# Want to Adopt a Proactive Approach to Disruption? Here's How.

Identify the disruptive forces set to up-end your industry so you can take advantage of the opportunities they can provide.

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Soon, Amazon won't have to worry about accusations that the company treats its warehouse workers like robots. That's because those workers will *be* robots.

And it's close to happening: In Japan, startups are working on autonomous robots that can unload shipping containers and run an entire warehouse without human direction or intervention. If and when this human-less warehouse comes to fruition, existing supply chains worldwide will reel from the disruption.

In tech-based industries, the landscape can dramatically change beneath a company's feet before leaders even realize there has been a shift. Reinvention seems to occur every few months in the mobile device industry, for instance, thanks to stronger computing technologies and more mature platforms on which to build them. Features such as push notifications and geolocation services were revolutionary a few years ago; now they are plug-and-play for developers.

As the components involved in augmented reality, blockchain, artificial intelligence and the internet of things start to converge and work together, it's never been easier to

commercialize cutting-edge technologies. These fresh capabilities add value, and the companies that fully embrace them will enjoy a competitive advantage – at least until the rest of the industry catches up.

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## So, how do you stay competitive in an evolving industry?

Businesses won't necessarily close up shop overnight if they fail to keep pace with the changes in their markets, but competition is fierce. Innovation can turn a struggling organization into a successful one.

Instead of *reacting* to the new technologies in your industry, take a proactive approach. Look ahead to how technology will create superior customer experiences today, tomorrow and a year from now. The following steps will help you identify the disruptive forces set to up-end your industry before they arrive – and let you take advantage of the opportunities they provide.

## 1. Get the lay of the land, and be willing to pivot.

Start with an honest assessment of your own company (or product). Identify anything that might differentiate you from the competition, both positively and negatively. After you have identified any weak spots in your operation, work relentlessly to improve them.

Once you have ideas, practice lean UX methodologies to rapidly prototype them. Bring your ideas to market, but don't hesitate to pull the plug at the first sign of failure. When you

discover something that seems promising, pivot in that direction and put your full energy behind it.

A company such as Samsung would be wise to take this advice. Eight of the 10 best-selling phones in the United States are Apple products, which run the gambit, price-wise, from relatively cheap to the $1,000 iPhone X. Samsung might have high-end and budget-friendly offerings, but it lacks the mid-tier presence it needs to be a true market competitor.

Armed with that knowledge, Samsung might be able to beef up its mid-tier offerings and give Apple a run for its money.

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## 2. Connect with customers on a deeper level.

Innovation and industry disruption naturally affect the way customers interact with products and brands. As a result, you must build relationships that can withstand unexpected twists and turns. Work to understand customers' emotional connection with your brand, which can be incredibly useful when it's time to delight and engage those same customers.

As an example, think about how market research tech provider ZappiStore used an emotion-recognition platform called Affectiva to analyze how viewers responded to movie trailers featuring Marvel and DC superheroes.

Although viewers enjoyed the special effects and explosions in the DC trailers, they felt a stronger emotional connection to Marvel's heroes. Box office figures echo those findings, illustrating that an emotional connection can be vital to a brand's success.

## 3. Keep an eye on the horizon.

Look down the pipeline for disruptive forces and new technologies. You'll certainly want to keep tabs on your competitors, but you should also watch other industries for inspiration.

Consider how these innovations will affect your business and how your company might look if you incorporated them into your offering. The further ahead you see disruptive technology coming, the better off you'll be when it's time to leverage it.

When you observe disruptors pivoting in order to remain relevant, definitely take notice. Dollar Shave Club reinvented the razor business, but lessons from the company's direct-to-consumer model have carried over into countless sectors. That doesn't mean Dollar Shave Club rested on its laurels. When the company noticed its subscription growth slowing, it changed its business model to offer customers options for receiving more than razors on a steady basis.

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As technology continues to evolve at breakneck speed, disruption has become a routine part of doing business. Companies that work to identify that disruption as early as possible will be the ones to capitalize, while those that ignore the changing landscape will pay a steep price down the road.

Regardless of what's happening in your own industry, these four tactics can help you not only stay ahead of trends, but also use them to your competitive advantage.

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