

In this article, we speak with industry experts to find out what advice they would give to businesses looking to plan for the future.

According to Shaune Jordaan, co-founder and chief commercial officer at Hoorah Digital, agencies that succeed will be those that understand the importance of playing the long game and accounting for the variables that come with it.

“If you want to do more than merely survive in the advertising industry, it is essential to take a strategic long-term view. It’s not about beating the competition, because tomorrow there will be new competition, but always looking to the long-term goals that ensure sustained growth and relevance,” says Jordaan.

“In advertising this means constantly engaging with human behaviour, seeking to understand what makes people tick, which in turn requires a keen awareness of social and cultural trends and nuances.”

Understand that the customer is the business

It is important to understand your customer and their changing needs. Online retailer, Teljoy, a business with a 50-year history, has learned a few things over the years about the importance of the customer.

“The customer is our first priority,” says Teljoy CEO, Jonathan Hurvitz. “More than profits or beating the competition or being the first to market, it’s about an acute understanding that the customer is the business. Second, change is constant in business and if you accept that, it becomes easier to think about long-term sustainability because you know there will be bumps in the end.

“The nature or extent of the problem may change, and the circumstances within which we offer our solutions may change, but it’s ultimately about connecting customers to solutions,” says Hurvitz.

Upskill and reskill your workforce

In uncertain times, it’s important to surround yourself with a skilled workforce that can adapt to change. Fostering a culture of learning will help you prepare for unforeseen challenges.

According to McKinsey, up to 375 million workers will need to change occupations by 2030. McKinsey also predicts that in about 60% of occupations, at least one-third of the constituent activities could be automated, implying substantial workplace transformations and changes for all workers.

“It’s important to recognise the importance of the workforce generational shift,” says Edmund Dueck, VP of Sales EMEA at Liferay. “Engaging millennials, reskilling the workforce, and investing in corporate learning are all new and significant considerations that will continue to be relevant.

“Upskilling and reskilling are vital for a highly competitive and evolving business environment, making them both critical elements of a powerful business strategy that is future-proof.”

Have an infinite mindset

To make your business stronger and more stable, build it with an infinite mindset rather than a short-term outlook.

“Businesses with an infinite mindset exchange short-term goals for those of achieving a lasting, positive impact on the world,” says Aisha Pandor, co-founder and CEO of SweepSouth.

In the book *The Infinite Game*, author Simon Sinek explains that businesses with a finite mindset play to beat the competition, with a “profits at all costs” approach. They’re often focused on the now and haven’t mapped out a long-term vision with strategies to achieve their objectives.

“In contrast, businesses with an infinite mindset play the long game, with a focus on the future and remaining relevant for as long as possible. It takes courage to lead with an infinite mindset because success might not show immediately, but if

you adopt it as a corporate strategy, you'll build a stronger, more stable, more innovative, and inspiring company. For inspiration, look at companies, organisations and individuals who embrace this ethos," says Pandor.

Place people first

The current pandemic crisis shone a spotlight on exactly what not to do, with many businesses facing consumer backlash for solely focusing on their profits despite the worldwide suffering taking place. At Radisson Hotel Group, the leadership team knew that it would be their reaction to the pandemic that would define them as a business during the crisis — as well as when the world emerged on the other side. This is why they kept their doors open throughout the various stages of lockdowns.

"The focus of our motivation was always our team," says Tim Cordon, Senior Area Vice President Middle East & Africa, Radisson Hotel Group. "Underpinning our decision to continue operating our hotels is the acknowledgement that they are crucial to the success of any establishment. Simply put, and I am sure it is the same for every other business, a hotel might be run in an exquisite and expensive building but the people who make things work and breathe life into the hotel — the team — make the experience for the guests."

As such, the Radisson group invests significant time in selecting and developing their team members, then empowering them with the correct tools to get on with their jobs. As Cordon puts it: "We have long espoused a brand ethos that prides itself on its culture and people-first approach, and it was important that we choose integrity, inculcating a genuine culture of 'every person matters', from the top down."

Plan for tomorrow today

While we all hope that we will not be faced with another pandemic in the near future, it is nonetheless critical to prepare for the possibility of a new crisis, whatever it may look like. To ensure the long-term survival of your business, there is no better time than now to begin making plans for the future.

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