In Tech, The Answer To Life, The Universe And Everything Is Not 42 - It's Integration

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We are living through a time of untold technological change; new ideas and new pieces of tech are fundamentally altering our world each and every day. The opportunity for businesses cannot be overstated. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the time to create something new, which changes everything and makes your company billions.

If only.

The simple truth is that the days when someone could create a new piece of technology and set the world alight overnight are over. As technology worms its way ever deeper into the inner workings of devices and systems, any innovation has to be able to seamlessly become part of this. Failure to do so means failure as a useful tool for business.

In 2013, Leap Motion released a hardware device that supported hand and finger motions as inputs to computers, with no need to touch anything. In 2016 the same company released a similar device for virtual reality. Think Tom Cruise in *Minority Report*, but without the gloves.

While fun to use, in reality this seemingly ground breaking product, is fundamentally nothing but a novelty toy. It sounded cool that instead of using a mouse we could just wave our hands around and things would happen but Huston we had a problem. And that problem was Leap Motion's hubristic inability to integrate effectively into the tech we use each and every day, meaning it had no real use-case.

Compare Leap Motion to Google Jamboard. This extremely useful tool allows the seamless integration of pen, paper, Skype and email into one ecosystem.

My colleagues can see, in real time, what I have just written down, anywhere in the world, on any smart device.

It may not be as fun, or set the pulse racing as fast but the real challenge today is not creating the new but bringing the existing together.

Teams, organisations and firms often succeed more by developing their base of human capital rather than bringing in new people. The same is true for tech. It is far better to focus on how to make existing technologies work better together than to focus on imagining something that doesn't even exist yet that might solve the problem.

Indeed, some of the most useful new apps are all about bringing together already developed technology, packaged in a new way. Take Rome2Rio as an example. This app didn't invent anything new; the ability to plot journey time has been around for a long time. However, what they have done is provide one platform that can tell you the journey time between any global locations. It will tell you exactly how long it will take to get from your desk in London to your meeting in Frankfurt.

Technology is ultimately a means to solve a problem. Need to do more complex sums than an abacus allows? Invent the calculator. Need to get places faster than a horse can run? Invent the internal combustion engine. Need to transfer information faster between your employees? Invent phones, emails and Skype.

The problems faced today by business and societies are mostly not solvable by something new and shiny. In tech, as in life integration and collaboration is now the answer.

This 'Age of Refinement' should not come as a surprise. We create technology in our own image. The tools we use are a reflection of us. As society more and more, is formed of a composite of interconnected individuals, brought together by collaboration rather than formal structures, technology is increasingly reflecting this. We can only expect this state of play to build.

The future was once all about creation. Innovation was once all about making something new. Now the future is all about integration. Innovation is now all about bringing divergent tech together, packaged in a way that works for us and solves our problems.

For tech and tech firms, integrate or fail is the new adapt or die.

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