claims, or risk revocation.

In this study, I have argued that the popular management discourse of creativity and innovation is one such way that capitalism attempts to justify itself, build commitment and inculcate the “spirit” of capitalism within the business world. The power of this discourse comes from the reality of global competition but also from its compelling vision of work. Knights and McCabe (2003) contend that the “idea of innovation” is often presented as “both a spiritual and pragmatic panacea” by management gurus, “something akin to the American Dream” (p. 1). It promises that even the lowliest worker can get ahead through commitment

to the capitalist process. Yet it is easy to see how this discourse legitimizes and obscures deep forms of power and inequality in society and the workplace. While the discourse of innovation promises material and symbolic success for everyone, it is often used to engineer consent to new forms of workplace control and exploit the creativity of workers for corporate gain. This is in the context of high unemployment and job insecurity for many workers, where outsourcing, restructuring, and layoffs are the norm.

However, despite these inequalities, the discourse of innovation will only increase in intensity during the coming years. Given the current economic crisis, the threat of global competition, and the demands for a greener economy, the imperative to “innovate or die” will only become more prominent in the discourse of politicians, businesspeople and the media in general. We see this already in the growing “threat” of China and how it has unleashed a flurry of discourse about American economic competitiveness. For example, a *USA Today* headline reads: “China: economic threat and potential market.” The article goes on to state: “Americans have long been mesmerized by the promise of what 1.3 billion Chinese consumers might buy. But now, Americans seem preoccupied by a darker image: the threat of what all those industrious Chinese workers might produce.” The article concludes with a hopeful note, however: “Despite the growing unease in some business circles, China remains a market of great profit and promise” (October 27, 2003). In this example, we see how the dialectic of promise and peril animates the discourse, shaping the logic of American enterprise. Scholars note how the persuasive power of the cultural circuit of capitalism, especially management gurus, has long drawn on the use of fear and hope to motivate managers to adopt new practices.

What remains to be seen is how workers will respond to this demand for greater innovation given the increasing disparities between the promise and reality of work life. In this study, I highlighted how employees were increasingly skeptical and disillusioned with the experience of organizational change and innovation at the company. Despite the excitement of enterprise, the reality of the employment experience was stressful, chaotic and uncertain. As a result, many employees were vocal about their complaints and dissatisfaction. This raises many interesting questions about how companies will respond to a growing workforce of knowledge workers who are increasingly disaffected by the failed promise of the new capitalism. I referred to this earlier as a fracturing of the capitalist imaginary, in which the stimulation of innovation and entrepreneurship is increasingly overshadowed by the frustrations and insecurity of work. Boltanski and Chiapello (2006) suggest that, as people begin to see the limits of the new social order in terms of security and justice, the spirit of capitalism must strengthen these dimensions to stand up to critique. If this theoretical insight holds true, we can expect to see a reframing of the new “spirit” of capitalism to redress the deficiencies of the new order. What would this discourse look like? Certainly the dimension of security poses significant challenges to business since much of the adaptability and innovation of capitalism is premised on the disposability or transposability of labor (e.g., cost-cutting, outsourcing, mergers and acquisitions). While organized labor represents a viable strategy for the working class, there are no such safeguards for creative or knowledge workers in most industries. In regard to the last dimension, justice, there seems to be a more productive, albeit contested, discussion on how capitalism can be coherent with a sense of the common good. Since the 1990s, corporate social responsibility has entered the mainstream of business discourse, with an emphasis on

the fiscal, social and environmental responsibilities of companies. While this discourse is complex and wide-ranging, CSR has become linked to innovation and entrepreneurship in numerous ways, especially in the area of environmental sustainability. Although some of this usage may be no more than a public relations strategy, others represent genuine efforts at positive social change. We need only look at political calls for “green” jobs as evidence of a substantial shift in public discourse.

In closing, I want to highlight how the promise and peril of innovation represents both the social construction of the discourse but also its fundamental contradiction. While the innovation imperative promises growth, empowerment and the excitement of enterprise, it is often driven by the peril of economic survival in a competitive market. Thus, I hope this dissertation has been able to accomplish its main purpose, which is to highlight the dark side of the innovation discourse and how it shapes the culture of work in the new capitalism in significant and detrimental ways.



## **APPENDIX A:**

### **INVITATION TO INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW**

Dear Orange Planet Employee,

You are invited to participate in an individual interview to discuss the culture and public image of Orange Planet as well as your personal work experience. This session is part of an organizational research study being conducted by a doctoral student from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational identity of an innovative fast-paced technology company.

The study will involve conducting individual interviews with a range of personnel from across the organization. Each interview will last approximately 1 hour and will cover the following topics:

- Personal/Professional background
- Work values and lifestyle
- Creativity & innovation
- Organizational culture and identity
- Challenges and ambiguities

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a valuable member of the organization and can provide unique insights into the culture and work experience at Orange Planet. Please note that your participation is voluntary and your comments will be kept confidential. At the beginning of the session, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form that authorizes your participation in the study.

Individual interviews are being scheduled for Oct 19-20 and Nov 9-10. If you are able to participate on one of these dates, please reply via email to \_\_\_\_\_. If you would like to participate in a telephone interview on alternative dates, please indicate this preference.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

## INVITATION TO FOCUS GROUP

Dear Orange Planet Employee,

You are invited to participate in a focus group to discuss the culture and public image of Orange Planet. This session is part of an organizational research study being conducted by a doctoral student from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational identity of an innovative fast-paced technology company.

The study will involve conducting several focus groups to gather viewpoints from different levels of the organization. Each focus group will last approximately 2 hours and will cover the following topics:

- General perceptions of the organization
- Organizational culture and values
- Creativity & innovation
- Everyday life in the organization
- Organizational vision and mission
- Brand, reputation and marketing

You are being asked to participate in the study because you are a valuable member of the organization and can provide unique insights into the culture and work experience at Orange Planet. Please note that your participation is voluntary and your comments will be kept confidential. At the beginning of the session, you will be asked to read and sign a consent form that authorizes your participation in the study.

A focus group for New/Recent Hires is scheduled for September 28th at 10:00AM in Conference Room X. If you are able to attend, please reply via email to \_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM**

#### **University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

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**IRB Study # 06-0533**

**Interview Consent Form Version Date:** Oct 15, 2006

**Title of Study:** Putting imagination to work: A study of discourse, organizational identity and the management of the creative class.

**Principal Investigator:** Mark S. Holt

**UNC-Chapel Hill Department:** Communication Studies

**UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number:** 919-962-0012

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Steven K. May

**Study Contact telephone number:** 919-593-2452

**Email Address:** *msholt@email.unc.edu*

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#### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the organizational identity of an innovative high-tech company. Organizational identity refers to how an organization collectively talks about itself and represents itself to others – that is, “Who are we?” “What do we stand for?” “Where are we going?” This interview will explore the shared aspects of organizational identity but also the extent to which identity is multiple, sometimes contradictory and experienced differently by members.

**How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 25-30 employees participating in interviews.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

Your involvement in this interview will last approximately 1 hour.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

You will be asked to discuss the culture and public image of Orange Planet, as well as share your personal experiences of working in the organization. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. Your comments will be audiotaped and transcribed for purposes of analysis.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

This research study is designed to benefit society by producing new knowledge about organizational communication processes, especially within innovative organizations. In addition, this research project will benefit the company by contributing valuable ideas and perspectives to Orange Planet's Human Resources initiatives.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**

We do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. However, even though we will take measures to safeguard your identity, there are always limits to these protections. Therefore, we encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of our limits in protecting confidentiality.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. All names will be "scrubbed" from any reports that are given to management. Furthermore, in some instances, participant quotations may be slightly altered to avoid deductive disclosure of identity. All audio recordings and hard copy transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. I am the only researcher who will have access to these records.

While every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study, except for your time.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB\_subjects@unc.edu.

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**Participant's Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

## FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

### University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consent to Participate in a Research Study

---

**IRB Study #** 06-0533

**Focus Group Consent Form Version Date:** Oct. 15, 2006

**Title of Study:** Putting Imagination To Work: A Study of Discourse, Organizational Identity and the Management of the Creative Class

**Principal Investigator:** Mark S. Holt

**UNC-Chapel Hill Department:** Communication Studies

**UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number:** 919-962-0012

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Steven K. May

**Study Contact telephone number:** 919-593-2452

**Email Address:** *msholt@email.unc.edu*

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#### **What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to participate in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researchers named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

#### **What is the purpose of this study?**

The purpose of this study is to explore the organizational identity of an innovative high-tech company. Organizational identity refers to how an organization collectively talks about itself and represents itself to others – that is, “Who are we?” “What do we stand for?” “Where are we going?” This session will explore the shared aspects of organizational identity but also the extent to which identity is multiple, sometimes contradictory and experienced differently by members.

#### **How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 40 employees participating in focus groups.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

Your involvement in this focus group will last approximately 1.5 to 2 hours.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

The group will be asked to discuss the culture and public image of Orange Planet, as well as share individual experiences of working in the organization. As a member of the focus group, you will be participating with other employees at the same level in the organization. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. Your comments will be audiotaped and transcribed for purposes of analysis.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

This research study is designed to benefit society by producing new knowledge about organizational communication processes, especially within innovative organizations. In addition, this research project will benefit the company by contributing valuable ideas and perspectives to Orange Planet's Human Resources initiatives.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**

We do not anticipate any risks or discomfort to you from being in this study. Even though we will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, we encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of our limits in protecting confidentiality.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. All names will be "scrubbed" from any reports that are given to management. Furthermore, in some instances, participant quotations may be slightly altered to avoid deductive disclosure of identity. All audio recordings and hard copy transcripts will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. I am the only researcher who will have access to these records.

While every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will not receive anything for taking part in this study.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study, except for your time.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB\_subjects@unc.edu.

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**Participant's Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent



## **APPENDIX C:**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### I. Introduction

- Welcome/Introduce yourself
- Purpose
- Topics/Length of session
- Audio-recording/Confidentiality
- Process Guidelines

#### II. Personal/Professional Background

- What is your job? How long have you worked at Orange Planet? How did you start with the company? What attracted you to work here?
- Describe a typical day for you (e.g., responsibilities, activities, etc.). What do you enjoy/find meaningful? What do you find frustrating?

#### III. Organizational Culture

- Describe the culture at Orange Planet.
- The following attributes have been used to describe the culture of Orange Planet. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?
  - Fun
  - Casual/Informal
  - People-oriented
  - Results-oriented
  - Creative/Innovative
  - Autonomy to do your job
  - Chaotic/fluid/changing
  - Conservative (financially)
- What other attributes would you add?
- What is the relationship between management and employees?

#### IV. Organizational Vision and Values

- How do you feel about the new vision of Orange Planet as a “Total Communications Provider”?
- How do you feel about Orange Planet’s core values and beliefs?
  - Which, if any, are meaningful to you?
  - Which values have changed or are no longer relevant?
  - If you could articulate new values for the organization, what would they be?

#### V. Challenges and/or Frustrations

- What are some of the challenges or frustrations of working at Orange Planet?

#### VI. Reputation and Public Image

- How would you describe the reputation and the public image of Orange Planet?
- In thinking about Orange Planet’s marketing campaigns, how well have they captured the “identity” of Orange Planet?

#### VII. Final Question

- If you were writing a news story about Orange Planet, what would be a possible headline?

#### VIII. Conclusion

Any other comments or questions?

Thank you!

If have any questions, please contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.

## FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

### I. Introduction

- Welcome/Purpose
- Topics
- Ground Rules

### II. General Perceptions of the Organization

- Card Exercise: Select one or more cards that describe your experience so far at Orange Planet?
- What is unique or distinctive about the company?

### III. Organizational Culture

- The following attributes have been used to describe the culture of Orange Planet. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?
  - Fun
  - Casual/Informal
  - People-oriented
  - Results-oriented
  - Creative/Innovative
  - Autonomy to do your job
  - Chaotic/fluid/changing
  - Conservative (financially)
- What other attributes would you add?
- Let's continue talking about the culture at Orange Planet.
  - What is the relationship between management and employees? What are key messages that you hear from executives or managers?
  - What are some of the organizational traditions (rites, rituals, routines)?

### IV. Creativity and Innovation

- In what ways is Orange Planet a creative/innovative company? How important is creativity/innovation to you?
- Do you feel you are able to exercise your creativity on the job? How so?

#### V. Organizational Vision and Values

- How do you feel about the new vision of Orange Planet as a “Total Communications Company”?
- How do you feel about Orange Planet’s core values and beliefs? Which, if any, are meaningful to you? Which values have changed or are no longer relevant? If you could articulate new values for the organization, what would they be?
- How has the vision/values of OP changed over the years?

#### VI. Challenges

What are some of the challenges of working in a fast-paced organization like Orange Planet?

#### VII. Reputation and Public Image

- How would you describe the reputation and the public image of Orange Planet?
- What attracted you to work here?
- In thinking about Orange Planet’s marketing campaigns, how well have they captured the “identity” of Orange Planet?

#### VIII. Final Question

- If you were writing a news story about Orange Planet, what would be some possible headlines?

#### IX. Conclusion

Any questions?

Thank you!

If have any questions, please contact me

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