
Stride into a year of disruption

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As we move into 2019, barely a day goes by where change, disruption and upheaval are out of the headlines. Stephen Allan explains why we need to embrace it.

As we move into 2019, barely a day goes by where change, disruption and upheaval are out of the headlines. Whether it's Brexit and US or UK government tensions, to changing consumer attitudes and the rise of digital technology, it feels as if the world has changed immeasurably over the last couple of years and that shows no signs of abating.

This climate is understandably impacting businesses. Financial investment, recruitment, training and development, expansion into new territories, R&D; many of these vital elements of an organisation have been either stopped or reduced because of

socioeconomic uncertainty.

The media industry has perhaps been most affected by changing consumer habits, much of which has, of course, been driven by the rise and rise of digital and social media. It has changed the way we create and develop, plan and execute work and we expect that to continue to evolve.

So, in this climate, how can businesses cope? It can feel a strange time to invest, expand and innovate. Because in a year, will those ideas, products and services even be needed?

The opportunity in change

In short, we need to lean into the change and force ourselves to embrace it, however uncomfortable that may make us.

Disruption is everywhere. It impacts every industry, business and person. It forces us to move forward, develop, change our ways of working and our points of view. Disruption is progress and it provides an opportunity to those brave enough to grasp it. As that famous Churchill quote says, “kites rise highest against the wind, not with it.”

But that isn't easy. As human beings, we're often averse to change and certainly change that comes unexpectedly and creates a shift in our lives – be that at work or at home. There's little we can do about that, it's human nature. We are creatures of habit; we learn, memorise, recall and repeat.

Some minds have more capacity than others to think outside of that structure but even then, the brain will seek assurance and familiarity. Look at some of the greatest innovators of our time – the likes of Dyson and Jobs – they make “thinking outside the box” a constant. For them, creativity is a habit and if someone tries to change that approach, they fight against it just as most of us fight change.

The point being – “change” never goes away and what is comfortable for one person won't

be for another. We need to learn to accept this and open ourselves up to it.

Within businesses, that means creating the right culture by putting the right people in place from the board and throughout the organisation. It means creating new services, teams and divisions and then hiring and re-training people to deliver them.

A disrupted MediaCom

In the media industry, mass disruption has most recently come in the form of digital technology. Initially, it was the advent of digital advertising that shook us to our core. Since then it's been programmatic, the rise of tech giants Facebook and Google as media leaders, Artificial Intelligence, IoT... the list goes on.

And we've adapted. MediaCom's job, at its core, is to assess and understand the audiences our clients need to target, create content that resonates and then deliver it smartly, efficiently and impactfully. Digital has forever altered the way we do that, but we have evolved by a) keeping that core principle at our heart and b) being excited about changes to the way we deliver.

Digital is simply the latest disruptor. In my 30+ years in this industry, I've experienced waves of disruption. All of which have been a firm kick up the proverbial for MediaCom and our clients, partners and peers.

10 years ago, the disruptor was mobile technology, with the iPhone having just landed in the laps of our clients' audiences all over the world. 10 years before that, it was the internet itself. A decade before, it was cable/satellite TV and the expansion from a few to a few hundred channels.

Media, and the world it shines a light on is constantly changing and the last few years have not been any more or less eventful.

The key is to be open to it, ready for it and therefore able to guide our clients and our own businesses through. Being afraid of "disruption" is understandable but I cannot emphasise

enough that the more we stride into it, the more we'll gain.

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