

Disrupting marketing as we know it

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Call it digital disruption or the fourth industrial revolution, our rapidly evolving environment is affecting consumer perceptions, purchase behaviours and the way they consume information and products.

This raises many questions for marketers about how to adapt their strategies and what drivers can be exploited to leverage this change. As with any significant change, threats to common practices and eternal truths must be taken seriously, but the risk of paying too much attention to false prophets of change is also ominous.

So how do marketers navigate this rapid evolution, what markers can they use to steer their thinking? Assuredly, attending another conference on the disruption caused by Apple, Facebook, Amazon or Uber is unlikely to provide the desired enlightenment, merely a few anecdotes for your next dinner party.

What marketers can do is to focus on one of the fundamental strategic principles underlying effective marketing and communication. Think of it, the right message to the right customer at the right time is a principle more relevant than ever, even as it has significantly evolved in its practical application.

Looking at the progress made in marketing since the 1950s (yes a million years ago in today's pace of change), some of the biggest improvements have been driven by more efficient targeting, resulting in more insightful communication and offerings. As a result, that's given marketers an increased ability to drive positive returns on investment.

Irrespective of the mediums of choice, the ability to customise messages and offers has driven some of the biggest innovations experienced in our field. And this is not about to stop. The race to greater customer centricity is a defining trend of the fourth industrial revolution and one that will differentiate winners from losers, full stop.

The application of data-centric methodologies, linked to digital technology that allows greater customisation and targeting, should be viewed as a core beacon for marketing evolution. Sure, there is still room for brand advertising and general messaging, but the day-to-day reality of marketers and their ability to build and foster relationships is reliant on their aptitude to create communications and offerings that have maximum relevance.

Customers are expecting brands to know them or at least understand and meet their needs. With digital reducing barriers for customers to change brands and switch from one product to the other, the customisation of the experience is becoming a vital retention tool.

This relevance must be applied when customers are most open to influence, how you interact with them at those points is the deciding factor. With an unprecedented erosion of brand loyalty across industries, if you don't give your customers reasons to stay, you give them reasons to go.



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