

How digital has disrupted the traditional consultancy model

 By [Anton Moulder](#)

1 Jun 2017

At some point, every smart business gets to a place where it needs to disrupt itself. Whether it is implementing a new HR system to motivate and inspire staff, or introducing a new app, product or service to stay relevant in the market: every business reaches a stage where deep-seated change is imperative for growth. Sometimes, failure to change leads to failure to succeed, as the now famous examples of Kodak and Blackberry brands have demonstrated.

For many years business leaders have sought to understand and implement this change with the help of outside consultancies.

Big name change management and advisory firms are brought in to identify where the weaknesses lie, and to chart a way forward for the business in its respective market sector. This process usually takes months, involves plenty of number crunching, face-to-face interviews, painstaking research and ongoing analysis.



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At the end though, businesses are presented with text-heavy tomes that present a highly detailed analysis of the current scenario, coupled with specific suggestions on how and where changes need to be made. This authoritative tome comes at great expense to the business or client, and the consultancy exits... having met the brief.

Meet the makers

However, in an environment that is dominated by digital innovation and ongoing disruption, the brief is changing.

Savvy businesses are recognising that they can no longer afford to wait for a consultancy to conduct a six-month analysis. Moreover, once businesses receive the normal 100-page tome, chances are their particular industry or market has already moved on to the next trend or wave of innovation.

In short, the digital sphere is moving far too quickly for the traditional consultancy model to have any kind of immediate and meaningful impact. As a result, a new type of 'consultancy' is fast emerging.

Unlike its predecessors, the new breed is characterised by speed and the ability to implement change quickly. It is also characterised by the ability to build something – usually in the form of a digital product or service. Instead of the laborious and painstaking research that consultancies conduct, the real work happens in short bursts – incorporating new methodologies such as design thinking, lean start-up methodology, design sprints and agile software development.

The entire process can happen within a month, and the business or client is left with an actual product or service – such as an app or streamlined e-commerce platform.

With this new consulting model, it is possible to get an actual product or service, such as an app or streamlined e-commerce platform out in a month, and they continue to validate assumptions with real people, continually refining the outcomes collaboratively with the business. The difference in delivery is that stakeholders are giving feedback on working prototypes rather than theoretical offerings set out in pretty presentation decks.

Designing, developing... doing

Whether this process happens with the help of an outside digital or innovation specialist, or by hiring internally to implement change, the key point is that 'thinking' is being joined by 'doing' or 'making'. Gone are the days when businesses could chew on theories and ideas for months... today, change and innovation has to happen quickly and efficiently. It also has to produce something tangible and immediately relevant to customers and employees.

In response, smart business leaders are adjusting the structure and makeup of their organisations to reflect this status quo. The most successful businesses are lean, agile, and able to pivot within months. They are designed for innovation, and to be proactive instead of reactive within their respective markets. Importantly, futureproof businesses also take their cue from their customers and end users – instead of a far removed third party 'expert'.

Not only is this new way of working and progressing more efficient, but it is also far more cost effective. With the new model of innovation, and the new wave of dynamic innovators, businesses are entering an enticing phase of creative freedom, efficiency and true empowerment.

ABOUT ANTON MOULDER

The managing partner of Urbian, Anton Moulder helped co-found the digital product studio with his partner Gary Willmott, to forge a firm where digital is used to better business, deliver new markets, and unlock new revenue streams. Described by his clients as a "strategic visionary", Moulder is obsessed with design thinking, disruptive business models, and how technology can make the world a better place for people and business.

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