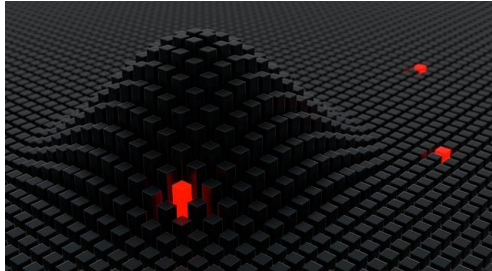


I was probably a teenager the first time someone told me that the railroad companies' biggest failure was that they thought they were in the railroad business. If they had realized they were in the transportation business they would have been the first to build airplanes and would own the world of transportation today. (Government protection against monopolies aside...)



The Power of Disruption

I've had numerous conversations lately with leaders trying to figure out their strategy for moving their organization through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. They roughly fall into two camps: Those trying to protect and rebuild what was, and those who are excited about the new freedom they have to innovate outside the old box.

Organizations with a clearly articulated and richly understood mission statement have an advantage here. Those without a culture that provides shared purpose beyond just doing tasks to keep revenue flowing are likely to struggle.

Ask yourself – and everyone else in your organization – whether the disruption will make your *mission* irrelevant, or just your *methods*. For example:

- **You sell running shoes in retail stores.** If your mission is to equip runners for greater performance, retail stores are just the method you've used. Instead of thinking only of other ways to sell shoes, broaden your potential by thinking of other ways to equip runners.
- **You put on big conference events.** If your mission is to connect people around a common interest, big conference events are the method you've used before. How else could you fulfill your mission?

Value Given Generates Value Received

The first question most of us ask is, "How do I generate revenue now?" That question needs answered, but it's a weak starting point. You generate revenue by delivering value. So first make sure you understand who you're serving (or want to serve) and what their needs are. Then ask how you can better meet the needs they care about most. Increasing your value to them is how you increase their revenue to you.

Don't allow the customer value exploration to be bounded by your profitability. You'll limit creativity if you do. If you've got the right team involved, they'll be energized by finding new ways to meet needs. Once they're excited about new ideas they'll be motivated to figure out how to make them profitable.

An externally inflicted disruption is a great tool to motivate your team to think creatively and come up with new ways to deliver value.

Strategic Planning is a Process, Not an Event

Don't expect to put a few people in a room for a couple of hours and come out with all the answers. It's hard to break out of our deeply-held mental models. Invite some people into the conversation who don't think the way you do and who aren't vested in what you've always done. Take time to get lots of input.

If you're really clear on where you're going (mission), you have freedom to explore many ways to get there.