

Beauty and the Brand

Kalika: Imagine a crazy world where most of what you learned in school is backward, upside down and inside out. Where the president of United States has COVID. Where consumers control companies. Where creators corner the avenue of self expression. Where your newsfeed is out of your control. A world where customers design your products. Perfection drives customers away and demographics are besides the point. Where meaning talks, AI hawks, and stability is rocked.

Imagine a world where imagination beats knowledge and empathy trounces logic. If you've been paying enough attention, you see and feel the powerful wave of change, rising all around you.

The question is, can you change your business, your brand, and your thinking quickly enough to swim in this new ocean. In this time of fast moving markets and leapfrogging innovation, we can no longer unlock wealth. We have to actively create wealth or else end up in the relics of indifference. Relevance is on the mind of every CEO, but you just can't add the word relevance to your mission statement and expect magic to ensue.

As a CEO, you have to actively transform yourself and your company from our narrowly focused, intellectual, cerebral, data driven company to a brilliantly moving tour de force, a design driven company. In this new creative economy you have to change to overcome the three challenges of the present marketplace.

They are: number one, relentless speed. Number two, extreme clutter, and number three, nonstop connectedness.

Let's start by looking at these three challenges that we face today a little closer.

Number one, relentless speed.

The first challenge is that business is accelerating. Ever since 1965, when Gordon Moore made the prediction that computer speeds would double every 18 months or so, business has increased at the same pace. More purchases are made in one hour than an all of 1965.

What this means is that while one company is busy marketing its latest product or service, other companies are busy making it obsolete. The market moves faster than any one company.

Number two extreme clutter.

The second problem that we see in the marketplace is that it is extremely cluttered. Since 1983, the number of us trademarks has quadrupled. Since 1991, the number of supermarket brands has tripled. Long gone are the days when you could just simply walk into a store, select from two products on the shelf and as long as they did what you needed it to do, you just bought one.

And the last challenge.

Number three, nonstop connectedness.

The internet has changed everything. Customers are connected and are in full control. They can get anything they want from anywhere at any time they have the choice and the voice.

So with less time, how do these customers make buying choices? They do this by having trust. So how do you build trust? The secret in order to build trust, you have to think, and you have to design. Design thinking is a skill that activates trust and it activates transformation without design thinking your strategic choices will be limited to only what's been done before. Traditional business thinking is based on a two step process: knowing and doing. You know something and then you do something. Design thinking is a little different. It adds a third step in the middle called making. The making step combines, reflection, experimentation, prototyping to expand the range of what we know and therefore expands the range of what we can do. What the designer says is, do we really know what we know?

Are there any new ways to approach this? The move beyond the "why" to the "what if." The designer categorically refuses to accept the old or the easy. It's a mindset it makes traditional thinkers ticked off, but it's the right mindset for today's new creative economy. At the end of the day, designers reach for three intangible qualities: truth, beauty, and trust.

Combined, it's true beauty. True beauty is a state of being authentic and real in a way that extends love to yourself and others. True beauty is sincere. It's safe. It's alive. It's playful. It's affirming true beauty lights us up. It illuminates our entire being more powerfully and empowers the light of everyone else around us.

True beauty helps other people feel more alive and powerful and real. The best brands exude truth. The best brands exude beauty. The best brands exude trust. These brands flourish.

These brands thrive.