

Guidelines for generating gamechanging ideas

Our working definition of "gamechanger"

Developments (projects, initiatives, strategies, new models, innovations) that "change the game" for independent media by increasing its impact and influence in the next five years. These are not incremental strategies, but rather big bold moves that The Media Consortium could develop or take advantage of in a rapidly changing media landscape.

Strategic moves

How can we think about gamechangers? To simplify, there is a continuum of strategies that might create gamechangers for TMC.

1. REVOLUTIONARIES

These gamechangers tend to be the über innovations. They create entirely new market spaces, categories, or social innovations that never existed before — and change the boundaries and rules of the industry or sector as a result.

Examples — Airlines, motor vehicles, telephones, computing, semiconductors, internet. Note that many revolutionary innovations came about by 1) combining a range of existing technologies, e.g. Internet 2) a supportive context or "paradigm shift" that allowed them to emerge.

2. DISRUPTORS

Whereas revolutionary innovation typically comes from the "outside-in," disruptive gamechangers start within the boundaries of a defined industry or sector. They tend to be more "bottom-up" or lateral in their genesis. Disruptive innovations are also different because they often start out as lower cost options with inferior performance in unpromising markets — which makes them hard to spot and taken seriously at the beginning.

Examples — Encyclopedia Britannica was unable to recognize that CDs & DVDs would be a disruptive format. In addition, disruptive innovations frequently "democratize" services and enable customers to be part of the value creation process. By this, they increase access or the ability of customers to do things that were previously done by a group of experts in a centralized fashion (For example, computing, photocopying, blogging). In any event, these strategies are called "disruptive" because they displace the incumbent players or technologies.

Disruptive innovations come in two forms:

- a) **New market disruption** creates new value by targeting "non-customers." These are people with needs that were *not being served* by incumbents. Or there was a bottleneck in the way of their ability to consume the offering.
- b) **Low-end market disruption** creates value by targeting customers who are being *over-served*, or don't need the performance required by high-end users. Often products overshoot the ability of consumers to adapt to the new features. Low-end disruptors reframe the offering by simplifying or focusing on the specific needs of these niche segments.

Examples — Personal computers, World Wide Web, FedEx, Intuit's QuickBooks, eBay, online auctions, MP3, iPods (downloadable music format) and Grameen Bank.

Examples — Minute clinics, home diagnostics, digital photography, photocopying, instant messaging technology, and microwave ovens.

3. ADAPTERS

Though not as flashy and memorable, sometimes incremental innovations that are combined in novel or timely ways, can become gamechangers. First movers are not always successful in the end, so being a "fast follower" is often the savvy way to go. Google, for instance, was late to search.

Adapters come in two forms:

- a) **Design & differentiation**
- b) **Cost reduction**

Examples — Apple's "trickle down" strategy from the high-end to mainstream consumers through unique positioning and good design. Google's simple interface helped make this late entrant the market leader in internet search.

Example — Wal-Mart's supply-chain approach

Characteristics

The following characteristics describe potentially gamechanging ideas for independent media:

- Surprising and **unexpected** (reaches beyond the traditional tactics of progressive media)
- **Time horizon** for manifestation two years or more
- Holds **potential risk** that is equal to the reward/benefit that it could create (for TMC and/or its members)
- Utilizes **technology** that is early enough in its adoption cycle to leverage early-mover advantage
- Potential to lead to new solutions or opportunities for **social impact**
- **Simple** and intuitive

Impact

Successful results from a gamechanger may include one or more of the following:

- **Improve collective performance** by 3x or more in either audience reach or influence (yet to be specifically defined)
- **Significantly differentiate** progressive media from competitors in news, opinion and commentary that will cut through the noise (including changing prevailing assumptions about progressive media)
- **Attract new or greater funds** from either philanthropy or commercial sources
- **Add significant value to relationships** between TMC members and their customers, suppliers, funders and partners required to bring progressive content to market