

# Digital disruption: from virtual customers to real-world results

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Crowdsourcing ideas and detailed journey mapping are essential in leveraging digital disruption to the best possible outcomes for your business - here's how...

At Gartner's 'architecting the digital business ecosystem' conference on 5 May at the CTICC, Brian Burke, Gartner's VP of research, spoke of leveraging enterprise architecture to understand the value and impact of digital disruption.

He kicked off by stating that one of the main things ICT specialists do when told to implement new technologies at a business level is to Google it first. There's just so much innovation out there that we need a relatively straightforward way of understanding new technologies, as well as the risk and opportunities they offer, so as to implement them as smoothly as possible.

## Disrupting business models for good with all things digital

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. The disruptive nature of technologies as they emerge shows that each industry affected has to break down barriers of their existing business models.

"Think of Uber," said Burke, and of how it has rapidly changed the way we think about public transport, globally. But it's not all sunshine and automatic acceptance, as there's also a dark side to leaping into new ways of doing business. There are strikes any time we affect the status quo in business - sabotage also comes in.



© Brian Burke, Gartner's presentation titled: Leverage Enterprise Architecture to Understand the Value and Impact of Digital Disruption

But it's not all futuristic. We think of autonomous vehicles and drones as something to enter our lives in years to come, but the concepts have been around for quite some time, as evidenced by the driverless trains that transfer you between terminals at some airports. We don't necessarily see them on the streets yet, but Burke says the challenge is not in getting the driverless vehicle from A to B, it's rather in the uncontrolled environment they would operate in. [Read this](#) for more insight.

### **3D printing and autonomous vehicles - becoming mainstream, but by no means new**

Also look at the concept of 3D printing, which has been around for 25 years and involved in the process of building models and prototypes. It's on our minds more often now as it becomes more mainstream by becoming more price-friendly and offering new business opportunities. That said, new approaches are required to make it through the ecological storm and have the concept something we think of a day-to-day business norm.

Another problem is that old approaches get in the way when we try to implement something new. Burke points out that there is often a lack of culture to lead and drive innovation in companies. To change this we need to focus on obsolete business models that need to be broken, and we need the fortitude to take on risks, as well as to challenge dogmatic views on business value generation and understanding the right metrics for success, as these are all signs of old ways of business thinking.

To highlight the need for risk-taking, Burke mentioned the famous Henry Ford quote, that if I'd asked people what they wanted they would simply have said faster horses, as the concept of a car as it is today was unfathomable, just a few decades ago. This shows that you can't expect your customers to know what they want, you need to lead them there and take calculated risks, without reinventing the wheel.

But how do you then get usable, quality ideas from your consumers? Burke says there's the tried and tested method of simply asking people what they want or using a suggestion box, but that results in lots of low quality answers. Instead, look to crowdsourcing methods as the best ones will bubble to the top. You can then take those into a funnel for development. Ideation is key here, in terms of gathering many ideas, then identifying the best ones and developing those. It's not as daunting as it seems. Burke says the first step is to understand the business outcomes you could apply the ideas to, then to evaluate the risks and opportunities involved and create a business transformation roadmap to follow. Crowdsourcing is a great way to match technologies as they evolve, in order to address a targeted business outcome.

### **What to do if your business is risk-averse but you still want to make digital leaps**

If your business is risk-averse you'll need to map the expected impact and outcome of an innovation portfolio, but not in the

way you've been doing. Now there's a shift towards having the people actually involved in your ideation process assisting with refining the idea and creating a business outcomes journey map, which makes it absolutely clear how the technology will be integrated.

There's no avoiding it, so you might as well do your research and be ready for it!

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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