'More and more we are seeing the need for entrepreneurs to be highly adaptable and flexible'. Prof. Kosmas X Smyrnios

In the October/November edition of the Business Review Weekly, School of Marketing’s Research Director Prof. Kosmas Smyrnios contributed to research underlying The tough get going - a feature article by Amanda Gome.

Professor Smyrnios’s research has yielded the BRW Fast 100 list where companies are ranked in relation to their average growth rate over 3 years.

To keep a sharp competitive edge in the marketplace, technology conscious Fast 100 companies are trading at lower prices, and deploying services and products to market faster.

Professor Smyrnios believes ‘more and more we are seeing the need for entrepreneurs to be highly adaptable and flexible because of the shorter shelf life of products and the changeability and quickness of the global marketplace’.

The agile strategies are paying off, resulting in striking accelerated revenue growth - with top ranking companies, Tribeca Corporation and Sirtex Medical enjoying growth rates in excess of 500%.

Such impressive growth is the result of entrepreneurs becoming super competitive. Indeed, as noted in the article “Fast 100 companies over the past few years have always shared one trait - the ability to be highly responsive to customers’ needs. But this year they have also exhibited another: all are highly resilient when faced with big set backs, showing the quality of flexibility” (BRW, 2003 Oct23 - Nov 19 p. 60).
Five trends emerging from research undertaken by Professor Smyrnios include:

1. Reinventing the business

"We have long term strategies that are constantly fine-tuned" (Keith Williams, Proteome Systems)

2. Pressure on price

In the past, fast growing firms tended to charge premium prices. Now, the majority price in the middle.

3. Going global

Fast growth companies must be globally aware to be successful. This includes focusing on relationships with overseas distributors.

4. Change in location

Whilst in the past the majority of fast growth companies have been NSW based, Victoria and Queensland have increased their level of representation.

5. Change in industry

Last year 30 IT companies dominated the Fast 100 list - now falling to 26 as they recover from the ‘tech wreck’ of 2001. Manufacturing companies are up, but expected to fade as the Australian dollar rises. The unrelenting trajectory of the new-age industries - property, business services and communications continues. Biotechnology companies have been imposing this year and are expected to feature increasingly in future lists.

For further details please refer to the full article in the BRW:

For subscribers only: www.brw.com.au

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Interview with Caroline Tan, PhD Research Scholar in the School of Marketing

LR: What was your involvement in the BRW Fast 100 research?

CT: Essentially, under the direction of Professor Kosmas Smyrnios and Amanda Gome (BRW Editor), I developed a questionnaire regarding the fastest growing small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) as well as public companies in Australia. Some areas of focus were their growth, personality characteristics of CEOs, the extent to which organizations are market, learning and entrepreneurially oriented as sources of competitive advantage and its effect of firm performance. The data were then analyzed and findings presented in the October 23 - 29 issue of BRW.
LR: How is the BRW Fast 100 research linked to your area of research?

CT: The focus of my research is on how organizations gain a competitive advantage - what gives fast growth companies their success. Fast growing firms here are discussed in relation to firms who have extremely fast and high turnover growth. These firms achieve turnover sales of as much as an average of 500 percent over the last three years. It is a known fact that many SMEs often fail. However, fast growth firms are basically different from the norm and many budding business owners would love to learn how these firms gain their competitive edge. Therefore, it is extremely valuable to study the success factors contributing to these firms success.

LR: Can you tell us a bit about the research you are undertaking in the competitive advantage area?

CT: Competitive advantage can be defined as the ascendancy a business has over competitors in assets, capabilities, costs, and culture. In my research, it is postulated that there are three specific sources of competitive advantage: the degree to which a company is oriented towards its market, the extent to which it possess a culture of learning, and its entrepreneurial inclination. These factors do not exist in isolation, however, form synergistic relationships. It is stressed here that having a competitive advantage does not equate to strong firm performance. For example, a fashion retailer may be located in the CBD (hence, a competitive advantage), but may not necessarily be generating sufficient sales (firm performance). My PhD thesis investigates the effects of a firm’s orientation, and marketing capabilities on firm performance.

LR: What do you regard as the main benefits from being involved in a research project like the Fast 100?

CT: The BRW Fast 100 is an industry partner and puts things into perspective from a commercial point of view, as opposed to an academic view. The gap between academic and business research may be minimized. Basically, I have the opportunity to view my findings from different angles. The data is also very current and the respondents are more tolerant towards responding to questionnaires. This is because they are eager to gauge what factors contribute to the success of their firms.

I also had the opportunity to meet the CEOs face-to-face at the BRW presentation ceremony. It was very inspiring because some of these people are so dynamic, young and successful. Essentially, these people dare to be different, that is go against the flow. By working with BRW, I also manage to set up in depth interviews with CEOs for the qualitative data analysis. This was extremely valuable because the point of contact had already been established. So there are many benefits to be derived from being part of a team comprising academics, professional business owners, and industry partners.

Visiting Researcher: Gerlese Åkerlind

The Research Development Unit is pleased to announce details of a seminar being conducted by visiting academic from the ANU, Dr. Gerlese Åkerlind, entitled Developing as a University Teacher and Researcher: An Holistic Perspective on Academic Development, to which all staff and students are invited to attend.

Date: Monday, November 17, 2003
Time: 2:00 - 3:00pm
Venue: Research Lounge, Bldg 28, level 5.
RSVP: James Hill - james.hill@rmit.edu.au by 10/11/03

Gerlese Åkerlind is a lecturer in the Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods (CEDAM) at the Australian National University (ANU). The Centre provides professional development support for academic staff at the ANU. Within the Centre, Gerlese is Convenor of the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and has particular responsibility for providing professional support for academics seeking career management advice. She is an Associate Editor for the journal, Higher Education Research and Development (HERD), and has just completed a four-year term as Convenor of the Phenomenography special interest group attached to the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction (EARLI).
Practice-Based Research Monograph: Call for Papers

Submissions for consideration for publication in this monograph titled ’Doing, supervising and managing practice-based research’ are now being requested. The monograph will be part of the SOLTAR (Scholarship of Learning, Teaching and Research) Series and will be edited by Associate Professor Carlene Boucher. The series editor is Professor John Bowden and the monograph will be published online by RMIT Publishing.

The Focus:
The monograph will be a collection of succinct, highly readable and focussed papers on the theme of practice-based research. The objectives of the monograph are to:

- theorise practice-based research and provide some conceptual constructs that will facilitate conversations around the characteristics and types of practice-oriented research activities.
- contribute to the growing body of literature on practice based research and to position RMIT as a significant contributor to this literature.
- create an opportunity for RMIT staff to publish their work. Currently there are limited opportunities for the dissemination of this type of work in discipline-based journals.
- create a resource for staff and students engaged in this type of research.

Audience
The intended audience is research supervisors and supervisees as well as those involved in research training, including research supervisor development.

Possible Topics
- Theorising practice-based research
- Doing practice-based research and lessons for new researchers
- Practice-based research and the experience of supervising and being supervised
- Practice-based research in the University setting

Types of contributions
It is sometimes difficult to describe practice-based research adequately in a traditional paper. Therefore, other forms of presentation that would be amenable to online publication are encouraged.

Final Submission Date: 31 January 2004
Submit (via email or on CD) to: Associate Professor Carlene Boucher
Email: carlene.boucher@rmit.edu.au
School of Management  RMIT
GPO Box 2476V
Melbourne 3001 Victoria, Australia.

Review:
Each paper will be reviewed by an external panel of academics recognised in the field. Upon receipt of a paper, notification to the contributor will occur via email. Selection will be based on readability,
contribution to the field in terms of both theory and practice, and advancement of issues pertaining to practice-based supervision.

Chapter length: 4-6000 words or equivalent

**How to present your paper:**
Please ensure that the paper contains the following details on the first page only:
- Author’s Name and Title
- Postal address.
- Email address.
- Phone.
- Title of the Paper

NOTE: Do not include the author’s name anywhere other than on the first page.
Please use AGPS 6 format for footnotes and references

**Further information:**

Carlene Boucher  email: carlene.boucher@rmit.edu.au  Ph: 0399255914

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**Research Funding Opportunities**

For details regarding other current research funding opportunities please visit the Research & Development Funding website which provides a list of grants, awards, scholarships and fellowships available to staff and students and is updated weekly at: [www.rmit.edu.au/rd/funding](http://www.rmit.edu.au/rd/funding)

Also for a listing of scholarships available please visit the Joint Academic Scholarship On-line Network (JASON) website. JASON is an on-line database of scholarship information for postgraduate students. For further information please visit:

[jason.unimelb.edu.au](http://jason.unimelb.edu.au)

**Aust National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE) Information Technology Online (ITOL) Program**

RMIT deadline Tue 9 December 2003 (external 16 Dec Canberra)

NOIE is now seeking applications under the 11th round of ITOL program. ITOL is an Aust govt funding program that supports the take up of collaborative e-business across a wide range of industry sectors by offering competitive funding. The objectives of ITOL are to provide assistance to a broad range of activities throughout Aust that:

- encourage collaborative industry-based projects which aim to accelerate the adoption of business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce solutions across a wide range of industry sectors, especially by clusters of SMEs
- foster the awareness & strategic take up of innovative e-commerce solutions within & across industry sectors which deliver sustainable economy wide returns & contribute to increased competitiveness.
In recent ITOL funding rounds, the industry solutions have demonstrated high levels of innovation & reflected emerging e-commerce applications such as e-marketplaces, wireless applications, value chains, introduction of industry standards & promoting interoperable solutions.

**Amount:** $200,000 max. Applicants can request max. of $200,000 funding; however, funding request must be no more than 50% of total eligible project cost. The remainder of the total project cost must be provided as cash or in-kind contributions by project consortium.

**Eligibility:** Applicants must be consortium-based, with at least 3 organisations that are broadly representative of the industry sector & able to demonstrate strong industry support for the project. Consortium members may include companies, tertiary institutions, industry/business associations, govt agencies, educational institutions & other not-for-profit organisations.

**Contact:** ITOL Program tel 02-6271 1191 email ITOL@noie.gov.au URL www.noie.gov.au/projects/ebusiness/developing/ITOL/index.htm

**Population Council Social Science Fellowship Program**

RMIT deadline: Fri 23 January 2004 (external 1 Feb USA)

Sponsor offers residential postdoc fellowships to persons who wish to pursue advanced training & research in population studies under mentorship of a member of its research staff. Priority areas of research include: fertility/family planning; health/reproductive health; population aging; population & development; transitions to adulthood & urban growth & its consequences. Applicants are expected to make initial inquiries, incl. CV, with a member of Council’s Policy Research Division who works in their area of research interest to explore possibilities for mentorship & research training prior to submitting a formal application.

**Amount:** Monthly stipend, travel & accom for one professional meeting pa, transportation expenses to & from New York at beginning & end of fellowship period, health insurance & small allowance for books.

**Eligibility:** Candidates must have recently completed PhD in demography, population studies &/or a closely related social science discipline within last 2 years & be proficient in English. Applications may be submitted in anticipation of receiving of doctoral degree, but fellowship cannot begin until after degree has been awarded.

**Duration:** Initial term of appointment is one year but reappointment for a second & final year is expected.

**Contact:** Fellowship Co-ordinator. Ph: 212-339-0671 email: ssfellowship@popcouncil.org www.popcouncil.org/fellowships/ResidentFellowships.html

**Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Churchill Fellowships**

RMIT deadline: Fri 20 February 2004 (external 28 Feb)

Churchill Trust aims to give opportunity, by the provision of financial support, to Australians from all walks of life who, having exhausted opportunities within Aust, desire to further their search for excellence overseas. There are no prescribed qualifications, academic or otherwise, for the award of most Churchill Fellowships. Merit is the primary test, whether based on past achievements or demonstrated ability for future achievement in any walk of life. Benefit to Aust is a significant factor. Fellowships will not be awarded to enable the applicant to obtain higher academic or formal qualifications, but proposals for professional or academic investigations will be entertained where project would primarily benefit Aust community. Fellowships will be awarded for the purpose of pursuing an overseas investigative project of a kind that is not fully available in Australia.

**Amount:** There is no specific amount, however the amount given will defray major cost of airfares, living allowances and any approved course or conference fees. Average at present is about $20,000.
Eligibility: Normally confined to Aust citizens over 18 years of age. No upper age limit is prescribed but generally awards will be made to those whose major contribution to their field lies before them. Fellowships will not ordinarily be awarded to those in a vocation which offers special opportunities for overseas study or experience, or to those employees in the public & private sectors where regular programs for overseas study or experience are available to the applicant. Aust residents temporarily overseas will be considered for fellowships if they will be available to attend an interview in Aust & are prepared to return to Aust on completion of fellowship.

Contact:  Ph: 02 6247-8333 or freecall 1800 777 231 email: churchilltrust@bigpond.com www.churchilltrust.com.au

ARC 'report back' sessions

RMIT staff, especially those involved in ARC applications, are encouraged to attend the ARC 'report back' sessions appropriate to them for feedback and discussion of outcomes of the Discovery and Linkage funding rounds announced earlier this month. Please see details below:

The ARC will be holding 'report back' sessions after the recent announcement of funding decisions in Melbourne on Thur 20 Nov 2003.

Representing the ARC will be Professors Lawrence Cram (Physics, Chemistry and Geosciences) and Sue Rowley (Humanities and Creative Arts). Professor Ian Petersen (Mathematics and Information Technology) may also be attending. A small number of staff from the Programs and Disciplines Branch will also be included in the ARC visiting party.

The following sessions have been put in place:

1. Presentation to Victorian academic staff
Date: Thur 20 November 2003 (9.30am - 11.30am)
Venue: University of Melbourne, Public Lecture Theatre, Old Arts Building (Building 149), Parkville Campus
Parkville Campus map http://www.pb.unimelb.edu.au/other/maps/

2. Presentation to Victorian early career academic staff
Date: Thur 20 November 2003 (2.00pm - 4.00pm)
Venue: University of Melbourne, Lecture Theatre E, Old Arts Building (Building 149), Parkville Campus
Parkville Campus map http://www.pb.unimelb.edu.au/other/maps/

3. Alternative presentation for staff who cannot make the 9.30am presentation
Date: Thur 20 November 2003 (2.30pm to 4.00pm)
Venue: Monash University, Faculty of Medicine Lecture Theatre South 1, Medicine Building 64, (Ring Road South) Clayton Campus,
Clayton Campus map http://monash.edu/campuses/map/clayton.gif

For further information, please contact:
Mira Maunder, Research Grants Officer, RMIT Research & Innovation
Tel: 03-9925 7726  Email: mira.maunder@rmit.edu.au
Asia Pacific Economies: Multilateral vs Bilateral Relationships  May 19-21 2004

Call of Papers

APEC members have in recent years engaged in bilateral economic relationship that opens a new chapter in the era of regional economic cooperation. Bilateral relationships should be seen as complement to the multilateral nature of APEC. The conference aims to provide an opportunity for scholars, professional and governments to highlight the latest changes and sharpen the development in the Asia-Pacific region. Scholars are invited to present papers in APERC-concerned, macroeconomic and sector areas: Multilateral and bilateral relationships; Trade Liberalization: Economics and Law; Capacity Building, Science and Technology; Financial Cooperation and Foreign Investment; Sustainable Economic Development and Growth; Human Resources Development and Women Affairs; Small and Medium Enterprises and Corporate Governance & Telecommunication, Energy, Environment and Transport Industries.

Submission of a 1-page paper abstract:
The abstract should include the paper title, name(s) and affiliations(s) of authors(s), contact person (address, fax and telephone numbers), language use in the paper and in presentation.

Deadline: December 1, 2003

Abstract should be sent to:

Dr. Kui-Wai Li, Department of Economics and Finance,
City University of Hong Kong, Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR.
(email: EFKWLI@CITYU.EDU.HK fax:(852) 2788 8842)

Successful abstracts will be informed via email in early January 2004.

Submission of full paper

Full papers have to be submitted either by post or by email on or before April 30, 2004.

Conference Website

Registration and related information can be found at the following URL:
http://fbweb.cityu.edu.hk/hkapec

Supporting research centers in the City University of Hong Kong

Accounting and Corporate Governance Centre; Asian Centre for Electronic Business (City U and Peking University); Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law; Research Centre for International Economics of the City University of Hong Kong; Southeast Asia Research Center & WTO Law and Dispute Resolution Center.