



SoundBite, Episode 1: Chris Vollmer, Managing Director, Strategy& Digital Services

Question: What's the single biggest technology issue facing companies today?

Chris Vollmer

The single biggest issue that companies face today is that they're living in an era of digital disruption. And what is digital disruption? It's the combination of massive amounts of technology driven change, huge amounts of business model and product innovation, plus very significant changes in user behavior.

The three of those things create what we call digital disruption. And for companies today, it's their most important concern, because it puts them on the defense for a lot of their incumbent positions. Companies are sitting there on top of very established business models, potentially large profit pools. And the reality is that each single one of them has a target on their back from a disruptor; someone who is coming from outside their industry, a startup. Maybe it's actually a company in an adjacent industry who wants to target a new area for growth.

They're all sitting there thinking about how they can attack your market in a different way. And companies face a very big issue in that a lot of times; they're very complacent about their established positions.

The enemy is standing still. In this era of digital disruption, where things are moving so fast, companies really have to have a bias for action. They have to have a bias for action, and they really need to think about their business, their market, their customers along three important dimensions.

One, they need to think like a startup, and thinking like a startup really means reimagining how you participate in an industry or with your customers or in your market. You take a blank sheet of paper and you don't just reengineer and improve on the margins how your business is and make it more effective, make it more automated, make it more efficient. You actually reimagine your participation in a category, in a segment, in a product area, in a market, and you actually move beyond where it is today. You innovate and you take it beyond where it exists. You take it into white space.

The second thing you do is you really put digital at the center of your strategy. I think a lot of companies have actually spent quite a bit of money digitizing their business. The failure that they've made is they actually haven't transformed it. They haven't pushed it really towards that re-imagination to get the full value capture of what they need to do. They may also not have cascaded it throughout their entire organization, so not everybody really understands what the digital strategy is, or what the strategy better set for digital is.

Then the third thing is that companies really need to put the user or the customer at the center of what they do. They really need to understand the behaviors; they really need to understand the problem that



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they're trying to solve for the user. If you're going to create a better solution, you have to understand in-depth, in detail, how it's actually going to be better. You have to have a very clear problem state and solve around that. Use your capabilities to do something nobody else can.

And that's really what that user first focus - that human centered design thinking actually brings, where you actually give things to users. If you're able to iterate with them, if you're able to quickly learn what works, quickly learn how you're able to improve upon that problem statement and then drive it towards very significant scale and value creation with them.

If you do those three things extraordinarily well, you put yourself on a path for very significant growth. You put yourself on a path towards redefining your position in your industry. You put yourself on a path towards the next wave of growth and profit for your company.