

Vaughn Tan, PH.D

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OVERVIEW

I'm a researcher, speaker, author, and consultant focusing on strategy, tactics, and organisation design in different partial knowledge situations: risk, uncertainty, and other types of partial knowledge. I also have domain expertise in data protection regulation and civil enforcement.

Expertise areas: Innovation management; strategy under uncertainty; organisational behaviour and design; data protection.

Special focus area: Designing organisations and ecosystems for resilience to uncertainty.

BOARD, ACADEMIC, AND INDUSTRY POSITIONS

Assistant Professor, Strategy & Entrepreneurship (2013–present; on leave), Univ. College London, UK.

Conducting world-leading peer-reviewed research on strategy for innovation and in various situations of not-knowing. Developing and teaching undergraduate and doctoral courses on strategy and design thinking, and on research methods.

Founding Partner (2020–), Dredge Partners LLP, UK. Developing novel applications of legal theory and data protection/competition regulation to build portfolios of pro-social funded litigation, and working with private capital to fund litigation. These portfolios are designed to encourage business model innovation in the data economy. £32m funding secured; further £48m expected by end-2023.

Founder and Executive Director (2020–), Data Protection Foundation CIC, UK. Research and prototype implementation for a technology-mediated mechanism for decentralised funding and governance of pro-social collective litigation. Work supported by a grant from the Algorand Foundation.

Advisory Board founding member (2019–), Oyster Sunday, US. Advising the founder on strategy, partner management, and hiring and team development. Oyster Sunday is a hospitality industry systems integrator for an unaddressed market segment.

Executive Board member (2018–), Rethink Food, US. Advising the leadership on growth, strategy, business model evolution, and partner/funder relations. Rethink is a US\$25m annual budget, 50-person not-for-profit developing new processes and infrastructure for reducing waste throughout the food supply chain.

Visiting Professor of Strategy (2018), Univ. of Southern Calif., US. Research on innovation in uncertainty.

Product development and special projects (2005–2008), Google Inc., US. Initiated, assembled core team, and secured resources for development of Fusion Tables (a novel structured data product, now part of Google core infrastructure). Main project manager for the Google's XPRIZE partnership to stimulate private development of unmanned lunar lander technology. Launch team member for Google Streetview (world-scale imagery) and Ads 3.0 (machine learning for advertising).

SELECTED CONSULTING AND ADVISORY WORK

Innovation advisor (2022–), UN Development Programme.

Technical consultant (2022–), Dutch Data Protection Foundation, Netherlands.

Product development consultant (2021–), Braneframe, US.

Industry resilience advisor (2021–), Regional Government of Skåne, Sweden.

Diversity and inclusion advisor (2019–), Wellcome Collection, UK.

Technology advisor (2009–), Guanacaste Dry Forest Conservation Fund, US.

Strategy advisor to the CEO (2020–2022), AVA, Germany and Serbia.

Special project advisor (2020–2022), Aspen Institute, US.

Strategy consultant (2015), Jumex Contemporary Art Foundation, Mexico.

Strategy advisor (2012–2013), Boston World Partnerships, US.

Technology advisor (2007–2009), Edward O. Wilson Foundation, US.

EDUCATION

Ph.D, Organisational Behaviour and Sociology. Harvard University and Harvard Business School, 2013.

Dissertation: "Intentional ambiguity," on how uncertainty can be designed to promote innovation in organisations.

Committee: Amy Edmondson (co-chair), Jeffrey Polzer, Christopher Winship (co-chair).

A.M, Sociology. Harvard University, 2012.

A.B, Social Studies (*summa cum laude*). Harvard University, 2005.

Thesis: "Leverage," on multi-level innovation diffusion mechanisms.

Committee: Kiku Adatto, Theodore C. Bestor (chair), Merry White.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

The Uncertainty Mindset: Innovation Insights from the Frontiers of Food, on counter-intuitive organisational design principles and practices that increase business adaptability and innovation capacity. Columbia Univ. Press (2020). Nominated for the Grigson Prize, FT/McKinsey Business Book Award, and Weber Prize.

"Using negotiated joining to construct and fill open-ended roles in elite culinary groups," on optimal hiring processes for innovation teams. *Admin. Sci. Qtr.* (2015), 60(1), p103-132.

RECENT TALKS AND LECTURES

- 2023 "Strategic ecosystem development under uncertainty." EBN Congress.
 - "Thinking about not-knowing." InterIntellect.
 - "Building organisations resilient to uncertainty." European Institute of Innovation and Technology.
 - "Not-knowing and public sector innovation." SciencesPo.
 - "Design principles for innovative organisations." Fog Pharma.
 - "Facing not-knowing." Specialty Coffee Association.
 - "Risk, uncertainty, and other forms of partial knowledge." Stripe.
- 2022 "Building a product-oriented organisation under uncertainty." KPMG Global.
 - "Uncertainty and economy." Joseph Rowntree Foundation/Emerging Futures Fund.
 - "How to organise for innovation" (with Vinnova). Conference Malmö.
 - "Tacit knowledge in organisations." University of Ljubljana.
 - "How to be new." Lengua Conference.
- 2021 "Designing small businesses for true uncertainty." Regional Government of Skåne.
 - "Adaptive strategy." Specialty Coffee Association.
 - "Uncertainty and innovation capacity." Singapore Ministry of Education.
 - "Uncertainty in business education." The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.
 - "Uncertainty and public-sector organisations." Swiss Public Innovation Lab.
 - "Uncertainty as a management mindset." Vin University.
 - "Management of teams and investments under true uncertainty." The Carlyle Group.
- 2020 "Organisational adaptation in times of crisis." University of Ljubljana.
 - "Managing pro-social corporate innovation under uncertainty." Intercorp.
 - "Finding innovation and opportunity in uncertainty." Turning the Tables.

Full list of talks and lectures available on request.

SELECTED TEACHING

- "Risk, uncertainty, and other types of not-knowing." Executive short course; confidential client; 2023-.
- "Digital transformation under uncertainty." Executive short course; Univ. of Ljubljana; 2021-.
- "Research methods." PhD seminar; Univ. College London; 2019-.
- "Strategy by design." Undergraduate lecture course; Univ. College London; 2015-.
- "Strategy and design." PhD seminar; Univ. College London; 2014-.
- "Managing uncertain portfolios." Executive short course; Singapore Mgmt. Univ.; 2017.
- "Idea translation and innovation." Undergraduate lecture course; Harvard Univ.; 2010.

Full list of courses available on request.