



Disruptive Technology – NEW OR OLD?

The world we live in is full of assumptions about breakthroughs, about the latest revelations in technology suggesting these seemingly “new” thoughts are totally revolutionary and new to all! I suggest this is not the case. In fact, if we look back over the recent centuries, you will find an unlimited number of disruptive technologies that have etched themselves in the very psyche of mankind.

Let’s talk a little bit about the past before we look at the future:

Over the last centuries there have been many examples of disruptive technologies, as we now call this phenomena.

- Depending on how far you would like to go back in time you could consider that the horse was a relatively revolutionary mode of transport. Therefore it’s safe to say you that by attaching a cart to the horse it created what we now call disruptive technology. – moving people and items more efficiently.
- Moving forward in time it is also reasonable to say that the humble horse and cart was replaced by other modes of transport. Not the least by steam driven locomotives, a major leap forward in moving larger volumes of items quicker and at a lower cost.
- Jumping forward a few decades it is reasonable once again to put forward the concept that motor vehicles, cars trucks or otherwise has had a massive and negative impact on the use of trains and severely diminished their usage throughout countryside and across the globe. Why?

Freedom, lower cost and speed while decades further on trains are making a comeback.

Therefore, just like Gutenberg’s printing press created a revolution in the method of producing printing matter i.e. books and documents. Looking into an allied field it is reasonable to suggest that the caveman with his stick chewed at one end to make a primitive brush was in fact the precursor to the first professionally made brushes for signwriters. I put to you that ALL of these breakthroughs are about delivering speed, lower cost and efficiencies previously unknown therefore their rate of acceptance is high.

Why am I highlighting this history?

To put forward this concept; that all of the aforementioned circumstances, in fact, is what we now call disruptive technology. I guess the big question for everyone is how they feel about “change” in their particular industry and whether in fact they are prepared to embrace it or turn

their back on it ... or is there another option? I say the other option is to manage it. Recognising that change is KEY and, after all, your choice. Ignoring change is what I am not advocating; understanding change is what I highly recommend to allow you to make informed decisions!

Is change good or bad for an industry?

That is a little bit like asking the question: “How long is a piece of string?” My Software Developer son who views things quite differently than my generation answers by saying “It’s twice half its length”, and I think you would have to agree he is absolutely correct.

Although his answer certainly offers one potential answer, it certainly doesn’t fulfill a meaningful or definitive answer, as one would perceive needed to ascertain the actual length of the piece of string. Therefore, just like my question “Is change good or bad for an industry?” The dilemma is the same – it’s really more about to whom you pose the question, is probably more to the point – are they advocates for change or staunch supporters of the existing protocols.

May I suggest if you are about to implement disruptive technology into your workplace, then the first step is the need to understand your personnel. (If you would like to know more about profiling people, see my offer at the end of this article)

TRENDS – the future is change.

Of the very many difficulties and issues faced by those who are tackling disruptive technology, the almost infinite range of change is somewhat overwhelming to many people. I worked in America for a number of years, and I often heard the use of a term, that I find somewhat offensive, “Let’s dumb it down”. I personally prefer the term “crystallise”

It reasonable to say that with the increasing complexity of these amazing and incredibly speedy machines, that the user interfaces, the design of the machine itself, and increasingly the simplicity of use for an untrained person is a key element in the uptake and the enormous success of these machines. Technology, the developers, and of course the marketers of our future have taken a relatively complex problem of manufacturing a full colour print and in a few short decades produced a completely new genre of machinery and equipment.

There is no denying that these new technologies have become far more efficient, far less expensive, easy to use and of course opening completely new marketplaces for those who wish to develop their business.

Reshaping industries – crystallise your thoughts

The changes in machinery, production scope and the versatility of what is being produced is in fact impacting to such a degree that the physical manner in which Sign and Print organisations actually operate their businesses is forevermore changed. Many of the old methods whereby industry trained managers could rely on is nowadays totally redundant in the workplace. The real tragedy or travesty, is those workplaces that don’t see the massive changes coming, or have not seen it arrive in their particular business area and even worse still, totally deny the fact that if they don’t change – they could evaporate!

In my role around the country, I visit many different sized shops, both in print and signs and I witness many sign and print manufacturers taking advantage of the opportunities and business directional changes they have at their disposal, These companies are embracing the technologies based on one simple philosophical question – “What is the best disruptive technology that we can employ to ensure a future in sign and printing manufacturing?”

HERE IS A TOP 7 LIST OF THE QUESTIONS PERHAPS WORTHY OF ASKING YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM:

- QUESTION:** Do we manage the data from our customers at the front end of the sale in the most efficient method?
a. Action: investigate and review your

incoming phone calls and emails and the method you manage a customer, perhaps install the CRM system.

- QUESTION:** Is the information we provide to our estimator quality information and concise, does that information allow the estimator to produce a timely quote in an accurate manner?

a. Action: Review your estimating process, and look at installing a quoting system.

- QUESTION:** Is the company using a follow-up after quote system to improve our overall ratio of win and loss quotes

a. Action: Review our sales and estimating systems

- QUESTION:** Let’s consider you have won the job, is the paperwork or electronic tracking you therefore put into operational processes easy to understand, available to all parties in the workplace and able to provide a best case case scenario for a production staff to manufactured goods as quoted with a profit.

a. Action: Review your job sheet and tracking process and compared to what is the best available option for you at a realistic and affordable price to suit your business.

- QUESTION:** Review if your machines and equipment are all the best type and most suitable for the production of the products you make?

a. Action: Conduct a brainstorming meeting with your staff and interested parties and create a wish list of the best type of machinery you can purchase to improve your production.

- QUESTION:** Do you have the best people, in the most productive roles or could we improve our people or process?

a. Action: Conduct a skills audit of your staff; look at training or employing the right person for the right job.

- QUESTION:** Are your customers the best type of customers for your business and do they provide the type of work, which best suits your organisation?

a. Action: Develop a “perfect” customer profile along with a profile that describes that best type of work that suits your organisation, develop a customer rating process.

Are you an early adopter or like a staged process?

The aim of my article is to offer you the catalyst whereby you at least review the opportunities or threats you are facing. At the end of the day you must be prepared to embrace what is best for your business!

If you are an early adopter here are a couple tips to might like,

- Review, identify and define the main issues that any new technology will bring to your

business and how it will impact.

- Plan and define the best method possible to implement this new equipment or technology.
- Create a physical and written list of the Could Have, Should Have and Must Haves of the planned purchase.
- Plan, define, design and provide to the Vendors an actual sample file. Then ensure you conduct tests on suitability of that finish sample to ensure its suitability.
- Importantly, utilise third party experts as required to help identify and understand the new technologies and how these technologies could impact on your business both positively and negatively.

Everything old is new again?

Some of the ongoing casualties of disruptive technology are people and skills. Those of us who have developed and acquired skills over a long period of time, usually see disruptive technology as a real threat, in reality of course it is. However, it is also a wonderful opportunity, interesting to observe those same skilled artisans who have taken hold of the opportunity to ensure the skills they possess are passed on. Some have developed a new marketplace for the old traditional skills, let’s take a look.

The sign industry – Over the last five or more years we have seen an unprecedented growth in people wishing to learn the age-old craft of signwriting. Many new age restaurants bars and venues are insisting on the authenticity of hand lettering to showcase their business. The new marketplace sees traditional methods as “authentic”!

The print industry – Many an old Heidelberg press has been dusted off and used to supply discerning customers with unique boutique short run and limited edition printing reminiscent of a bygone error. The buyer is after a “look or feel” of the work.

This is a whole new marketplace not just emerging but flourishing internationally – why not have a foot in both camps?

Here is a few Google or YouTube searches which will provide you with some valuable insights into the concept of “Everything old is new again” Search for: Gemma O’Brien, Mike Meyers or <http://www.learnbrushlettering.com.au/>

To help you, we offer a free one-hour meeting to discuss your opportunity; we can shed some light on how to leverage the current or future of your business. We can also help you understand your greatest asset – your people by conducting an audit. Please give us a call on 0418 161600 or send an email subject line “Disruptive technology offer” to john@controlzone.com.au