

# Disruption doesn't need to be disruptive

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We live and operate in a world of disruption. We all know that change is inevitable, so it's how you plan and prepare for the changes and disruption that will impact your industry, your organisation and your operations that will have the biggest effect on the future of your business.

## What does disruption actually look like?

Disrupting an industry is simple – on paper. Simply analyse the market, identify a gap and develop a solution to fill it.

High profile disruptors like Airbnb and Uber have exploited technology to directly connect customers and suppliers for instance. Their services are easy to use, simple and convenient. And they have both upended their respective industries (accommodation and transport).

These disruptors attract massive investment and plenty of media attention. Which is why many people assume disruption has to be a big bang, industry-changing event. But the reality is that effective disruption is often a series of ongoing innovations and refinements that take place over the longer term.

## Disruption is an internal process too

Start-up businesses have an advantage in that they can align and re-align people and processes quickly and easily. And they exploit this capability to address changing market conditions or develop innovative solutions for their customers.

Established businesses don't usually have this level of flexibility. At least, not from the outset. To change the world, you must first change the organisation from the inside. And this means actively disrupting how you work.

The global pandemic has been the most disruptive event in most of our lives, both personally and professionally. But despite the uncertainty, most businesses have proven capable of managing the disruption. This proves that we can all disrupt and adjust our processes when forced.

The challenge now is to actively embrace disruption - proactively making changes and refinements rather than constantly responding to external pressure. Because if we only ever respond to external pressures, we will be forever playing catch-up to our switched-on competitors. Which actually means we are constantly *losing* market share over the longer term.

## Starting small

Disruption can be an overwhelming concept, particularly when you can see potential improvements everywhere. However, it makes sense to start small. Instead of trying to reform and overhaul the entire business, start with a single department.

The mailroom isn't normally considered the most exciting area of your business, and it's certainly not the obvious place to start disruption. But transforming the way you handle physical mailing can have wide-reaching business benefits. Starting in a small and manageable way allows you to see what's possible – and tangibly demonstrate that the outcomes are positive. You can then roll those observations forward as you begin to reform and disrupt other departments. Eventually you can scale upwards to tackle the big projects which will carry your business forwards into the future.

Internal or external, disruption can be both exhilarating and scary. Without it though we will struggle to grow – maybe even survive. And as competitors become more aggressive with their own developments, the window of opportunity continues to shrink. It's time to ask the question – do we want to disrupt or be disrupted?

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