The Innovator’s Dilemma Revisited
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Abstract:
In 1997, Clayton Christensen of the Harvard Business School published one of the most influential management books ever, if one is to judge by how often the title is alluded to. The book was The Innovator’s Dilemma, and the subtitle implicitly explained what this dilemma was: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail. Christensen’s story was a dramatic one, seemingly easily understandable, and illustrated with well-told cases. In September of this year, Christensen released his sequel (Hollywood style, perhaps): The Innovators Solution: Creating and Sustaining Successful Growth. In good academic tradition, in this talk I am going to go backward, to Christensen’s original argument, and examine its analytical underpinnings, as well as its empirical applicability. The motivation for this is what I see as a common confusion about the nature of the innovator’s dilemma, and in particular the nature of what Christensen calls ‘disruptive technologies.’

About the Speaker:
Professor Nirvikar Singh is currently Director of the Business Management Economics Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where he is Professor of Economics. He was a founding co-director of the Santa Cruz Center for International Economics (SCCIE), which sponsors research and seminars on key policy issues in international economics. He also served as coordinator of SCCIE in 2001-03. He teaches courses on business strategy, technology and innovation, and electronic commerce, as well as graduate microeconomic theory. He served as Chair of the Department of Economics from 1992 to 1995, and Director of Graduate Programs from 1990 to 1992. He has consulted for the World Bank and for high-tech start-ups in Silicon Valley. He received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and his BSc and MSc from the London School of Economics, where he was awarded the Allyn Young Prize, Gonner Prize and Ely Devons Prize. Professor Singh’s current research topics are electronic commerce, business strategy, technology and innovation, governance and economic reform in India, federalism, international technology transfer, international water disputes, and economic growth in East Asia. He has authored over 70 research papers on these and related topics in economics.

Next week:
5/26: Tom Gill, Chief Information Officer, Plantronics, Santa Cruz, on Globalization and Information Technology at Plantronics. (Plantronics, a global company with headquarters in Santa Cruz, is the world leader in communication headsets.)