A VIEW FROM SUE UNERMAN

Tech disruption is not going to stabilise

OPINION   TECHNOLOGY   TRANSFORMATION

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You can't buy an agile culture, you have to grow one, and that agility has to come from the top.

If it ain't broke it soon will be.

Not the printer. Not the presentation facilities. Not the air con now that summer has arrived. Your business model.

Over 70% of venture capital and equity funding in the UK goes into developing tech – in excess of £9bn last year. The variety of innovation driving this investment demonstrated in June's London Tech Week takes your breath away. From very pressing developments in cyber security, fintech, healthtech, smart cities to entrepreneur Richard Browning who has designed a real life Iron Man flying suit. Any one of those developments could challenge

your business model, even if it is a challenger itself.

At MediaCom's LTW session we heard from a variety of excellent speakers on how tech is changing in marketing communications and how to pick out the best ideas from the irrelevant and marginal.

As Sir Martin Sorrell, who opened our session, says, "Technological change is inevitable. Our response to it is not. Organisations that thrive in the digital age are those that take control of their own destinies, harnessing digital technology to work for them."

People used to suffer from Fomo (fear of missing out). Now it's Como (certain of missing out). We are sure that we have to be missing out, because there is just so much going on. The skill is in sifting new developments to be sure we're hearing about, and acting upon, the correct ones.

Ignoring tech development is not an option. Ravleen Beeston, head of Bing sales at Microsoft said this week in an upcoming podcast, "We rode the wave of our past and it didn't do us any favours." She then added, after describing Microsoft's turnaround, "you can't shift strategy however unless you shift culture".

It's crucial to assess the developments in tech with a critical eye, filter out the ones that will create real competitive edge before someone else does, and to establish a culture that can capitalise on them.

This must be an agile culture. Here's a certain prediction – there's no point at which tech

disruption is going to stabilise. We have to be continually learning and re-calibrating the tactics of marketing communications.

A consumer focus is essential, and the data intelligence that is coming our way is only beginning to be useful. In essence our current use of big data is really just not big enough.

Better data will establish that TV audience drifts are in fact audiences changing how they watch rather than diminishing love of TV content, that some audiences are watching more TV content than ever, but on screens and platforms other than televisions.

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Some published retail data excludes Amazon and eBay. So stories of sales plummeting may well be missing the mark. The impact of this can be understood best if you know that Amazon Prime members' power when collected together makes them a top three economic nation worldwide.

We've yet to calibrate how voice search is going to disrupt consumers' retail patterns still further, for some categories it will narrow down choice, and the rules of branding will need revisiting.

So we're going to have recalibrate, frequently and systematically. Some things that we think are broken may not be. Those things that we think are unbroken soon will be. You can't buy an agile culture, you have to grow one, and that agility has to come from the top and be embraced throughout the organisation.

If it ain't broke it soon will be, the answer is to break it first. Don't sit and wait for the

disruption, look for it, embrace it, invent it.

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