

As Uncertainty Persists, What's Next In Brand Future-Proofing?



Many business executives use the buzzword Future-Proofing but few, if any, have actually developed, implemented, and tested a truly strong strategy to successfully bolster a brand for the long-haul within an era that at times is so turbulent, even the best marketer is tested. However, given paralyzing global pandemics, unknown effects of rapid climate change, and general massive paradigm shifts within consumer demographics, future-proofing is more important now than ever.

Future-proofing is to create a foundation and strategy for your brand and company that is so well-developed that it is defended against various challenges that could threaten its reputation, market share, and more. There are several areas of future-proofing that need to be identified and explored. The first pertains to that which might be seen as a potential threat from a third party, typically digital, upon which an agency or brand is reliant. Indeed, Keith Brewer VP Digital Strategy Horizon Next explains, "In general, it's critical for brands to future-proof in order to ensure their brand will be set up for long-term success. We consistently examine current trends in the industry and use those to identify and protect against potential threats that may come our way in the future on a digital level. A recent and relevant example would be third-party data and Google's removal of cookies, which precipitate the need for us to evolve our digital strategy over time and looking to new tech applications that can prepare us for several years out." He continues, "This has removed a lot of pressure since we identified it as an issue not long ago, and we're working now. Equipped with models that show the connection between attention metrics and brand impact, we can buy with confidence as it becomes harder and more expensive to connect an exposure with an outcome. This is a key way digital media buyers, at least, can future-proof their brand."

However, threats in the real world can shake the very core of any business. Certainly, the latest issue to occupy the minds of all is to how to better guard against an environmental threat that could be massively disruptive for the actual team responsible for continuing to carry out and/or augmenting the brand's message during a cataclysmic, global event. For example, working from home has now taken on new meaning for most companies, however, few were ill-equipped beyond the general Zoom, Skype methods that bring together a couple of people, at best. Future-proofing in this sense means investing in better work-from-home technology. Everything from enabling collaboration tools that can support small groups as well as company-wide addresses to assessing the amount of at-home bandwidth for employees to availability of secure Wi-Fi networks are all absolutely critical to maintaining the rhythm of the company, and therefore the brand, under challenging circumstances. Having a reliable tech partner than can provide office-grade Internet at home that employees don't have to pay for themselves is also key for which to plan.

However, some of the most important focus for future-proofing is that of management development itself. Rui Ribiero, CEO of the [QSP Summit](#) this summer in Portugal says that the Summit team realizes that most of what concerns managers today is uncertainty and volatility, both macroeconomic and psycho-social. "It's very difficult for leaders to make decisions about the future without having an abundance of information. So, much of our focus this year will be on helping to provide insights on the future of leadership whether solutions on how to manage remote/traveling employees, board rotation, employee-management tensions around values and the brand's role in society and more. Such discussion and exchange is invaluable to those seeking ways to truly create a formula for future-proofing that works for their company's particular needs."

Yet, one of the biggest tips for Future-Proofing is to also ensure the creation of a diverse workforce in terms of age, race, educational demographics and expertise. It is from this collection of various perspectives and concerns that much of the road to how a brand should best prepare for impending changes will oftentimes reveal itself organically. Indeed, all stakeholders of the brand should be tapped from time-to-time on specific future trends or concerns they see that those in more senior positions might simply be missing.

From supply chain disruption to fear of recession to political environments and much more, now is the time to focus on a particular future-proofing strategy that works for your specific brand and the needs of the team that supports it. Success depends upon it.

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