The Linguistic Microfoundations of Hype

Abstract

I explore the microfoundations of hype by studying the various texts delivered in a high-tech entrepreneurs' training course at the height of the dot-com bubble of the early 2000s. While best-practice discourse offered ordered, rational know-how and guidelines, hollow success stories and fantastic failure stories added fantasy and irrationality. Both kinds of texts resonated selectively with the theme of dot-com hype. These intertextual dynamics made the entrepreneurial project under hype seem doable and plausible, but also mystified. Through the best practice discourse and the two kinds of stories, the training course performed the promise of both hype and entrepreneurship.

This paper is joint work with Lukas Vogelgsang, Jennifer Haase and Martin Hoegl.

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