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**KAREN FOLEY:** Hello, and welcome back to the Student Hub Live. OK, we've been having some great business discussions, and we just heard from some institutions about B100. I've been asking you lots and lots of questions in our interactive widgets. We've got some more for you here now.

But before, we were asking you about the extent to which being here was helping you understand how the curriculum related to your studies and whether you felt more prepared to study. And a lot of you did, but some of you are unsure. Well, in this section, we're going to discuss some issues that are related to your studies. And from a business perspective, we take a look at the secrets of Silicon Valley.

So I'm joined by Peter Bloom and Steve Godrich and Isidora Kourti. Thank you for coming along to talk about this subject, which really is about communication and technology and the impacts that a lot of this is having on society. So, Peter, could I ask you just kick off on this, in terms of how you see things at the [INAUDIBLE]?

**PETER BLOOM:** Sure. I think that we're in a really interesting and exciting time. Technology has the opportunity to completely change business and society. And this is on a larger level about how we even do business, how we think about the economy.

For instance, in 30 years, we may not even have to go to work every day, for instance, to the kind of everyday organisational level, using data actually to make your job easier. And to using robotics or automative processes to make a workforce that doesn't have to do such kind of monotonous things, and actually get focused on creative and interesting things. So we're seeing the ways in which technology, particularly robotics, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of Things, are rapidly changing not only business, but the economy and society more generally.

I think one of the interesting elements that really, I think, students across our modules are going to be looking at is seeing the ways in which a lot of assumptions that were quite accepted, even 10 years ago, are now being challenged. So it's a really interesting time to study this, because they are, in many ways, the creators of the future. They're the ones who are going to actually be able to say, how are we going to use this technology to make for a

more empowered workforce? How are we going to make this technology to make for smarter and more empowering organisations and cities?

**KAREN FOLEY:** But you mentioned the time factor. And one thing that I'm conscious of is that this was something that was being said, a long time ago. Oh, I remember when they were saying robots will be doing all of these jobs. I remember when people said there won't be magazines or newspapers now that the Internet's here, because everyone's going to be accessing the media in these ways.

And yet, lo and behold, we still see magazines and things. So to what extent do we think these sorts of things, these concepts, are really going to happen? I mean, we've seen some of the drone stuff at the [INAUDIBLE] and these brilliant ideas that seem so future-proof, in reality, have a lot of implications that we can't always think about before we implement them.

**PETER BLOOM:** Absolutely. I mean, I think that there has been a lot of talk, some of you may hear of it, of this Fourth Industrial Revolution. And this is around the ways in which artificial intelligence in particular, but also robotics, is going to, again, transform our economy. But you're right it's a much more integrative process, and often gradual process than we may like to think. And a key thing that I think we try to get across across the undergraduate curriculum, and certainly in our research, is the fact that this isn't preordained.

This isn't something in which, almost like in a *Blade Runner* type way-- I feel like maybe I'm being dated. It's one of my favourite movies when I was growing up. That could be everyone's.

But that we have this dystopia of mass unemployment and there's nothing we can do about it. In fact, quite the opposite. Right now, we have so many opportunities to actually say artificial intelligence is going to make a huge difference. The Internet of Things is going to make a huge difference. But it's up for us to decide how we want this to look.

So I think one example of what you're speaking about, that we can see in our everyday life, is the gig economy. Now this has been something that has grown increasingly popular. And a lot of people feel they have very little control over this, and they feel like their jobs are much more precarious, and also feel as if this is something in which they can't change or influence. But I think the recent decision around Uber, where London actually said we're quite excited about innovation, but you have to respect employment rights, you have to respect customer safety, this is an example of the ways in which traditional forms of regulation and new forms of

regulation, but also the ways in which we think about what we would like, is going to change how we have technology in our society and organisations.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So where does this whole idea-- I mean, we're asking the students at home about the distinction between collaboration and competition and openness. And to some extent, the whole issue with Uber, there are issues around competition. I mean, I saw some posts on Facebook about the rate of a taxi and how much it would cost with various sorts of forms of a black cab versus a neighbour versus the bus versus getting someone to pick you up, etc. So there's all sorts of things going on in terms of competition and openness, and how we view these things, as well as these issues of how we're using technology.

**PETER BLOOM:** Well I think Isidora can speak more to collaboration in the broader terms, especially how it relates to competition. I think in terms of something like Uber, it's also interesting to think about the fact that we have things like Uber. And we can balance having things that are low cost, being able to use platforms to make things more convenient, and things that are safe and that actually protect drivers' rights. I think as well as that, looking more forward-thinking, in Milton Keynes, it's one of the first cities in the world that has piloted the use of driverless cars and taxis.

So the real question, then, might not be about the fact of who this competition of which type of cab company is going to win. But actually, are we going to have to pay for cabs in the future. And if not, and if we have this different type of system, how do we make sure that we create a society where the people who lose out from this, such as the drivers, whether they're black cabs or Ubers, are actually protected, and can also be empowered by it? But I think, Isidora, you can speak perhaps a little more to the collaborative element

**ISIDORA KOURTI:** Yeah. I think that, actually, collaboration becomes increasingly important on today's very demanding and complex and changing business environment, where we actually have different organisations. That they have to come together and work in order to survive, in order to innovate, to keep growing. And essentially, actually, achieve some time of long-term existence. And this is particularly the case, I think, in the commodity industry. Because it is actually a basic ingredient in order to make innovation happen.

We need to bring different organisations together. And even if they compete in one area or in one market, they actually come together and they become stronger against their competitors while at the same time, they may become weaker against each other. But still, they bring a

stronger face on the competitors.

And I think that when we actually say that competition is actually maybe collaboration is a competition in a different form, in one sense. Because you have competitors coming together, and collaboration becomes a very important skill for the organisation to survive. Today which is very difficult to penetrate in your markets, or actually to have the development of new products. If that can be done in a very fast and efficient way with collaborations.

So we see, for example, that Facebook recently, I think, they have established a partnership between different universities in order to have some research, and make sure they explore new revenue streams. I know that for artificial intelligence, and I think virtual reality as well. And if I quote, I think it was this the CEO of LinkedIn, which actually, he said that, I want to create big products. That we cannot do it alone. We always need someone else.

So I think what is interesting, and I think that what the module will actually reflect as well, is that the collaboration is a basic element in today's environment, especially in the technology industry, but in other industries as well. But what is unique in Silicon Valley, I think, is actually that they have this business environment which attracts many businesses and start-ups, because they have this collaboration and this openness as a basic attitude. And there are many examples that actually illustrate that.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So can you just tell us-- we've asked people at home about collaboration and competition and about openness. And we're going to see what students at home say, and do keep filling that word cloud in. But what do you mean by openness and collaboration?

I'm getting the sense that what you're saying is that collaboration isn't quite as dichotomous as competition. Within collaboration, there is an element of competition as well. So it's not quite as clean as one might initially think. And we can explore that later.

I mean, actually, I'll tell you what students at home have said about their collaboration versus competition. 77 per cent disagree with the statement that competition is more important than collaboration. So that's good, but it'll be interesting to see what do you guys think openness means.

So fill those examples out on the word cloud. And if you can only think of one or two, just press a 0 or a dot to send the results. So tell us, what do we mean by openness?

**ISIDORA KOURTI:** I think it is part of collaboration as well. So it's like being willing to work with others, and share

information and knowledge in order to create something bigger, something more useful, or to offer the best services to the public and the customers. Maybe it's about being actually receptive and interested in new ideas, accept those ideas, and offer to people the opportunity to express and test these ideas. And of course, to continue to be willing to constantly change, adapt, and innovate, so as to respond to these changing needs with the market and the customers. Maybe, as a conclusion, maybe it is a mindset of devotion to innovation, stability, collaboration, and openness, and being willing to test and explore new ideas. Think differently, in one way.

**PETER BLOOM:** Also, to add to that, I think it was a perfect description of the importance of openness is also to think about the ways in which a concrete level openness is now. And I think you put it perfectly, Isidora, becoming a competitive advantage. So if you look at something like 3D printing, actually, you had this traditional 20th century patent-based mentality about it. And then all of a sudden-- and they weren't getting very far with it.

And then all of a sudden, they said, why don't we actually turn this into an open source problem? So we're going to put all the information we have on 3D printing on the web, and anyone who has an idea about it can talk about it and can do this type of problem-solving. And within two years, 3D printers, almost all the major flaws were fixed. And actually, they were [INAUDIBLE] be able to market at a relatively inexpensive, accessible price.

And I think what Silicon Valley has shown, though in a quite marketised way, but I think they are going to have to face this, is that a lot of things that are very market-driven are very closed, they're going to have to shift. Because they're going to have to compete with these open communities that are open to new ideas. But also, open to access about saying, knowledge is something that we can all share and we can all contribute to problem-solving, and contribute our own experience, whether it be around products, whether it be around technology, or whether it's huge problems like urban transportation.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, let's see what Stephen said. We closed the switch a little while ago, so things may have changed. But we asked what openness means.

And there were a lot of very, very positive words coming through the word cloud that you supplied us with. So things like honesty, sharing, broadminded, taking broad view, access to learning, take on ideas, diversity of views, transparency, lack of restriction, and good ethics. So very, very positive, open, collaborative ideas.

So is this always a good thing, then? I mean, you mentioned this idea that sometimes, people will eventually have to compete with each other. So being open can really drive good business practise and ideas. But is it always good?

**STEVE GODRICH:** Well, there's obviously two points of view. You could have a very pessimistic view and say, well, it's bad and that historically, we're used to organisations competing with each other in a very traditional way. Or you could take the more optimistic view and say, well, actually this is beneficial, as Peter said, for us all to share knowledge for the benefit of all humanity and the world in general.

And I think what you've heard from Peter and Isidora reflects how business is changing, in terms of it becoming more globalised, in terms of more integrated, and so on and so forth. And these are some of the challenges that we're all having to come to terms with. And the nature of work itself is changing. So it's a very different world that we're operating in now.

**KAREN FOLEY:** No, absolutely. I wonder if you could link some of this back to curriculum, because this is one of the things that we're trying to talk about is how these big ideas are actually seen within modules. And we can see some of the traits that are coming through here. But, Steve, I wonder if you could talk us through B207, Shaping Business Opportunities, and how some of these examples are taught?

**STEVE GODRICH:** Well, a lot students come in through doing B100, the introduction to business studies, and so on. And that is good grounding on various aspects of business. And then moving on to a level two, second year, which students will get onto very quickly, they start being faced with something really quite interesting.

And the whole issue of globalisation, innovation, sustainability, organisations being sustainable is addressed in a very sort of forward-looking way. Looking at how the future might be and how we, as participants in that and studying it, can affect and change things. I brought my tennis ball along, because one of the examples we use in B207 is we track how many miles the constituent parts of a tennis ball travel to be made into one of these things, that then gets whacked at Wimbledon on a opening Monday morning.

**KAREN FOLEY:** How far is that?

**STEVE GODRICH:** It's over 50,000 miles. And perhaps the oddest thing is that the world that you see here gets shipped from New Zealand back over to the UK to be treated, then gets shipped back to the

Philippines, to then be whacked onto to one of these things. So the purpose of the example, really, is to show how integrated the world is now. Wimbledon, 20 years ago, used to get these from a factory in Barnsely.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So things are coming a lot more international. Kristen and Mychelle?

**MYCHELLE:** Well, we've got students from a lot of different nations. We've got Germany, Cyprus, Italy. Kristen, obviously, is from the US originally. And I'm from New Zealand.

**KRISTEN:** As if you couldn't tell from my accent.

**MYCHELLE:** We've had some interesting comments from students. Bruce has said that collaboration is fascinating, as it is such a disruptive concept for capitalism. And Ashley has said AI robotics and gig economy are all hot topics in the company that she works for. And she's instantly impressed that the Open University is, too.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Excellent. Anything to feed back on any of those comments?

**STEVE GODRICH:** Well, it's just great that the students are on board with it all, and excited by it, as we all are. We're into the idea that the OU and our particular faculty is very much thrusting forward in these areas. And we're looking forward, rather than back. So, yeah, it's all good stuff.

**KAREN FOLEY:** So, students, we've been talking today about studying, starting to study. And I guess, in terms of being open and being collaborative and sharing, I wonder if you guys could give us your final thoughts on what you'd recommend for new students? We've been talking about plagiarism and some of the business ethics in that. But we're seeing that, obviously, working together seems to be a better idea than working alone. And we've been talking about engaging with tutors and forums and the Open University and the student support teams, etc.

So what would your advice be for new students who are just starting, in particular business? Because we know there are a lot of Level 1 business students out here today. What would you say to them in the spirit of being open and collaborative?

**STEVE GODRICH:** Absolutely just dive straight in there. Everybody will have-- all the teachers that students have will have a tutor group forum. We got it stuck in there, and the tutor will have posted some topics to get people started to have a conversation with fellow students. There'll be some great ideas. There'll be some great questions there.

In fact, you'll probably want to post the question yourself as a student thinking, well, I don't know about this, that, and the other. And fellow students are a great help in assistance and support, as is the tutor. So it's really just getting involved, as much as anything.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Well, what do you say, Isidora?

**ISIDORA KOURTI:** I myself am a new member of the OU. And what I have really admired is actually that there are so many different platforms and systems in place, and processes, in order to increase collaboration between the tutors, or between tutors and students as well that I couldn't have imagined before joining the OU. So I think that the students, first of all, they must find ways to become aware of this.

But they are everywhere in the website and the [INAUDIBLE] anyway. We do advertise these ways. But they should try to take advantage and actually use them, because they are very good platforms to increase collaboration between students, as well as to take advantage of the staff and the knowledge that the staff has as well.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, absolutely. Good point. Thank you. Peter.

**PETER BLOOM:** I think-- and this might sound kind of funny-- but to enjoy it. I think when you start, and I know when I started my first-year course, there's a lot of nervousness, and I have to learn everything right away, and feeling quite overwhelmed. And then if I look back, I think-- and take a breath. And remember, this is, for as much as you have all this new information, it's meant to be engaging, it's meant to be fun, and it's meant to be stimulating.

So within all the new experiences and the activities and the ability to collaborate, to also just enjoy it. Because I think if you enjoy what you're doing and you're really looking forward to it, even if you don't catch everything right away, you are motivated. And you remember you're in this because you want to be excited about things. You want to learn new things. So I think the enjoyment part would be my advice.

**KAREN FOLEY:** Yeah, absolutely. And an important thing, and I is something that is very easy to forget amongst trying to get organised sorted with everything. But you're right. If you're open to the ideas and learning, and open to mistakes as well, it's a really important part of the whole process.

Well, Isidora and Peter and Steve, thank you very much for that interesting discussion. I hope you've enjoyed it at home as well. We've got another very short session for you next, where

I'm going to talk to Mike Lucas about apprenticeships.

So don't go away. We've got a short video before then with Stephen Analis to show you another side behind the scenes. So we'll see you in a couple of minutes for that back session.

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