



DRUID

## Review paper

 [70089 NURTURING INNOVATION THROUGH INTELLIGENT FAILURE: THE ART OF FAILING ON PURPOSE](#)

I confirm that I have no personal interest in the outcome of the assessment of this paper and that my grading was carried out impartially and carefully in accordance with the detailed instructions

### Submit paper grade

Please keep in mind that DRUID is a conference aiming to stimulate debate and diversity as well as strengthen the quality of research. The conference invites high-quality research from any social science discipline addressing innovation and change. Hence, **it is NOT the aim of the conference to present polished, submission-ready research or research with a very narrow, disciplinary stance.** In addition to presenting 'normal science', we give high priority to papers with ideas with potentially high impact, new approaches and creative methods.

You can find the Call for Papers for DRUID23 here: [DRUID23](#)

Generally, when grading, generally think of selecting papers you would like to find in conference sessions you attend. Keep in mind that you are assessing novel work in progress and NOT final papers submitted to a journal.

Papers awarded the grade 4 (= Definitely be included) should be relevant, and both novel and high quality. Irrelevant papers should be graded 1 (= Definitely not be included). Papers that are technically accomplished but with no novel ideas or implications, or novel but with sloppy methods, should not be graded higher than 3 (= Probably be included).

#### Relevance

DRUID does not present specialized natural sciences/engineering papers, or papers that do not fall into the field of Industrial Dynamics in a broad sense by addressing innovation and the dynamics of structural, institutional or geographic change.

#### Novelty

Examples of novelty include, for instance:

- The paper can make a significant empirical and/or theoretical contribution to the existing literature
- The paper develops or introduces methods previously unknown or uncommon within the field of Industrial Dynamics
- The paper improves significantly the range or sophistication of methods already used or having broad applicability within the field of Industrial Dynamics
- The paper introduces novel data or new data sources that may open up for entirely new lines of interesting research

#### Quality

While we emphasize the novelty of a paper, if a paper does not live up to the usual quality criteria, i.e. with clearly stated aims, research questions, with clear theoretical positioning, relevant and well-accounted-for empirical method, argumentation and writing, it will detract from its other merits.

- 4) Definitely include in the conference program  
 3) Probably include (if space permits)  
 2) Probably not include  
 1) Definitely not include

## Candidate for best paper

- Yes  
 No

### Comments to the organizers about this paper. NO summary of content, please.

Thank you very much for having the opportunity to review your work. The paper provides a compelling, interesting, and overall refreshing perspective on innovation.

In terms of positioning, I think currently there are quite a number of literature streams mixed together, ranging from cognitive perspectives, organizational learning, and Carnegie tradition. Maybe there is a chance to integrate those streams further or make clear what they have in common and where they differ in terms of the target topic of failure in innovation.

In addition, I suggest the term "intelligent" might be better replaced by "purposeful" or "deliberate". Because I think the definition of intelligence (even in relation to artificial intelligence) is probably closer to adaptive and self-reinforcing, which does not fit very well with the functioning of the IF concept defined in the paper. Related to the literature, the authors also suggest the link to hypotheses development and testing. Here I would propose to take a look at recent emerging research on the scientific approach in entrepreneurial decision-making or even concepts such as lean start-ups. I can see some similarities in terms of the deliberately setting-up experiments and failures and how failing is part of the expectation.

I can see that the paper is also related to the broader question in terms of "how to measure innovation (success)". The authors propose that a failed innovation attempt may enable learning to such a degree or impact that it should no longer be classified as such is fascinating.

I do appreciate the matrix provided on page 14. However, I think the numbering is not very useful (e.g., L1, etc.). In addition, the bottom left quadrant is not really based on a realistic assumption. If a decision-maker or organization purposefully designs an experiment that fails that there is no learning resulting from this, it seems rather unlikely.

From my perspective, I think the provision of a counterintuitive hypothesis is excellent. However, I see the problem of the H3 in two ways. First, I think the boundary condition of psychological safety is very prominent, and because of this should have more attention. Second, the concept of psychological safety is mentioned on page 15 but not introduced or defined properly. I am familiar that this concept is closely linked to the work of Amy Edmondson, which the paper heavily builds upon, but I think it would be beneficial to define the term and concept more closely.

Finally, the part related to the breakthrough (innovation) has not been very clear to me. I think it's very promising, and it does make sense - or I can see the possibility - that IF can lead to breakthrough innovation by triggering a learning cycle bringing one closer to the frontier. However, it seems to me that the relationships and mechanisms are still rather vague, and I would suggest defining them more precisely.

As one suggestion, I think this paper provides a highly valuable and novel perspective. However, in my view, it lacks a little depth and precise relevance in terms of theoretical contribution. For example, this also indicated that only one reference is cited in the section with 5.1 Theoretical implications.

As a recommendation, I would suggest further looking for concepts that are similar to those suggested earlier. Iterative modes of learning and related frameworks are indeed existing, and they can reflect actual further developments of something like Six Sigma (also mentioned in the text).

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