

# THE MATTER OF STRATEGY AND ETHICS

Luciano Pederzoli

EVANLAB

31st October 2016

*The theme of this article is research by single individuals or small organizations, and follows on from a previous work entitled A DISCUSSION ABOUT RESEARCH (<http://www.evanlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/1e-A-DISCUSSION-ABOUT-RESEARCH.pdf>).*

I have been involved in the “unconventional” abilities of the mind since my youth, and over the course of time I was able to join or subscribe to many non-profit associations that dealt with subjects related to that field. I therefore have had the opportunity to note the systematic repetition of situations which, in light of my decades of experience, I can define as “standard”.

Virtually all of these associations were established – with some help from friends – by a renowned or respected figure, but without either public or private sponsors. All of them therefore had financial problems due to lack of funding and relied on subscriptions to stay afloat; as such, much time and effort was given to increasing subscribers through meetings, conferences, and various cultural initiatives for publicity. This served both to maintain current subscribers as well as attracting new ones.

To acquire prestige and members, some associations stated that they also did scientific research and attempted at times commendable initiatives, although none led to publications in scientific peer-reviewed journals, or what is otherwise known as the “official literature”.

Often, through the voluntary commitments of some subscribers and members of management, such initiatives would at first attract a decent audience and produce an encouraging increase in subscriptions as well as the reputation of some members of management. However, this was accompanied by the necessity for more initiatives, expenses for listed speakers, costs for hiring premises, the continuing cost of flyers, advertising, and occasional book of little commercial success but very satisfying for the author’s *ego* (almost always a member of the management team).

Before long though, financial difficulties – given that reaching an adequately large proportion of the public with expensive advertising campaigns in the mass media was not possible – led first to a stagnation and then a decrease in both audience (always strictly passive, inclined only to listen to conferences if deemed interesting, sometimes demanding more, but never actually doing anything concrete) and subscribers.

The first to feel the negative impact of this situation was always research, which in itself is always expensive and primarily is able to produce very few serious works per year; in other words, it’s not very eye-catching. The usual way out consisted of producing several works of insufficient scientific substance for publication in any official journal (added to which is the not insignificant cost of publishing required for each article, another hurdle for those with limited funds).

Then there was always someone with an inflated **ego** who, once a part of the executive group, fell in love with the associated power and prestige, as limited as it was, and began an attempt to supplant the association's original creator. Since in Italy it is mandatory in associations that members of the directive are elected democratically by subscribers, sooner or later and pretty much in a proper manner, people like this usually succeeded, thereby assuring the association's gradual extinction because they were unable to manage active subscribers, disadvantaging them instead of rewarding them, resulting in organizational inefficiency and halting the already weakened research activities.

At this point there would begin a haemorrhaging of subscribers and audiences, who would regularly move to a new association, often created by disappointed ex-subscribers of the old one, eventually folding this one too and creating the conditions for a new standard cycle of birth-development-deterioration-extinction.

From that presented above I have learned the following regarding non-profit organizations:

- a) If the subject is not mainstream and opposed to official viewpoints, sponsors and public and private funding is out of the question, especially in Italy. Self-funding is the only option.
- b) Those who participate in cultural initiatives are passive and disloyal, not disposed to doing anything concrete and easily lose interest if not constantly stimulated by subjects that appeal to them and are usually presented in a simplified manner.
- c) It is not uncommon for young enthusiastic subscribers to contribute their efforts, but they cannot be relied upon for long term commitment. Initially they need to gain experience, justifiably find paid work, and raise a family while developing a career; consequently they 'disappear' until around the age of 50, becoming available again, if they are still willing, after retirement. In other words, when they are older adults.
- d) When relying only on volunteers and scarce funds, it is not possible to adequately run cultural initiatives and scientific research simultaneously, since they require completely different obligations and expertise; it's therefore necessary to choose one or the other.
- e) When the board is composed of several people and some ambitious members, eventually jealousies, rivalries, and power plays ensue, resulting in unqualified people in charge and catastrophic consequences for the association.

An association dedicated to cultural initiatives, particularly information about "frontier" subjects, must inevitably be subject to the requirements and limitations expounded above, but that is not what I intend to concern myself with here.

The matter in consideration here is, instead: do these same requirements and limitations also apply to an association that is only dedicated to scientific research, or are there others?

To find the answer we will look at the requirements for an association the sole purpose of which is scientific research on frontier subjects.

- 1) It is of course necessary for it to be non-profit, because it allows access to contacts that would otherwise be impossible and (with some luck and skill) to potential tax-free funding and donations, with regular detailed financial statements disclosing revenue and expenses. The

association must have a properly registered logo and trade name as well as a website that identify it unequivocally; someone, therefore, must take responsibility for these expenses, including those for the association's establishment. It is best if the association comprises of two people only – one as president and the other as secretary to deal with administration and bureaucratic tasks. It is important that the president has at least one specific scientific/management qualification with respect to the research field to be studied.

- 2) It must be decided whether the association is to involve itself only with research in the field or also in the laboratory; in the latter case both the appropriate equipment, as for field research, and a location to function as a laboratory must be available. Location is a real problem, because although it can be modest, it should be suited to the needs of the particular research to be undertaken. This means the owner must relinquish it for the association's permanent use rent free, and someone must assume the costs of refurbishment. It is best if the costs of the association's establishment and the location's refurbishment are provided by the same person, who then becomes the representative, thus assuring logistical stability and, if possible, this person is also the major decision-maker. With only two people constituting the association, the financial contribution from its parts cannot be counted on (which would be hugely insufficient anyway), but it ensures power issues are eliminated and its management remains stable.
- 3) Quality scientific research should be published in official (peer-review) journals in order to obtain scientific credibility. If scientifically unknown – that is, without a certain amount of published work – it is virtually impossible for any produced articles to be accepted, unless a co-author (as the primary signatory) is already well-known in the field and especially part of the academic world. This condition is deemed to be necessary for journals to even consider any submitted article; the scientific world is in fact a closed and self-referential one. It is then necessary to produce regular publications to acquire credibility among researchers in the same field, and so quality research must continue for years.
- 4) For effective research, people with the necessary qualifications must be sourced – very little of value can be accomplished only by the two people who comprise the association. Apart from them, another important requirement is an academic with expertise in both research and publishing in peer-review journals, who has a solid reputation among fellow researchers in the field (indispensable for being considered by anonymous reviewers of submitted articles).

When working with “uncommon” abilities of the mind, there is a need for someone with sufficient amounts of these abilities to understand what it is actually possible to do – and how – to produce scientific studies in that subject. It is also better if this person has close ties to the world of sensitives and some prestige in that world, so as to choose the most suitable elements to be subjects in each study.

An expert in laboratory data collection and processing is also required, without whom reliable data cannot be acquired or presented in a properly convincing way.

Finally there's a need for someone to manage the website (on a voluntary spare-time basis) so that it can be constantly updated with new results for interested readers. Another requirement is someone (preferably a native speaker, also voluntary) to translate the texts into English for the website, because this allows international visibility - the site must be bilingual. Assuming we have found people with multiple and complementary expertise, we require at least three people for the main roles, as well as two in support positions (administrative, website management and translations). Those who fulfill the main roles must be willing to collaborate,

get along well, and remain in their positions permanently. Furthermore they must be immune to outside influences and conditioning; it is better, therefore, if they are retired or close to retirement.

- 5) Support roles for single studies must of necessity be given to occasional collaborators with the required qualifications, whose reward must only be their signatures on the published works in which they participated; an organization such as that defined here can in fact only exist on a volunteer basis, through self-funding from those who occupy the main roles. If the occasional outside fund eventuates – unless it is exceptionally large – the collaborators can at most expect a reimbursement of their expenses, because the acquisition of indispensable equipment must come first. Greater scientific credibility is obtained if the studies are conducted using ‘certified’ instruments, as commonly used by researchers.

Only if the aforementioned conditions are strictly adhered to does it become possible to undertake valid research work in fields considered “taboo” by official science – and EVANLAB is proving so convincingly – but at the same time we can’t advertise to the greater public, and must work only for the pleasure of discovering that limits exist to be overcome and that they can be overcome. We must not wait for applause even if what we do is unquestionably valuable. This really is research in its purest form!