

Technology and the revolution of usefulness | part I

 By [Anton Moulder](#)

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If you've been listening to the conversations that management teams have, you will have heard the words “digital disruption” a lot. That's because anyone who runs, owns or manages a business is aware of how technology is transforming their industry, and in some cases, putting their business at great risk.

The most frequently cited example is, of course, Uber — the global transportation brand that transformed the way people get around. There was a time when getting a ride somewhere involved the frustration of trying to hail a cab or tangle with a telephone call. Uber changed all that by making moving around cities as easy as touching a button on your smartphone.



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The digital disruption brought about by Uber isn't just the story of how that business model has forever changed the transport industry; it is much bigger than that. The larger narrative that business leaders need to appreciate is how technology has forever changed customer behaviour, and what this means, not just for transport, but for how vehicles will be made in future.

Taking a step back

But before going forward, let's take a step back. Remember '[Mad Men](#)'? That period drama about one of New York's most successful agencies? People loved that series, not only because it was so brilliantly conceived and made, but because life was a lot easier for Donald Draper and his clients. Back then, all a business needed to do to sell goods was to come up with a catchy campaign that advertised their product.



Back in the day, a brand would make products, tell people about those products and then customers would buy. It was a relatively simple process. But those days are gone.

Uber, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp have forever changed humans and how they engage with companies. Today people have become used to technology that is useful, adds value to their lives and that serves them.

When we want something, we find it using Google. When we need to know the answer to a question, we go to Quora. Locally you don't have to worry about carrying cash if you have a smartphone. [Snapscan](#) enables payment as easily as one would take a photo. You get the picture — technology becomes pervasive because it is useful.

Consumer expectations have changed

The useful software and apps that we find on our favourite devices have been so effective at delivering service and value to us, that consumer expectations have changed. Moreover, it has fundamentally shifted what people want when they engage with brands.

Needless to say, if you're a Big Five bank and you shuffle people through a clunky call centre, where they have to input multiple keypad digits that make sense to your business processes — but not the customer — you're in trouble.

Nowadays people want service that's so intuitive it is almost absent.

The big disconnect

The big disconnect for more traditional brands is that companies like Google were birthed on service, while locally that big red retailer that is rapidly becoming obsolete was created to sell products.

If you're a bank, retailer or legacy brand and you can't make the change from product to service, from selling to adding value, you're ripe for disruption.

The big question is: how can traditional companies change? To find out, keep an eye out for part II of this series.

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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