



WINNERS' PLAYBOOK

HERE'S THE BEST ADVICE GLEANED FROM OUR YEARLONG SERIES ON DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION.
BY DAN TYNAN

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BE DATA LED, NOT DATA DRIVEN

Any organization can cherry pick data to justify its strategies, says Forrester principal analyst Brendan Witcher. Smart organizations look at the data first and then decide what to do.

"Any organization can find data to support a strategy they already have," he says. "Organizations need to dive in, look at the data and see what it's telling them to do before they make any assumptions about what they need to do."

2

LOOK OUTSIDE YOUR OWN INDUSTRY

Companies that have enjoyed the greatest success in transforming usually look for inspiration and innovation outside their core business, notes Altimeter Group principal analyst Brian Solis.

"The companies I'm most impressed by are those that have looked outside for innovation, like Starbucks and Domino's," he says. "Starbucks considers itself a mobile technology company; Domino's wants to be the Amazon of pizza. They realize that they have to think like those kinds of companies to compete at that speed."

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WHEN A CRISIS HITS, BE TRANSPARENT AND DIRECT

When your brand is hit with a crisis, denying, minimizing or blaming others just makes everything worse. The best strategy is to own your mistakes, apologize to the affected parties, take steps to demonstrate how you'll do better in the future, and move on, says Brandwatch CMO Will McInnes.

"It's not if a crisis will happen, it's when," he says. "Brands need to accept that they are in a constant dialogue with their market. Campaigns will go wrong. Focus-group-tested messages will fall flat. Employees will misbehave. But consumers will accept mistakes when the response feels appropriate."

STUART KINLOUGH/GETTY IMAGES

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BE GOOD—IT'S GOOD FOR BUSINESS

Brands can no longer count on customers remaining loyal. Instead, brands need to be loyal to their customers, says Jamie Gutfreund, global CMO for digital agency Wunderman. Provide service to the community and the world at large, then trust that people will recognize that and want to do business with you.

"Being in service to your customer means being a good company," she says. "It means supporting social causes that have nothing to do with sales. It's not a question of 'I'm supporting a social cause because I want to create loyalty.' You do it because it's the right thing to do."

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GET READY TO RUMBLE

Living in a data-driven world requires clarity of purpose, bravery and empathy, says Michael Weber, partner and chief commercial officer for BrandCap, a business performance consultancy. But it also requires agility.

"The benchmarks of today will not be the benchmarks of tomorrow," he says. "You need to be prepared to stay nimble and pivot. Companies that are doing a good job at this are always asking whether the numbers they're comparing themselves to are still relevant."

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LET THE DATA SURPRISE YOU

The real point of collecting data is to uncover things you didn't already know. You need to approach it with an open mind and be willing to embrace new insights, says Zenith president Brent Poer.

"There are always things you may not already know, or audience segments that

are underserved," he says. "A lot of this is about turning over rocks and looking for little moments of surprise. That's always an 'aha' moment. That's where you find the magic."

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GO WHERE YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE

Brands spend millions trying to lure customers to their own sites, when they should be focused on improving the customer experience across all platforms, says Linda Holliday, CEO for Citia.

"Most companies spend most of their money trying to drag attention back to their own website," says Holliday. "If you're Condé Nast and you want readers to have an extended experience with Vogue, it doesn't matter whether it happens on the company website, YouTube or Instagram, when the alternative is 'not at all.'"

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DOUBLE DOWN ON DATA

Organizations still need marketing leaders to represent the voice of the customer. But much of that voice is derived from data that's locked away in multiple silos, says Ingrid Lindberg, founder and CXO of Chief Customer, a consultancy focusing on customer experience.

"You're still going to need a single source of truth about what customers really want," she says. "You can't go wrong if you double down on the data. Get people focused on where the power is, which is information, and share those insights across the organization and all those different silos."

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ADOPT A DIGITAL MINDSET

The move-fast-and-break-things ethos of Silicon Valley hasn't quite made its way to Madison Avenue. For example, traditional audience measurements like CPM and Nielsen don't transfer to the digital age, says Omnicom Media Group president of investment Catherine Sullivan. The industry needs to iterate faster on the changes necessary to compete in a digital environment.

"It's not just media companies, it's all of us," she says. "We're all trying to be more like digital, but the reality is that it's taking too long. We need to collectively rip the Band-Aid off, and we all need to be in this together."

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THINK EXPONENTIALLY, ACT INCREMENTALLY

Organizations hoping to anticipate disruption need to view their business through multiple lenses, then act quickly when signs of change present themselves. Transformation is usually a journey of many small steps, not one enormous leap, says Amy Webb, founder of the Future Today Institute.

"A lot of companies wait for big offsite meetings to make changes," she says. "But technology is moving so quickly and change is happening so fast that leaders need to get into the habit of making smaller incremental decisions much more quickly. It can be as simple as assigning a staff member to be a thought leader on an emerging technology, to pay attention to it and read more. That's an easy incremental activity that can pay huge dividends later on."