

Marketing the Future zooms in on digital disruption

Digital disruption and consequentially the accelerated pace at which our working lives are shifting was tackled from three seemingly disparate directions at Marketing the Future, a recent event held by the IMM Graduate School and proudly supported by Nedbank.



Pepe Marais, Jay Badza and Dion Chang. Image supplied.

{{IMAGE}}

Dion Chang, trend analyst; Jay Badza, founder and head honcho of Orchard On 25; and Pepe Marais, founding partner and CCO of Joe Public; are three dynamic personalities who have each taken the concept of digital disruption and melded it according to their particular creativity and experience.

Dion Chang: The future you were waiting for has already passed

Any company that thinks they are being proactive by planning for digital disruption should know it's too late. The first wave of digital disruption is long gone and we are well into the second phase, where robotics, automation, algorithms, Big Data, and virtual and augmented reality have already significantly shifted reality as we knew it. As a result, companies and individuals who weren't keeping an eye on the trends are finding their skills and services are quickly becoming redundant.

"The important thing is understanding the cross-industry impact. People are so fixated on their own industries, they don't look at the neighbouring and ancillary industries," says Chang. "The lines are blurring more and more, and suddenly something that happens in say hospitality becomes a huge problem in healthcare ... or something like that.

“It’s about reskilling or understanding that your skills are hybrid. What stunts most innovation trajectories for companies is the fact that they are siloed, they are very hierarchical – it’s an old 20th Century structure – which is like trying to get into a driverless car, but we are still using an old stick shift manual to operate it. It’s just not going to work, you need a different way of thinking.”

Continual learning and upskilling have become paramount to keeping your head above water in the sea change of our current age.

Jay Badza: The fine art of influencer marketing

“We are in the middle of a marketing revolution. It’s only those brands that are bold and ballsy who are going to stand the tide,” says Jay Badza. A vital component of this is for brands to make clever use of social media and the rise of influencer marketing.

Brand ambassadors are a thing of the past and the proliferation of social media platforms has seen the rise of influencers as the true marketers of the future. And like any professional, they deserve to be paid. It’s no longer acceptable to “pay” a social media star with “exposure” or free coffee and a donut.

To be successful, however, it’s key to understand your brand story and exactly how a particular influencer is going to fit into that strategy. By engaging with influencers, brands ensure that they are part of the broader conversation and play a part in changing cultures.

Pepe Marais: We’re only human after all

To become more purposeful as a human being and as a business, we have to move beyond money as the primary motivator. The way business is positioned at the moment is that the bottom line has become the top priority, with dire consequences. The world is changing and legacy companies are crumbling in the wake of new age start-ups and the digitally enhanced reality of millennials and centennials.

“We need to push for something greater than money to stand for,” Marais says. “In my experience, as being more of an artist, you put your hat down, you play your heart out, and the money follows and I think that approach is lacking in the world. Which is why I’m pushing for something greater than money to stand for as a brand.”

The results can be dramatic. Joe Public faced bankruptcy in 2009, but since finding a purpose for the business it has grown into a company that is well known for its creative, human approach.

Marketing the Future is a means through which the IMM Graduate School reconnects with past and present students. Moreover, it provides a platform to stimulate thought and discussion around some of the critical challenges and opportunities emerging from the marketing industry today.