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Rotman Dean, Roger Martin: In Search of the 3D MBA

Posted by: Helen Walters

Roger Martin is dean of the [Rotman School of Management](#) at the University of Toronto. He's a familiar figure around these parts—yesterday, we published my [review of his latest book](#), *The Design of Business* and in the past we published [a series of extracts from another of his books](#), *The Opposable Mind*.

Recently, I heard Roger present at [BIF5](#), a conference held in Providence, Rhode Island (here, see notes taken there by master-live-blogger [Ethan Zuckerman](#)). And I confess, I was taken aback. Though still mild-mannered and softly spoken, Martin was steely and unamused as he discussed a topic that's close to his heart: business education. He quoted from *The Economist*, which said that the current system does no less than produce "jargon-spewing, economic vandals," a phrase that made the audience gasp and titter in about equal measure.

The talk raised to the surface a topic that I hear numerous parties discussing, but around which there seems to be little consensus. At least, everyone seems to agree that multidisciplinary thinking is a critical skill that needs to be nurtured in tomorrow's workforce, yet no one has any idea how to go about changing the existing system so that it can be taught effectively.

Martin referred to the need for a 3D MBA, which marries the teaching of a deep knowledge of facts and theories with the wisdom and skill needed to be able to apply them in the real world. I really like the idea, and I loved Martin's terse wake-up call to educators and would-be innovators. But how would this work in practice? How can the higher education system evolve appropriately—and quickly—to produce professionals who are equipped to drive the world in the direction it needs to go? Which schools or organizations are actually proficient at teaching or encouraging interdisciplinary thinking? How do they do it? Let me know—would love others' insight on this hugely important topic.