Introduction:
Baseball is a sport, which requires several skills. In particular a batter needs to be highly skilled to run all bases in one hit, thus to make a homerun. For a successful homerun, a batter undertakes the following three phases:

1. She has to closely study the trajectory of the ball to be capable of hitting it precisely with her bat.
2. She has to hit the ball far enough to gain enough time for running all three bases in one hit.
3. She must run all three bases fast enough before the defending team throws the ball back to a base that she has not reached yet.

A similar situation face institutional entrepreneurs when changing institutions. Institutions are “rules, norms and cultural-cognitive beliefs”, which are present in organizations and organizations’ environments (Scott, 2014). According to literature in institutional theory, institutions shape actors’ behaviour and interests, which is why institutions usually remain quiet stable (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Institutional entrepreneurs, however, aim to disrupt this stability: They are organized actors with sufficient resources who see an opportunity to realize interests that they value highly by creating new institutions (DiMaggio, 1988; Hardy & Maguire, 2017).

Phases of Institutional Entrepreneurship:

Similar as a baseball batter, institutional entrepreneurs face a “defending team” (institutional defenders, who aim to maintain dominant institutions) and needs to undertake three different phases in order to make a “homerun” (to successfully change dominant institutions). These three phases are presented hereafter while maintaining the analogy of a baseball game:

1. Observing the trajectory of the ball: During the first phase, institutional entrepreneurs carefully study the institutional context and have broad connections to a diverse set of stakeholders. In this way, they perceive dominant norms and beliefs in one or various fields. This enables them to recognize potential institutional contradictions (Sco & Creed, 2002), which provide the departure point for institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009).
2. Hitting the ball: During the second phase, institutional entrepreneurs develop a broadly accepted new vision for divergent change and they mobilize allies behind this new vision (Battilana et al., 2009). They position themselves as a credible actor, who is able and willing to initiate change.
3. Running around the three bases: During the third phase, institutional entrepreneurs formalize newly introduced practices and build stable groups, which maintain these new practices. When this process has succeeded, they have developed new institutions and might become institutional defenders.

Institutional Entrepreneurs’ Skills:

Each of these three phases requires different sets of skills. Based on a systematic literature review on 50 empirical papers about institutional entrepreneurship of the top twenty management journals with contributions on this concept, I identify seven different skill dimensions:

1. Observing the trajectory of the ball: During the first phase, empathic and analytical skills are essential. Thanks to empathic skills, institutional entrepreneurs have a wide network based of stakeholders from various backgrounds. Analytical skills enable them to easily understand the institutional context. Both skills are a prerequisite to identify institutional contradictions; the departure point for institutional change.
2. Hitting the ball: During the second phase, mediation and translation skills are important. When creating a new vision, it is usually manifold with old features in order to be seen as familiar and to be accepted by a target group. Institutional entrepreneurs need to find a good balance while using old and new features to present a new vision. This step requires mediation skills. Translation skills are necessary to translate among the different stakeholders, which are essential to support and therefore spread a newly introduced vision.
3. Running around the three bases: During the third phase, while formalizing newly developed procedures, institutional entrepreneurs must have organizational and tactical skills. Organizational skills are necessary to structure initially spontaneous procedures as well as to build groups, which are going to institutionalize these procedures. Tactical skills are crucial to repel attacks of threatened institutional defenders.

Finally, timing skills are other relevant characteristics of institutional entrepreneurs. Similar as a batter, who needs to wait the right moment to start running, institutional entrepreneurs understand the right moment to initiate change.

All seven dimensions of institutional entrepreneurs’ skills are illustrated in the graphic below.

Future Research:

By means of this literature review, I hope to contribute to institutional theory in three ways: First, I aim to clarify the concept of institutional entrepreneurs’ skills to increase consensus on its meaning among scholars of institutional theory. Second, by establishing this yet non-existent concept, I want to develop a starting point to study the emergence of these skills; thus, gaining insights on the institutional entrepreneurs’ still puzzling origin. And third, I wish to guide future research by pointing to potential relationships between various dimensions of institutional entrepreneurs’ skills with other key concepts of institutional theory.

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