

What if nothing is changing?



By [Damon Stapleton](#)

17 Jul 2019

There is an advertising urban myth about a company needing to sell more baby powder. Basically, all the brightest and the best would come into a room each day and try and brainstorm how they could sell more baby powder.



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They would look at communication, distribution and pricing. At the end of each day, a cleaner would come in and clean up the room. While she did this, she would listen to what they were saying. At the end of three days, very little progress had been made in selling more baby powder. The cleaner could see everybody was a little crestfallen, so she gave them her idea:

Why don't you just make the holes bigger?

The question is always how you change the game. And the answer is usually made up of two words: Creativity and simplicity. You will find these two qualities in any answer of value.

However, changing the game and talking about change are of course two very different things.

One of the funniest things in our industry is to watch people take on the cloak of the grim reaper. One of the safest positions you can take in our industry is that everything is about to die.

This has been said every year since I got into the business. Bob Hoffman wrote [a brilliant piece](#) about this phenomenon in Cannes recently.

“ In it, he shows how speaker after speaker talks about how we are all dying if we don't adapt. Or, how advertising is dying. Or, that massive change is on the horizon. Run for the hills. For the love of God, we have to change. Otherwise we are all going to die. ”

Now, of course if you get to the end of these talks you will find most are selling something. And nothing sells quite like impending doom.



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Damon Stapleton 19 Mar 2014



I guess the real question is, what is changing and what isn't

The idea of change has always fuelled our industry. The restlessness this brings is a good thing. But, it can also be a false prophet.

So, I thought I would look at all this through the lens of an excellent article I read recently. For me, it highlights the fact that in the end, we always come back to the need for creativity. That is what never changes.



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It is almost always the solution you return to, over and over. And more importantly, it's how you change the game and make giant leaps when everything else eventually gives you parity.

The article is by Jay Patisall in *Forbes* magazine, called [The Cost of Losing Creativity](#). Please do yourself a favour and read it.

In it, he argues that the industry has commoditised brands and homogenised experiences. Here is what he had to say about how customer experience has become too similar to make a difference:

“ The issue is that the work looks, feels, and behaves too similar. The industry obsession for meeting every customer need and want for ease and convenience by using technology has left little room for creative differentiation. That has come at a cost. The front door to your brand is a web or app experience that is virtually indistinguishable. Fashion experiences look the same. Quick-service restaurant and coffee apps allow you to order ahead and skip the line. All airline apps allow travellers to check in, manage travel, and use a mobile device as their boarding pass. What can make one brand different from another when the experience is built from the same common technology platform, designed to solve the same user or category need, and programmed for the same two devices? Creativity. ”



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In other words, there comes a point where through technology or just about anything else, you reach an experience plateau where everything becomes the same again.

You and your competitors become the same again. And then, you have to differentiate again. For that, you need ideas. You need creativity to change the game. It would seem as long as there is competition or choice, this will always happen.

Take television and content. Recently, Disney and NBC have taken their content back from Netflix. The game is changing and, to be fair, there are many scenarios that could play out in the future. But just for fun, let's take this information and run with it.



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Disney (I believe the app is called Disney Plus) and many others could soon have their own apps that consumers will be able to access in a variety of ways. This means in the future, you could have a multitude of apps or platforms on your screen. And hey presto, we are back where we started.

Not unlike today, with a multitude of television channels to choose from. What was once radically different will become familiar again. This cycle is far truer than radical change.

So, the question becomes **how will all these streams of content differentiate from each other?** My guess is that it will mean a few people in a room trying to come up with ideas. No matter what labels are used or what impending doom men in cool trainers tell us is about to visit, this always seems to be the answer.



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It is ironic that the one thing that actually creates change, doesn't change at all. Creativity.

It knows eventually it will get the call, after all the talking and posturing is done. It knows it is the only architecture that will let you leap again and again.

Just like the holes in the baby powder, the answer is always staring us in the face.

"Creativity doesn't wait for that perfect moment. It fashions its own perfect moments out of ordinary ones."—Bruce Garrabrandt

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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