

Keep calm and adapt (or die)

By Leigh Andrews

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The second day of the INMA global media summit Africa had a strong focus on transformation and reorganisation, with moderator Peter Ndoro announcing that we need to make plans now to ensure we make it through to the other side of the current digital disruption unscathed.



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Trude Margel, MD of the *Itera Gazette* and president of INMA's European board spoke of publishers' two choices: Change or die. These aren't just scare tactics. By 2025, Margel predicts that 75% of the brands around today will be but a memory. Some brands do have that longevity factor, while others just don't realise they're sitting on an idea for the future.

To illustrate this, Margel shared the story of Kodak launching the world's first digital camera in 1975 – this was done by mistake, and on being told it wasn't part of their core business at the time, the idea was put on the backburner. Fast-forward a few decades and sales of film rolls plummeted to such an extent that by 2012 the company was bankrupt. The meaning of the phrase "having a 'Kodak moment'" has similarly been adjusted in our shared lexicon from the original motivation to capture the moments that matter to you, to a sarcastic description for a [horribly twisted event](#) such as a company that crumbles as it [fails to adapt](#). We all need to make changes before it's too late to avoid our businesses having a similar 'Kodak moment'.

Fail fast or face death by unicorn

“ 1. Produce lots of ideas 2. Work simply, & inexpensively 3. Work with a business plan as a living document 4. Kill your business [#INMAfrica](#)— Awande Dlamini (@AwandeDlamini) [November 15, 2016](#) ”

Explaining her process model, Margel said key is to constantly innovate and produce lots of ideas – a practical aspect too with attendees encouraged to network and come up with solutions to real-world consumer problems like constantly losing your key – interesting how many solutions involved all things digital despite this being a physical issue. This was important in illustrating the importance of failing fast and moving on to the next challenge. Margel calls it 'death by unicorn' or startup and says the ultimate disruptor is Apple. In terms of failing fast and moving on to bigger and better things, she spoke of how their launches of Mac and the iPod had a lukewarm reception but they kept at it and struck 'tech titanium' with the iPhone and iPad.

On the point of "killing the business" as part of change she said: "If you don't put yourself out of business, someone else will," so prod around for your soft spots and things that aren't quite up to scratch yet – change them before your competitors latch on and innovate there, leaving you in the dust. Just think of San Francisco's yellow taxi cab dominance until Uber disrupted the industry in 2014 and the way Netflix has changed the TV subscription model despite many legacy businesses in the space for decades.

Ndoro interjected that we need to relook at our business and reinvent it. "I keep seeing the 'keep calm' signs in my head as we've been doing this for decades and will continue doing so," he said, adding that we're just adapting faster than before and that's the key to moving forward and not being left behind.

“ In the digital 'war', to paraphrase Bernard Shaw, it doesn't matter who is right or wrong - but who is left. Inspiring

[#InmaAfrica](#) summit!— Simoneh de Bruin (@SimonehDB) [November 15, 2016](#) ”

Conclusions of the day and summit overall then included the fact that we need to keep adapting but also keep doing what we're doing well with good, honest journalism. You're more than just a publisher now and can't possibly do everything, but definitely do more than before, faster. Ndoro also emphasises the importance of 'knowing thy customer' through data and analytics in order to improve their experience with your business as other brands are already doing so and the expectation is being set. Keep calm and you'll get through this stage of business evolution.

All in all a wealth of relevant information was shared. If you missed any of my previous coverage you can go through all the presentations on [INMA's website](#) in your own time, and be sure to follow the [#INMAAfrica hashtag](#) for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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