



EFL “Brieflet”: Engaging with Disruption

*Times of crisis, of disruption ... are not only predictable but desirable.
They mean growth. Taking a new step ... is what people fear most
Fyodor Dostoevsky*

Disruptive Innovation (Christensen, 1995) is the process of creating a new market and value network that disrupts and displaces those established by extant market leading firms, products and alliances. Business and related media regularly report how Corporates are confronted by disruptive, particularly technological and digital, changes. However, it is the existence of *value disruption* and the minds that create and hold values - particularly in relation to human development - that underpins all disruptive innovation.

The Context

Courageous leaders within Non-Government Organisation (NGOs) and the Corporate sector are already talking with each other (and the State sector) to engage, initiate and lead disruptive innovations. Why? On the one hand, the Corporate sector is often sought, and promotes itself, for its technological expertise. On the other hand, societal needs and expectations about commercial and philanthropic organisations' responsibilities have changed exponentially in the past decade in relation to:

- Engaging grassroots “recipients”, their distributors and communities in higher levels of decision-making
- Ideals, lifestyles and values of new generations of employees
- The accountabilities, credibility and context-specific knowledge of Boards
- Learning the once corporate-exclusive language of “Mergers and Acquisitions”
- The socio-political, medico-pharmaceutical, migratory, resource, employment and climactic operational contexts
- Funding sources, and the models and resources needed to tap them
- Demand for ethical, evidence-based service excellence at minimum cost
- Disintermediation - the removal of the “middleperson”
- Effective security: personal, intellectual, cyber, fraud, privacy ...

Identifying and confronting the risks inevitably present in the above, and being prepared to navigate an organisation into feared waters alongside erstwhile ideological rivals requires innovation, reciprocal consultation and considerable courage. Each party risks: losing income, reputation - and organisational existence; or gaining the same - and creating a more valuable and lasting place in the world.

*True philanthropy requires a disruptive mindset, innovative thinking and a philosophy driven by entrepreneurial insights and creative opportunities
Naveen Jain*



Alliances and Partnerships

The popular expectations - that profit making organisations be held to account and that community empowerment be left to NGOs - are no longer valid or reliable. Next generation leaders are seeking each other out to ask for and offer help. NGOs are asking how Corporates might contribute funding, research and areas of expertise. Corporates are curious about NGO access to the community, and about their fields of applied knowledge and training. Disruptive leaders are assertively seeking out the gaps and opportunities. They continuously develop new questions to draw in and educate new streams of funding, leadership, staff engagement and community inclusion. Questions about the role for NGOs, as well as Corporates, in schools and tertiary colleges are heard in strategic discussions.

Aim for Triple A

Enhancing the individual and organisational capacity and capability to engage with disruption is calculated, not accidental. It takes vigilance, foresight and courage. Reflecting upon the context for disruption above, be guided by three key elements:

- Alignment - review and prioritise your values and those of your organisation. Then seek and engage with the most difficult questions and uncertainties that are challenging the status quo. See your resolutions and new strategy through
- Agility and speed - as a keel is to a yacht, find what is needed to retain core stability. Find and choose only the systems that flex with the changing winds
- Asset management - Educate, inform and get the support of your Board, staff and other key stakeholders (support them too). Be prepared to engage with different ways of doing: contracting; organisational reviews and restructuring; talent and systems management

We are here to put a dent in the universe. Otherwise, why even be here?
Steve Jobs

Sources for your further interest

Christensen, C. M. & Bower, J. L. (1995) Disruptive technologies: catching the wave. *Harvard Business Review*

International Institute for Environment and Development. (8 Feb 2016). [Getting good at disruption in an uncertain world.](#)

Willmott, P. & Scanlan, J. (Jan. 2016) How companies become digital leaders. *McKinsey & Co.*

Sam Farmer is Owner-Director of Enhance Facilitation Limited and strongly advocates that leadership is a team responsibility. Strength-based in his approach, he is passionate about collaborative coaching. As well as offering professional supervision, he provides psychosocial support to professionals working within high emotional impact contexts. He is a registered psychologist, has regular professional supervision and is bound by the Psychologists' Code of Ethics. **Sam coaches and connects Corporate and NGO leaders who engage with the challenges of thinking disruptively. Please contact him if you are prepared to join them in "looking over the edge".**