

How Disruption Brought Order

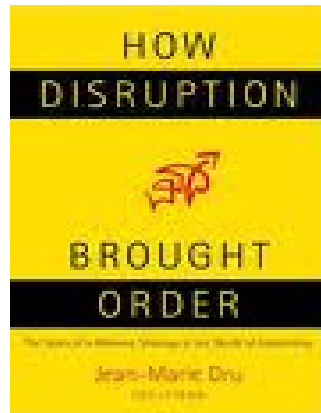
The Story of a Winning Strategy in the World of Advertising

About the Author



Jean-Marie Dru served as President and CEO International and was appointed President and CEO Worldwide in March 2001. In 2008 Mr. Dru moved into the role of Chairman.

Jean-Marie Dru is also the author of three books on advertising and marketing strategy, including his latest publication 'Beyond Disruption', 'Changing the Rules in the Marketplace' (John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2002), 'Disruption: Overturning Conventions and Shaking Up the Marketplace' (John Wiley & Sons Inc.1996), and 'Le Saut Créatif' (The Creative Leap, Latt's 1984). 'Disruption' is available worldwide and is currently in its fourth reprint.



Author: Jean-Marie Dru
Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan Books, 2007
ISBN: 10 0 230 60069 7
236 pages

■ The Big Idea

It finds its way into your business meetings. It punctuates your speech, shapes your way of thinking, and guides your company's direction. It imbues your journey with the scent of adventure, leads us down unexpected paths, and spreads from city to city with a complete disregard for borders. At the same time, it troubles and comforts you. It makes your company a different kind of place; it is an activity that people cannot do without.

It is a word that sounds ungraceful but has burrowed itself into the heart of your agency. Of Latin origin, it is a word that the French introduced into the English language and that subsequently disappeared from French. It signifies "rupture," or rather the act of "creating a rupture."

The word is *disruption*.

Why You Need This Book

Both a fascinating business memoir and a practical guide to harnessing the power of Disruption, this book offers a rare inside look at the cutting edge of modern advertising.

THE METHOD

Disruption is in tune with our times, this world of fierce global competition, of shortening cycles, and of constant turbulence. In such an unstable context, brands must evolve permanently to stay relevant. You try to give clear directions, to give your clients a sense of increased control, despite ever stronger pressures. Brands change.

Disruption has given us tools, a vocabulary, a point of view. Disruption could take on a more positive connotation; a progressive shift in meaning. Years have gone by, and the tide is beginning to turn, as evidenced in a selection of articles that have appeared in management magazines using the word in a positive sense. Today, university professors use the term in their classes.

A recent article in *Fortune* paying tribute to the staggering success of Steve Jobs ran with the title “Steve Jobs, The Master of Disruption.” The shift is happening.

In English, the word “disruption” can be positive. It is generating for itself a new sense. Perhaps one day it will even be reborn as part of the French language.

THE PRODUCT

This ferment of ideas, which could give an impression of rising disorder, not to say even chaos, is in sharp contrast with a new possibility: Everything is becoming miserable.

Soon almost all media will become as precisely measurable as online advertising is today. Instead of vague extrapolations from a panel to determine the number of people supposed to be in front of their televisions, advertisers will know exactly

how many people watched a show, how many skipped the commercials, and which ones paid attention.

This information could be tied to demand-sensing models. If a spot proves more effective than anticipated, the agency will be able to alert the client in order to adjust product supply in anticipation of increased consumer demand.

Advertising Age reminded us that, back in the 1950s, John Wanamaker said: “Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half.”

This old question may soon be answered.

THE MEDIA

When discussing the numerous institutional initiatives taken by McDonald’s, from cooperating with the agricultural industry, to launching new kinds of recruitment and training schemes, Larry Light, former global marketing director of the Chicago-based company, did not hesitate to refer to “brand journalism.” While we might refer to brand media, to many the combination of the words “brand” and “journalism” will be inappropriate.

Light simply wanted to point out the end of monolithic marketing and one-way communication. Until now, every brand had to communicate one message, and only one message. That time is over. From now on, brands must communicate on all the initiatives they undertake, like an endless chronicle.

To help these initiatives find their public, brands now have within their reach an entire range of multiple, complex, and entangled channels and platforms. The strongest ideas will result from managing this interaction, which is born of the blending of the real with the virtual, of the commercial with the editorial, of the tangible with the intangible, of the factual with the imaginary, and of the artistic with the scientific.

The world of communication has never been so wide open.

CULTURE

“Culture is just not one aspect of the game, it *is* the game,” said Lou Gerstner, the former chief executive officer of IBM and the inspiration for one of the most memorable corporate turnarounds of all time. In making this statement, he found a striking way to insist on how important culture is to corporate life.

Any culture, corporate or not, is the fruit of a collective adventure. Something created through the combined sensitivities and intelligence of thousands of men and women. Something shared. A mental structure, an evolving language, a collection of desires, a kind of elan.

A view of the future based on values of the past. If you feel comfortable with this definition, you will agree that every enterprise ends up creating its own culture.

VALUES

Whatever the company you work for, your dream, one way or another, should be of building something different, something with its own identity, something compelling. A Henry Ford said: “A business that is in the business of making only money is a poor kind of business.”

A company such as TBWA is defined more by its values – integrity, audacity, and open-mindedness – than by its mere functions, which cover all the communications disciplines and are practiced by all their competitors. These values set them apart from the rest.

SKILLS

Agencies need to win new clients in order to survive. Acquiring new clients leads to Homeric battles. There can only ever be one winner; there is no difference between second or last place. An agency that consistently comes in second would be not far from being the best in the world, but it would go out of business.

In the new-business presentation, you usually have around ninety minutes to convince, persuade and conquer. These are the most costly ninety minutes imaginable. The amount of time and money spent on their preparation can reach colossal proportions. Winning is all that counts.

To win, you have to blow your competitors out of the water. Complacency is a fatal error.

PRINCIPLES

The first one is that you should invest in your strengths. There is a choice to be made between leaning on your strengths and compensating your weaknesses.

The second principle consists in refuting the idea that it is only strategy that counts. Hundreds of books since the 1960s have tackled the importance of strategy, with just as large a number of different definitions being used to describe it. The recurring theme is this placing of strategy above everything else, relegating execution to second place, considering it a trivial translation in the real world of noble strategic thinking.

Third principle concerns decision-making, and how to make it easier. As a general rule, the simplest decisions are taken without management even being informed. Only the most difficult decisions, those where the advantages and disadvantages of each solution appear to cancel other out, to weigh equally on the scales, find their way up to the top management's desk. In this case, most of us only want to see the advantages and end up making decisions based on the positive aspects.

Fourth principle concerns error management. The right to fail is one of the most commonly used banalities in management books, which give it a much more important place than it merits. Though it is obvious, in my view, if you fail, you need to fail fast.

Fifth principle that is dear to us consists of cultivating competence. As Paul Arden, a brilliant British member of our profession, said: "It is better to live in ignorance than with knowledge. Solving the problem is the exciting part, not knowing the answer."

Sixth principle is about managing talent. Jack Welch established a very tough rule at General Electric: Every year, each department head had to let go of 10 percent of his people – the poorest performers. This may not be too difficult to achieve in the first year, but imagine how hard it is if, by misfortune, you have been the head of the same department for five years. You need to find your own way in order to attract and keep the best talent.

THE BRAND

A brand can be famous without people truly knowing anything about it. They can know what a brand does without understanding what it represents. They see the label or logo without necessarily knowing that behind this symbol lies a story, a precious heritage and an enduring passion.

What have transpired for Apple, Adidas, and Nissan also holds true for the vast majority of the companies and their campaigns. They refuse the established order and understand the failure to change is fatal.

To succeed, or simply survive, they know that it is not enough simply to rely on their past success, nor is it enough to entertain the illusion that the future is a mere extension of the present.

“You can never bathe in the same river twice,” states ones of the oldest paradoxes known. The future is not smooth. It can only be reached by a series of ruptures, very rarely through continuity.

Nothing endures but change. And every business should be a force of positive disruption.

© 2009 BusinessSummaries.com