

INNOVATION, AGE & THE THEORY OF DEADWOOD

UNCLE TIM

OAI Academy: Everyday Greatness Guide -EGG

Is there a one-to-one relationship between innovation and age, and at what age do we become deadwood?

We all believe that life is finite. While some scientists believe age is nothing more than a mere set of numbers that provides opportunities to celebrate with our friends and well wishers, others believe that age is a strong determinant factor in creativity and that we peak between 15- 39 and become deadwood at 50.

The Japanese popular artist was a frontline proponent of the former school of thought: All I have produced before the age of 70 is not worth taking into account At 73, I have learned a little about the real structure of nature. When I am 80, I shall have made still more progress . At 90, I shall penetrate the mystery of things. At 100, I shall have reached a marvelous stage, and when I am 110, everything I do, whether it be a dot or a line, will be alive

Hokusai lived to be almost 90 before he died and created his most iconic woodblock print: The Great Wave Off Kanagawa when he was nearing life's departure lounge.

Professor John Fenn, an inveterate late-starter was another member of that school of thought.

Despite his diligence and commitment, Fenn at 70 years of age remained an inconsequential scientist at Yale University working on atomic and molecular beams, but with little or no recognition among his peers.

He later moved to Virginia Commonwealth university where he expanded on his earlier paper on a new solution he called electrospray ionization This method allows scientists to measure ribosomes and viruses with incredible accuracy, providing knowledge that transformed our understanding of how our cells work.

In 2012 at almost 85 years of age, John Fenn was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry. He won, finally.

Albert Einstein, one of the greatest geniuses of all time was more known for his theory of relativity which he discovered at the tender age of 26. But not many people know that Einstein also drew a parallel between Age and innovation, which I now call the theory of relative Deadwood

According to Einstein, A person who has not made his great contribution to science before the age of 30 will never do so True? False?

Einstein soul mate was Professor Paul Dirac who like Einstein, won the Nobel Prize for a discovery he made in his 20s. Dirac was more blunt even:

Age is, of course, a fever chill
That every physicist must fear
He's better dead than living still
When once he's past his twenties year

To both Professors Einstein and Dirac, innovation and discovery seem to be a young person's game.

The research work published in the book titled The Formula by Scientists Albert-Laszlo Barabasi affirmed that scientists tend to publish their breakthrough work at the beginning of their careers

Psychologist Dean Keith Simonton analysed the career trajectories of over 2000 most accomplished inventors, scientists and entrepreneurs, including Isaac Newton, Da Vinci, Edison, Bill Gates, and the Google Guys among others.

All of them had their miracle years between ages 15- 39.

To Genius Albert Einstein and Co., Creativity is the purview of the youth or at worse early middle-age

Even artists, writers and politicians also experience early primes
Bill Clinton became Governor of Arkansas in the US at a tender age of 32. While both Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and John F Kennedy were sworn in as America's youngest President at age 43 each.

Let us briefly go through the pages of history to see if we are going to arrive at the same conclusion of the Theory of the relative Deadwood as Professor Dirac affirmed

1. Charles Darwin at 18, out of his relentless curiosity with nature came out with his theory of evolution which is still relevant till this morning.
2. Michael Dell created the multi billion dollars Dell Computer at age 19 with just \$1000 when he was an undergraduate.
3. Elon Musk, the world's richest man at age 10 developed an interest in Computing and Video games and acquired a Commodore VIC20. At age 12 he sold the code of a BASIC-based video game he created which he called Blaston to PC and office Technology magazine for \$500
4. Richard Branson first business was a magazine called Student which he established when he was 16
5. Bill Gates at age 15 and his friend Paul Allen, formed a business and developed TRAF-O-DATA, a computer program that monitored traffic patterns in Seattle. The 2 teenagers netted \$20,000 for their efforts.
6. Steve Jobs was 21 when he and his 2 friends created Apple. Jobs sold his Volkswagen bus while Steve Wozniak sold his beloved Scientific Calculator to raise money for Apple which today is valued at \$3trillion.
7. At age 11, in 1941, Warren Buffet bought his first stock by buying six shares of Cities service preferred stock. He later went to become the most celebrated investor of all time. And today at 91 years of age, Warren buffet is still picking stocks the way his quiet farmer-son picks Cherry on the farm.
8. At age 20, Twitter CEO, on March 21,2006, Jack Dorsey posted the first Twitter message which allowed users to send messages no longer than 140 characters.
9. Larry Page and Sergey Brin were 19 and 21 when they created Google.
10. Chinua Acebe was 28 years when he wrote his first and most famous novel Things Fall Apart in 1958.
11. Professor Wole Soyinka was in his 20s when he wrote his first play titled A dance of the Forests He later became the first African to win Nobel Prize for Literature.
12. The Billionaire Boy, Mark Zuckerberg was just 19 when he started Facebook in 2004.

Against the above background, does that mean we must lose our spark or mojo as we age?
Are people above 50 deadwood?

GOOD NEWS Scientists have discovered that creativity itself has no age limit.

The above statistics represents just 1% of the human population whose IQ is 140 . They are called Genius.

There is another category of human beings who are SMART This represents 5% and their IQ hovers around 110-140.

While the research carried out by Albert-Laszlo Barabasi confirmed that it appeared that a scientist has roughly a 13% chances of publishing her highest impact work in the first 3 years of his career and at 30 years on the job the likelihood of making a discovery that will over shadowe her previous work is less than *1%

Age is real, our energy and appetite go south as we climb north, age-wise. Our children come into our space, our parents become fragile and need our attention, we burn out, we get distracted by spouse(s) and friends. our priorities change and our pace lags. Fear takes hold of our lives. Human greed, which is the wealth's number one building block reduces with age.

And since Entreprenuship is like buying lottery tickets, the more tickets you buy the more your chances of winning. And vice versa.

Late-starters tend to buy fewer Entreprenuship lottery tickets, so at evening when they count their wins, they are very scanty.

People remember Steve Jobs today for the iPhone and iPad he invented.

But not many people know that Steve Jobs failure list (failed lottery tickets) is longer than his successful lottery tickets.

Apple's first handheld Newton, NEXT, the G-4 Cube, MobileMe among others were all spectacular failures.

Steve Jobs was once fired from the company he built. He spent sorrowful 10 years in the wilderness before his Apple's 2nd coming.

This must have affected his health and subsequently premature death.

But because Steve Jobs started buying the lottery tickets at a tender age by the time he reached 35, he had mastered the game. He had overcome the 2 major pot holes on the way to road to breakthrough: Fantastic Idea, Poor Execution and Great Execution, poor idea

At 35, Steve Jobs and others listed above were in the winner's zone of Great idea, fantastic Execution

Their respective phenomenal failures vanished behind the concomitant massive blockbusters

It is futile for young African leaders to count on luck for breakthrough. The penchant for ritual money should also be condemned by well meaning people. The principle to good success remains the same since time began: embracing turbulence, not avoiding it, taking calculated risks, trusting but also testing your intuitions, doing the unexpected with audacity Ritual money, therefore, has no space in any good success.

Even though creativity has no expiry date but success does. To increase our chances of success we must take note of two fundamental laws:

Law of Preferential Attachment Which simply means that once we achieve recognition and that attention powered by preferential attachment will set us up for life.

For instance, from 1986 when Professor Wole Soyinka won the Nobel Prize, he has been a great beneficiary of the law of Preferential Attachment Every novel he writes generously profit from the law of preferential attachment.

The challenge for young African leaders is to imbibe enough discipline to keep this attachment till the end. Life is too slippery and early wins is worse than alcohol.

Something happened on Sunday January 30 2022, a young but hugely talented footballer playing for Manchester United club in the UK was arrested for raping and threats to kill.

That singular incidence has disconnected Mason Greenwood from the law of preferential attachment, probably for the rest of his life.

Not many people will be as twice lucky as Tiger Woods: the chances of *second-coming is less than 1%*!

The second important law is the law of Attention Economy

While all projects have an expiry date like fresh tomatoes, innovators don't.

Innovators keep moving forward from one project to the other. They scarcely pause to count their winnings they are more interested in more wins, purchasing more lottery tickets every time

That is one secret of the wealthy people, knowing that success fades with time and that no one respects ex-king, they keep testing their luck repeatedly. I was once a king story is never a sweet music to the ear.

This is why Warren Buffet is still picking stocks at 91 and why Aliko Dangote, Africa's richest man is still dreaming of buying Arsenal football club in the UK as soon as he finishes his refinery!

Take Home

We are not deadwood at 50! This is Einstein's Error

Both Professors Einstein and Dirac were wrong on the theory of relative deadwood.

Nonetheless, age is real, early birds catch the worms. Fortune favours not just the bold but the early-starters with: Great ideas and Fantastic finishing skills.

Congratulations to those who are between 15- 39 reading this today.

You can still join with less stress either the G1 or G5 club.

Multiple congratulations to the 1%+5 % (The GENUIS and the SMART)

There is hope for the 94%, the ones called deadwood by Nobel laureate, Professor Dirac.

The G94 are not deadwood but late-starters. Late-starting does not mean no-starting

But if you belong to the G94, you will need stubborn creativity with John Fenn-like relentless tenacity and resilience to leave a permanent mark on the sands of time

You can't leave footprints in the sands of time if you are sitting on your butt counting your scanty winnings. Who does that? Definitely not anyone in G1 or G5 club.

And who wants to leave butt prints in the sands of time?

If Papa Warren Buffet at 91 is still scoring goals, what's your excuse Go for Goals. More goals

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