



Digital disruption or distraction?

Meeting Minds Experts CEO, **Medhat Nassar**, says new tech tools may seduce, but customer experience remains key.

“The fast pace of change within the digital environment makes it difficult to compete when coming from a traditional environment.”

Do we need to spend more on technology to achieve growth? With so many digital tools in play — from the web and social media, to mobile apps, chat bots, and wearable tech — it is easy to lose focus on the real benefit such tools provide, making the term ‘going digital’ in itself a distraction rather than a solution.

In an attempt to shift from a traditional to digital environment, some business events end up investing in technology and resources without achieving growth. Some may even lose ground and downsize, the common reasons being: (1) they wanted to see immediate results and (2) they didn’t consider the customer’s experience.

Technology is supposed to help us know our customers better, otherwise it would just be an added cost, leading to frustration among clients and within the organisation itself. Some people say that millennials like to be more interactive and influence the interaction rather be told what to do. But what matters — regardless of the generation — is our ability to understand our customers’ needs and deliver what they want through a simple and flawless experience.

Going digital is intended to enhance interaction with participants, encourage them to open up and allow us to do business.

Mapping the interaction stages and identifying customer needs is, in essence, the whole meaning behind going digital. Otherwise, we risk losing engagement, even with all the technological capabilities on our side.

The mapping process also helps identify issues that cause frustration, as well as stages where customers are at the highest level of satisfaction to sell them something more or get them to advocate for the organisation.

Then comes disruption, which means ‘challenging the status quo’. Disruption not only requires working smarter but harder, faster and often in a way so out-of-the-box that the established competition doesn’t see you as a threat. It is about being so disruptive that bigger players cannot or will not adapt fast enough to knock you out of the game.

Disruption is not about thinking better, but about thinking differently. The process begins with asking ‘why’. If the answer is weak, you have found an opportunity. The starting point is: “That’s just the way we’ve always done it”. However, challenging the norm isn’t always easy. Sometimes the best ideas can come too soon and the market may not be ready to accept them. So, it is most important to always test and keep trying.

Business events operate in a very disruptive space and the fast pace of change within the digital environment makes it difficult to compete when coming from a traditional environment. In a digital environment, we put the customer journey or experience in place first, then allocate the processes and resources required. The customer journey becomes the product itself, not the technological infrastructure running it. Just like any other product, it requires planning, processes, resources, management, measurement and improvement. ■

This article was provided by the International Association of Professional Congress Organisers. Medhat Nassar is CEO of Meeting Minds Experts Dubai – UAE, a specialist PCO and corporate meetings planner. IAPCO represents 133 companies comprised of more than 8,300 professional congress organisers, meeting planners and managers of international and national congresses, conventions and special events from four countries. For more information, visit: www.iapco.org.



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