

# Fresh thinking as a route to future business success

**T**here are strong arguments in favour of underpinning key elements of a long-term business plan with disruptive approaches, according to Alan Mackie, Chief Marketing and Products Officer, Gamma. He says that the 'business as usual' status quo will remain in perpetuity – despite market uncertainty and a superfast moving industry – unless channel leaders pursue strategies characterised by 'fresh thinking – an imperative that has been catalysed by the Covid-19 pandemic. "For many organisations disruptive thinking is a matter of survival," stated Mackie. "In the past year, competition has been fiercer than ever. Every business has changed the way it works, and the quick shift to digital has been highly disruptive in itself.

"It is vital for businesses to avoid getting stuck in their pre-pandemic direction and ways of working. Now, more than ever, organisations will need to innovate and, in some cases, step outside of their comfort zone. Business leaders should encourage employees and colleagues to go past the idea of doing something 'the usual way', and move towards doing it 'the outstanding way', even if this is outside of the organisation's normal way of working."

Mackie believes that business leaders should adopt a measured approach to driving and managing disruptive thinking, with an all-inclusive



Alan Mackie

## Outside-the-box thinking should be encouraged throughout the company, not just at leadership level

strategy involving all people within the organisation.

"When we talk about outside-the-box thinking, too often we assume this means completely revolutionising the status quo," he added. "This assumption makes the whole concept sound way more challenging and time consuming than it needs to be. Ultimately, when a leader truly thinks outside the box, the box goes away – and so does the pressure of having to deliver something new. Business leaders who are hoping to overcome inside-the-box thinking should be willing to take a new perspective on their day-to-day work and activities, while also having the flexibility necessary to incorporate new ideas into their routine."

Outside-the-box thinking is only possible when collaboration and

communication are at the core of a business strategy, believes Mackie. "Especially at a time when we're all working from home and employee engagement is more important than ever," he added.

Leadership is crucial in bringing discipline to disruptive strategies and key to success is execution, which ultimately hinges on decision making. "Decision making should be a trial and error process," noted Mackie. "Some decisions might lead to failure, but it's critical for reseller leaders to persist and adjust throughout this process. We are living in uncertain times, and although scary, organisations will need to continue to innovate and take action if they want to succeed."

According to Mackie, disruption strategies should start with the customer and take account of the problems they are trying to solve or the improvements they want to make to their business. "Once we have established the nature of the value we are looking to bring to the customer, this can be the guiding principle in determining the go-to-market plan for the business, and the different markets to explore," he stated. "Rather than jumping on the latest technology or market opportunity bandwagon, resellers should set out their business purpose and look to develop new ways of working and new partnerships to support their plan."

# Realising the right balance

**T**he term 'disruptive' can be applied to simply questioning the norm or being radically innovative in your approach. Either way, it's essential to constantly challenge current practices and assumptions, to be flexible and adaptable, and to embrace new business practices, working environments and emerging technologies. "But being disruptive does not mean that you always have to be radical," stated Andy Wilson, Head of Wholesale, CityFibre. "Many customers value stability and consistency. You should not be disruptive for its own sake."

For resellers seeking to be disruptive and take a leadership position, their business model and culture will need to change. "You also need stability and consistency," added Wilson. "It is also key to get the balance right between data collection, analysis and accuracy, and the delegation of responsibility within the business. The better the information and interpretation, the more accurate your decisions will be."

Resellers are also advised to be disciplined and make time to think because thinking is vitally important to decision making. "Block out physical time for tactical and strategic thought, otherwise you will always be consumed by the here and now and won't have the opportunity to plan and strive towards future goals," noted Wilson. "To be truly disruptive, you also need to be agile and able to make decisions and act on them immediately, at every level.



Andy Wilson

"It's also necessary to have a culture which allows people to make mistakes. Whether they are senior or middle managers, or junior employees, people should never be scared to try something, and they should never be punished for making a mistake. You should include everyone in the business in your disruption strategy and have a feedback loop that will allow their voices to be heard."

## Key threat

For many channel businesses today, the biggest threat will be new, more dynamic and disruptive entrants, believes Wilson. "These new businesses will be quick thinking, agile and responsive," he said. "They have no legacy constraints and are able to react and adapt to changes in the market quickly. Established businesses need to think how they can respond to that challenge and turn it into an opportunity. While customers value stability and dependability, resellers will nevertheless need to match the new entrants in terms of their innovation and their capacity to embrace new ideas and technologies."

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