ARE YOU FUTURE-PROOFED?
DISRUPTION, INNOVATION
AND THE CCO

Insights from the 2018 Page Spring Seminar

page
“When we started to think about the theme for this Spring Seminar, we heard from many of you that we really needed to shake things up and use this time to learn things that might be new to our thinking. Companies have been transformed or disrupted. Many have turned to design thinking to infuse their thinking about the future.

What I hope...is that we will step out of our comfort zone and listen for new ideas and new ways of thinking about the future. I hope everyone will come away with at least three new ideas they can apply to their way of working that turbocharges their function.”
Spring Seminar Topics

• Anticipating the Future: Applying Design Thinking — 4
• Understanding Blockchain: Opportunity or Threat? — 9
• How AI is Transforming the Communications Industry — 14
• What CCOs Need to Know About the Future of Media — 18
• The Workforce of the Future — 22
• How Technology is Changing Everything, and What it Means for Us — 27
“We are all designers. We’re all shaping the world with some intention to meet the needs of ourselves, our companies, our society. Design is a basic human activity.”

Tim Brown, CEO and President, IDEO
Tim Brown explains how to catalyze a design approach, not only to assimilate technology innovation, but to change the very nature of the organization.

“We’ve spent the last 50 years focusing on operational efficiency. In times of rapid change, it doesn’t matter how operationally fit you are. If you aren’t agile, you are at a disadvantage.”

A design approach will foster “creative competitiveness” needed to be a fit enterprise:

Creative competitiveness requires three capacities:

- The capacity to have new ideas.
- The ability to act on ideas.
- The ability to share ideas, both inside the organization and outside in the world.

Why is that third point so important? Because new ideas that aren’t embraced by the outside will fail.
Anticipating the Future: Applying Design Thinking

How can chief communications officers enact a design process?

Adopt a design approach through a process of **diverging** to explore possibilities, and **converging** to the ones that meet the needs of the people we serve.

**The steps:**

- Engage in direct observation to understand the *needs* of the people your organization serves.
- Once those needs are understood, clarify the question - what is the real, most urgent problem?
- From there, start to explore ideas, without filters about what is “feasible.”
- Build versions of what the answer will be - it might be a product, it might be a story. Then test them on your audience. “Learn through making until we get to something that works.”
Anticipating the Future: Applying Design Thinking

Actions for chief communications officers

**Ignite purpose:** Innovation depends on extending far beyond the R&D department, to all parts of the organization. Defining purpose and activating it across stakeholders are essential to transformation.

**Evolve the leadership model:** Successful leadership comprises three key traits:

- **Explorer:** Asking, what’s over the horizon?
- **Gardener:** Setting the conditions for success.
- **Player/Coach:** Knowing when you’re needed to work alongside your teams to help them take a risk they might not be able to on their own.

**Foster collaboration:** Problems inherent to an entire industry or sector may require convening across companies and disciplines.
Anticipating the Future: Applying Design Thinking

In his own words:

“Don’t limit your thinking to what is feasible. There’s time for that later.”

“Whenever you get disruptions delivered by technology it tends to break down whatever silos were created in the organization to serve the old order.”

“Seek out questions and answer them, rather than only responding to the situation. What are the larger questions about the future that we ought to be thinking about?”

—Tim Brown
No one needs to be a computer scientist. No one needs to know coding. It’s another tech industry being built and we need every skill set imaginable. For those who think it’s too late, no. We’re in the ugly duckling phase of this.”

— Sandra Ro
Understanding Blockchain

Moderator Tomicah Tillemann defines blockchain:

“Blockchain at its core is a record. It combines two attributes that enable us to do things we’ve never been able to do previously.

One, it’s distributed, maintained on thousands of computers around the world simultaneously. They are all constantly checking each other to check accuracy and credibility of the information.

Two, once information is entered into the record, it is permanent. You can update the info but you cannot erase it. Each point of data is “chained”, so you cannot change anything in that record without changing everything.

Practically speaking you have a system that is extremely secure, transparent, encourages high levels of accountability and transparency, and a mechanism for creating trust in environments where individuals may not trust each other.”

Tomicah Tillemann, Co-founder Blockchain Trust Accelerator
Understanding Blockchain

Key uses of blockchain technology:

• Strengthens governance
• Improves accountability
• Repairs damaged partnerships
• Protects sensitive data
• Tracks sustainability
• Safeguards property rights
• Shapes the future of work
• Assists in workforce development

What is Blockchain?

- A decentralized system that creates permanent, unchangeable records
- Blockchains act like global notaries
- This empowers people to transact peer to peer without central intermediaries
Understanding Blockchain

Why should CCOs know about blockchain?

• It’s not just about bitcoin or financial services. Blockchain may have applications anywhere people want to create trust in information, foster transparency, push back against false information or “fake news.” A social media company could potentially create a “supply chain of information” as it goes through the system.

• The lexicon around blockchain is still formulating, and communicators can play a role creating context and shaping language to humanize the technology. The blockchain community recognizes it needs help telling its story.

• The regulatory landscape is confused with gaps and overlaps, but there are laws that apply and need to be followed. Communications leaders are needed to help start-up founders stay on the right side of the regulations when creating compelling narratives.
Understanding Blockchain

In their own words:

“In relation to the history of the internet, we are at about 1993 when it comes to this technology. There are very few instances when you have a technology with so much transformational potential that has been explained so badly.”

—Tomicah Tillemann

“You are professionals with amazing skill sets, and developers need help.”

—Sandra Ro

“Why is everyone changing the world over a database, why is this a big deal? In many senses there is a movement towards decentralization generally, and reexamining the relationship between parties.”

—Joshua Ashley Klayman
How AI is Shaping the Communications Industry

Speaker:

Imad Lahad, Senior Director, APCO AI Comms Lab

“Every disruption in history is always a cultural change, not a technical change.”
How AI is Shaping the Communications Industry

AI is:

- Changing a wide range of industries at staggering speed, including media, broadcast, digital & social media, advertising, talent, voice & sonic branding, and video & design.

- Allowing media companies to direct human resources towards producing deeper, more meaningful content, without sacrificing coverage.

- Fostering a new breed of human talent that “trains” AI enabled technology to deliver on specific requirements.

Imad Lahad explains AI is not:

- A fad
- A trend
- Another form of digital transformation
How AI is Shaping the Communications Industry

Specific examples:

**The Washington Post**: Heliograf “robot reporter,” an automated storytelling agent deployed to produce stories on data-centric events such as elections.

**BBC**: Adopted an object-based media approach, whereby every content asset has been separated into individual units that can be reassembled into channel-specific formats.

**McCann Japan**: “Hired” a robot creative director, which competed with a human creative director in a pitch and lost by only a few points.

**Wibbitz**: An AI tool for publishers that summarizes stories and creates video, infographics, and other assets in minutes.

**Government of Dubai**: In process of creating a communications department that is five years ahead of its time.
How AI is Shaping the Communications Industry

In his own words:

“We have to embrace and lead this change, internally before externally. If you start internally, people aren’t afraid for their jobs or the future.”

“There is not one single player yet, and this is the BIG opportunity. It’s about being courageous and taking that leap. We can take that place and own it ourselves.”

“The ecosystem all around us is being disrupted and challenged. We cannot sit still and think, ‘we will not be disrupted.’”

—Imad Lahad
What CCOs Need to Know About the Future of Media

Speakers:

**Mike Allen**, Co-founder & Executive Editor, Axios

**Peter Cherukuri**, Chief Strategy Officer, Boston Globe

**Jeremy Gilbert**, Director, Strategic Initiatives, The Washington Post

Moderated by **Charlene Wheless**, Principal VP, Global Corporate Affairs, Bechtel Corporation

“At the National Portrait Gallery, all of the presidential portraits have labels with just two sentences about each president. Whether it’s Jimmy Carter or FDR, two sentences. Know your two sentences. It’s our instinct to be overly complicated. You have two sentences, tell those.” —Mike Allen
What CCOs Need to Know About the Future of Media

Charlene Wheeless probes media leaders on the changes happening in their industry, and their implications for CCOs.

The Washington Post

- Innovations like Heliograf have allowed automation, in particular for data-heavy stories like election returns.
- Working on striking the balance between the audience insights that AI can deliver, so that the brand can provide content that is targeted and relevant, without undermining trust.

Axios

- Focus has been on using technology to help make people “smarter in real time.” Every story starts as one iPhone screen in length, with an emphasis on what happened and why.
- Those same principles play out on the commercial side, as the brand applies the same story characteristics to sponsored content, “one screen, one card.”

The Boston Globe

- In the print era, the sports box scores were the most important things to Globe readers. Now the brand is figuring out how to create similar “tune in” moments through the digital experience - finding those points where readers find rituals around content.
- In early days of digital news, it was about “winning the morning.” Now “it’s about ‘winning the moment.’”
What CCOs Need to Know About the Future of Media

Important takeaways for CCOs:

• While there is more content than ever before, there is still a hunger for high-quality, insightful stories that help explain changes happening in the world.

• Technological advances that enable newsroom efficiencies also ignite more existential questions about the media’s purpose - to continue to chase technology and harness it for proliferation of content, or to use the technology to focus on what media’s unique value proposition should be.

• Newsroom leadership is a scarce commodity, with the rise of partisanship and the requirements of the new skill set.
What CCOs Need to Know About the Future of Media

In their own words:

“We have to rely on the people in our newsrooms to communicate directly with the public without much or any filter. How do you have enough people in your organization who can be points of direct connection on that you and your CEO trust?”

—Jeremy Gilbert

“Fox News is one of the most fascinating media stories of our time. People can just go in and snuggle down. MSNBC does the same thing. These are the alleys we are in, the filters we are in. If you can open people’s eyes to something new, you have an opportunity to convey the story the way you want to.”

—Mike Allen

“The newsroom is the center of our solar system. It requires us to make sure the new crop of talent doesn’t forget why we exist.”

—Peter Cherukuri
Workforce of the Future: How Will We Manage the Next Generation?

Speakers:

David and Jonah Stillman, Co-founders, GenZGuru

“If you want to understand a generation, you have to look at the events and conditions that take place during the generation’s formative years.”

—David Stillman
Workforce of the Future: How Will We Manage the Next Generation?

The father-son team exposes the characteristics of Gen Z, which is too often lumped together with Millennials, but is in fact emerging as a unique cohort.

Four key characteristics of Gen Z:

**Realistic:** Gen Z has been imprinted by the Great Recession, and is more worried about the economy and considers salary the key factor in choosing an employer. “Gen Z is in survival mode. Our parents told us, ‘you’re going to have to work your butt off’” —Jonah Stillman

**Driven:** Millennials were the “participant award” generation. Gen Z knows they have to work for accolades and success. “Gen Z knows you have to fight hard.” —David Stillman

**Hypercustomization:** Gen Z has had the ability to personalize experiences from birth, in everything from shoes to the online world where they are instantly recognized. “Since the day we were born we could create our own personal brand.” —Jonah Stillman

**Phigital:** The lines between the digital and physical world have not just been blurred, they are no longer acknowledged. Attending a meeting via Skype or in person is basically the same experience. “In terms of Gen Z ‘remote work’ options, they will say, ‘if I’m logged in, aren’t I at work?’ This generation is really going to change it up.” —David Stillman
Workforce of the Future: How Will We Manage the Next Generation?

Gen Z by the numbers:

76% are willing to start at the bottom and work their way up
75% believe there are ways of getting a good education without going to college
55% feel pressured by parents to gain early professional experience
61% say they are willing to stay at a company for 10 years
32% have a parent who has started their own business, and 17% want to start their own
91% say tech sophistication will impact their desire to work at a company

Source: GenZ@Work Survey
Workforce of the Future: How Will We Manage the Next Generation?

In their own words:

“Our generation has never seen a political process that works. So people are now standing up for themselves. It shows the power of today’s youth and what’s in store for the future.”

—Jonah Stillman

“Gen Z feels competitive towards those they work with. We’d see a lot of companies doing a great job communicating about teamwork and collaboration. That attracts Millennials, not Gen Z.”

—David Stillman
Workforce of the Future: How Will We Manage the Next Generation?

Takeaways for CCOs

• Millennials will be managing the Gen Z generation. There will be clashes between the collaborative Millennial and the independent Gen Z, but this can be overcome with two-way mentoring.

• Recruiting Gen Zers might need to start as early as high school, as many of them are already thinking about where they want to work.

• Gen Zers are also the DIY generation, predisposed to teach themselves, and quickly. They need to be mentored to take input from others, and to also slow down at times - to think, and to consider the possibilities around them.
How Technology is Changing Everything, and What it Means for Us

Speakers:

Lulu Cheng Meservey, Co-founder & Chief Operating Officer, TrailRunner International
RJ Pittman, SVP, Chief Product Officer, eBay
Dave Wright, Chief Innovation Officer, ServiceNow

Moderated by Alan Marks, Chief Communications Officer, ServiceNow

“CEOs are looking for people who can take cultures through these transformations.”
—Lulu Cheng Meservey
How Technology is Changing Everything, and What it Means for Us

Alan Marks and a panel of experts discuss innovations happening in search and customer engagement, specifically:

**Voice search technology**

- Search becomes “winner takes all” as users ask for and are given recommendations, rather than seeing a list of options.
- Keyword strategy will change because natural voice queries are very different from written search requests.

**Related conversational interfaces**

- Chatbots are becoming more sophisticated and applied more widely to manage tasks such as employee on-boarding and other routine areas where Q&A runs along predictable, though still complex, lines.
- Email might truly be receding with the increased use of Slack, an enterprise Facebook application, and as other tools are adopted.
How Technology is Changing Everything, and What it Means for Us

Critical issues for CCOs:

• Recent news about social media companies and privacy demonstrate the risks that are inherent in the blistering pace of innovation. Communicators need to be embedded in these issues from the outset.

• Don’t get too caught up in discussions of whether emerging technologies are hypes or fads, and instead look to evaluate them “systemically,” says RJ Pittman. AI has been around for 40+ years, but it took the emergence of cloud computing, and the accompanying vast amount of data, to make it ubiquitous.
How Technology is Changing Everything, and What it Means for Us

In their own words:

“FOMO is not a business case.”
— Lulu Cheng Meservey

“I’m paid to disrupt and see around corners and be first to market. There is a lot of risk that comes with that. Communications people are there to help balance that risk so that you don’t drive off a cliff.”
— RJ Pittman

“The assumption everyone should make now is that privacy is pretty much gone.”
— Dave Wright
Futureproof: How to Prepare You and Your Team

“There’s a much bigger world out there, moving faster than any one of us could imagine. We have to know which way the crowd is moving so that we can be leaders.” —Margery Kraus

Action points for CCOs

• Transformation is not just about adopting new technology solutions. Effective R&D culture must be enterprise-wide, including communications. Try applying design thinking to your own function, starting with what is desirable, rather than just what’s feasible.

• Innovation spawns a new lexicon. If you don’t understand the applications of a technology, chances are few people do. Help your organization humanize innovation with your expertise in storytelling and audience engagement.

• Take a leadership role in sharing and collaboration across functions internally, and even externally with partners and competitors, in order to socialize innovation and drive adoption.

• Purpose is king, as no organization can truly transform without all its stakeholders understanding what success looks like. Step up to drive the activation of purpose across the enterprise.