Leave Innovation to the Private Sector

By CHRIS FOX, Associate Editor, *PD&D*

I've written several editorials on the importance of our government funding innovation and acting as a crutch for progressive technology. I stand by those views, but there is an importance of privatization that I am compelled to express.

If the dollar wasn't so dirty and we could start clean — I mean completely bleached of the corruption and the twisted version of ethics that business has been paired with – innovation should be left completely up to the private sector. The problem with privatization is the drive for profit over progress, loopholes, and putting a dollar over the greater good. These are big hurdles — we're talking skyscraper sized hurdles. Of course, this is an unachievable, utopian perspective. It is why innovation will never be solely relegated to the private sector — regardless of conservative efforts to shrink "big" government.

A good case can be made for privatization, even with our love for that green paper – it's fast and efficient (usually). Innovation in the private sector has to be fast, because if anybody is going to make a profit off of something, it needs to happen before the next guy manages to do it. This is the nature of progression, competition. Build it better, so people want your iDevice or fuel efficient car rather than the other guy's.

The issue, even in Utopia, comes with secrets and hoarding of knowledge. Nobody will get anywhere unless they are allowed to build upon their predecessors, even if they are only months, days, or even hours apart. When working knowledge and know-how is locked away from competition, for the sake of competition, we are halting the innovative process.

'Create and move on' should be the motto of every innovator. Life will always require new inventions; the only thing stopping innovation in a privately controlled enterprise is laziness in the form of a comfortable paycheck. Enter monetary gain.

The American Dream is to succeed on your own accord and utilize your talents, but hiding innovative ideas isn't going to make your concept the next iPod. Arrogance is pervasive in a world of creativity and invention that stains the process by allowing the businessmen to swoop in and promise profit. The guy who knows nothing other than to sell, and preys upon the timid wonder.

If you haven't been able to tell — by this editorial or others — I'm a fairly liberal leaning guy, so I don't have to explain how much it pains me to say that I agree with the right wing ideal that *some* things should be privatized. Privatization can drive innovation ten-fold, but not when the pilot isn't an innovator.

In this sense, I still think NASA should receive ten times the funding it does and the green movement should get federal support, because capitalism would crush these industries without it. Like I said, there is a form of laziness that comes with a steady paycheck, as well as job security when a project seems never-ending. Programs like these need help to get the ball rolling because they are new and unprofitable, but they should be quickly ushered out of the proverbial nest so as to make them innovate faster.

This idea goes back to a common thread in many of my previous editorials. Education should be given freely to anybody who is willing to partake; to whatever level the individual sees fit for his/her talents and abilities. This would not only feed the privatized innovation machine, but it would lead to a population propelled forward by centuries, rather than being caged by a stack of ideas in a vault.

A lot can be said in favor of a fully privatized R&D society, but as our civilization stands, we have a long way to go before it is truly efficient.

What's your take? Email chris.fox@advantagemedia.com *[1].*

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