

Disruptive thinking/disruptive marketing

David Adams

Purpose

This is a group exercise where members of the group are singled out to be tested by the rest of their colleagues in relation to identifying disruptive thinking and disruptive marketing implications.

Description

The exercise is totally conceptual. The individuals in the group are made to consider the implications of a disruption of business from influences wholly outside of their control. The technique can be modified to enable it to be used as a marketing strategy. This exercise uses the power of the group to stretch the minds and thinking of its members.

Process

Examples for disruptive thinking

- 1 A house builder in the south-east of England is forced to build houses without using water due to extreme drought conditions. This scenario forces the subject to think differently. By using this process, accepting that the scenario is highly unlikely, it forces the thinking to be thoroughly creative. Even if a solution to the problem is discovered, this is not the point of the exercise because other aspects of the business in question will be forced into the open.

- 2 Newspaper publisher forced to reconsider business model due to total unavailability of newsprint.
- 3 Fish importer who supplies supermarkets finds all sources of fish have disappeared from the seas or has been totally contaminated with mercury.
- 4 Government minister decrees that no private transport is to be used for the carriage of goods.

Examples for disruptive marketing

These are based on real examples from well-known industries:

- 1 Apple inventing the iPod, completely overshadowing the Sony Walkman.
- 2 Dyson inventing the bagless vacuum cleaner.
- 3 Ryanair charging passengers for baggage; now charging passengers to check in physically rather than online.

Groups can work in twos or threes to brainstorm new ideas and create 'new products' or can work together as a complete group. In addition to the traditional brainstorm process, Edward De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats* process can be used.

Pitfalls

The group needs to be able to be free-thinking but, indeed, that is the purpose of these exercises.

Bibliography

- de Bono, E. (2000) *Six Thinking Hats* (2nd revised edition), London: Penguin.
- Gilbert, I. (2004) *Little Owl's Book of Thinking: An Introduction to Thinking Skills*, Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.
- Kerin, R. and Peterson, R. (2006) *Strategic Marketing Problems: Cases and Comments*, London: Prentice Hall.