

From Italy to Silicon Valley, where ideas can become a business

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Mind the Bridge reminds us of a bridge, the San Francisco bridge, at the very heart of Silicon Valley, the homeland of global revolutions started in basements. But it is also the virtual bridge, **bringing the ideas of Italian businessmen and US capital together**. The bond becomes more tangible, thanks to **Mind the Bridge**, the foundation created to promote creativity and to help entrepreneurs transform their ideas into reality. **Alberto Onetti**, Management lecturer and **CRESIT** Director at Insubria University has been appointed to the board of this San Francisco-based organisation, to join its founder, **Marco Marinucci**.

Professor Onetti, who are the people that contact you, and why?

"Mind the Bridge is a response to the brain drain. It turns to entrepreneurs that have new ideas and that are looking for people willing to finance them. The venture capital culture is widespread in the United States, there are investors who want to make their capital available to projects that have good development opportunities. This is something that is very difficult to find in Italy at the moment. We bring companies to Silicon Valley and there, we help them to present their new ideas."

What does Mind the bridge actually do?

"Our basic objective is to promote innovation. We also try to bring together Italian "brains" and U.S. capital. In order to obtain funds, a company needs to present its projects, to make them credible and to explain the development opportunities. At this stage, we help companies to transform their ideas into a clear and credible business plan, to cultivate the global business culture and to produce international entrepreneurs. Today, We can no longer talk about Italian, British or Chinese companies. Successful companies are global. It is no longer possible to grow in only one country."

Which sectors do the companies with innovative vision, that we can "export" overseas, operate in?

"Software, new social networking platforms, virtual marketing tools, wireless solutions and biotechnologies are the fields in which Italian creativity shines at an international level. But we need broader projects, with well-structured business plans and good presentation skills, as presentations must be in English."

What are the Italian strengths?

“Basic research. Our strength lies in the good ability to innovate and to exploit new technologies. However, it is essential for the growth of these subjects to provide companies with a way of finding capital.”

Does becoming international also mean opening up to a new way of doing business? What are the main differences we can find in the Anglo-Saxon markets?

“There are many differences. The first lies in the enterprise idea itself. In Italy, it is seen as a long-term commitment, like a marriage. But venture capital looks at a certain period of time. It decides to finance a project and then leave it, to take up other routes, to finance new ideas it believes in. The Italian habit of growing fond of a company is missing. Another difference is how things are seen; we are used to projects that evolve gradually and that aren't too ambitious. Venture capital accepts the risk, and wants to take a chance, to think on a larger scale. Last of all, there are the management skills. In Italy, we focus greatly on the product and less on the other aspects of doing business. Therefore, as we grow, we might find we have a shortage of managerial skills.”

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