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## **Editorial: Why are gaps important to the opportunity development process?**

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For the opportunistic organisation, it is important to understand gaps. An easy way to think of a gap is that a gap is the difference between the current state of things and the desired state of things. Gap analysis has been used in business to look at area including operations/production (Gulledge, 2006), benchmarking (Wong and Wong, 2008), information technology (Roses et al., 2008) and even strategy/market forecasting (Liu and Wang, 2008). Although there are few entrepreneurship researchers (cf. Minkes and Foxall, 1982; Woods and Joyce, 2003; Kraus et al., 2008) that have mentioned or used the concept, we believe that further work needs to be done specifically in the area of opportunity creation. Below we will briefly express some of our thoughts on the topic.

Gaps are important for the opportunity development process for two reasons. Firstly, it can be argued that the gap is the opportunity itself. Secondly and the key point of this article is, that these gaps that create the opportunities. It is the gaps that initiate the action that leads to the desire and behaviour to close the gap. What do we mean?

Let us look at dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is a gap. The gap between the situation in which you would be satisfied versus the state in which you are currently. The gap produces tension. In a drive to reduce or eliminate the tension action is taken. Action

continues to occur until the tension is gone, which takes you back to a state of satisfaction. Very simple, so how does this apply to opportunities? Well, one way is to look at opportunities themselves as dissatisfaction or a gap. In the market there are actors (potential customers) that are dissatisfied with what is currently available at current prices. As a result, that is an opportunity for another set of actors (entrepreneurs) to reduce that gap by offering a product or service at a certain price. So it is the dissatisfaction that creates the business opportunity. Therefore, if the organisation is going to be successful at identifying these opportunities it must look for dissatisfaction in the market. Now we have arrived back to a place that researchers know well, but have gotten here in a different manner.

Let us go back to the idea of tension. It is this tension that is created by the dissatisfaction gap that motivates action to reduce the gap. In the modern economy, people experience dissatisfaction and tension from the lack of products and service that meet their needs all time. Most of these people do nothing about it or intensify the search for products and services to reduce that tension. A few believing that they are not alone in experiencing the tension and sensing a potential profit opportunity become entrepreneurs to exploit that gap. But what happens to the members of the opportunistic organisation? To maximise the organisation's sensitivity to opportunities, the opportunistic organisation must focus on how move its employees from this tension to discovery or ideation (i.e., creation of a business an idea kernel or business idea). How does it do this?

When people feel this tension or notice this tension in others, generally, their first response is to do nothing. Entrepreneurs and their employees must be trained to fight this response. We believe that entrepreneurial organisations can be made more successful if they train their employees to be sensitive to this tension. So when they sense this tension from the environment, they transmit this information into a specially designed system for this purpose. This means that all employees can have a significant role to play in the opportunity development process. Furthermore, we could push the point even further to say that these employees have even a responsibility to be involved in the process. Over time and through experience, it should become easier for the staff of these organisations to recognise this tension, so much so that, its recognition and input into the system become almost second nature. Furthermore, offering incentives can enhance this process.

In addition, the process of moving from tension to ideation is reinforced by the culture of the organisation. The importance of a special type of organisational culture cannot be stress enough. Part of the culture must be the collective understanding and commitment to the creation of value. Linked closely with that is the development of opportunities. It must become engrained in all organisational members, especially those directly involved in the opportunity development and exploitation process.

So while employees in less successful firms may feel the tension (potential opportunities), they generally do nothing with that information. However, the employees of successful firms may tend to be sensitive to that tension, but not only that. It may be the case that employees in these successful organisations make that information explicit and available to others by transmitting it through specialised designed organisation systems. However, that discussion is for another day.

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