

The trends that will affect all business

 By [dave nemeth](#)

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As a trend forecaster and business consultant, this year has seen me and my team work across a variety of industries. Our insights across the industries have led us to foresee the following happening, which we believe will be real game changers:



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Trend 1 - Corporate trends: Corpups (Corporate startups)

Many companies have been left on the back foot in recent years due to the innovation and flexibility of startups which have managed to quickly and effectively capture valuable market share and in many cases, changed the entire dynamics of that specific industry. Corporates have tried many things in recent years, including innovation programs, in-house incubators and cross departmental project teams, yet still find themselves taking too long to take even the best ideas to market due to deep structure, sign-off policies and general red tape.

Expect to see big corporates investing in small teams with their own vision and directives and most importantly, their own budgets to create innovative strategies / products / services with the ability to take this straight to market under a separate umbrella from the main company.

This allows for complete agility and flexibility with minimum interference from the existing structure. This will allow corporates to test and go to market exactly like a startup but without the concern of tarnishing their existing brands.

Trend 2 - Corporate trends: Real responsibility programs

Whilst most corporates have CSI (Corporate Social Investment) projects already in place, many of these are irrelevant in the bigger scope of both global and localised issues. Expect corporates to start addressing real and relevant issues that in many cases will be of a more sensitive nature and address issues that government isn't.

This will include issues internationally, such as the migrant issue and local issues such as education and housing. This will however force companies from "sitting on the fence" and playing safe to actually challenging some of the pressing problems facing impoverished communities. Telling the story and taking a stance will prove risky, but will create a new found loyalty and challenge issues many governments are unable to do.

Trend 3 - Corporate trends: The super consultants

Companies are finally realising the need to use external consultants to reimagine what they are doing in order to refresh and innovate. There will be a paradigm shift from recent years where everything was taken in-house to outsourcing to specialised consultants who will actually have power within the organisation. Teams will report into them and they will have certain decision making powers.

The entire role of the external consultant or consulting companies will change as they become empowered and therefore have the ability to create real dynamic change. Many of these external companies will not be in the form of the behemoth consulting firms but rather smaller agile firms and even specialist individuals. This includes a certain move away from the big ad and PR agencies to smaller creative companies who don't have the heavy billing structures due to their large staff compliment.

Trend 4 - Generation pairing

Forward thinking companies will place new graduates (millennials) who seem to have a keen business aptitude and

innovative thinking under the mentorship of directors of various departments. This will be a two way relationship whereby the company stalwarts will be able to get this new generation involved in top level think tanks and problem solving to get a completely new perspective on the services and products that they are servicing the market with. This new approach will create a totally new and refreshed company culture without trying to enforce it, which mostly ends up being contrived with little benefit to the overall organisation.



Image by 123RF

Trend 5 - Retail trends: Personal interactive experience

There will be a backlash to certain innovative trends that have been predicted over the years such as self-service checkouts, digital changerooms and automated assistants. In an age where humans' jobs are threatened and consumers yearn for great service by real people, we will see a focus on "person to person" interaction. This does not mean that technology will take a back seat, but rather the implemented technology will be put in place to assist with efficiency and not to replace humans.

This will mean a focus on up skilling and training of retail staff to become experts within their various sectors. They will act almost like personal shoppers within the retail environment rather than just the menial task they are often employed to do. In this way technology may replace the cashier but the new model will allow the cashier to be unskilled to take on a whole new meaningful and important role.

We are moving into an age where we expect to find everything we need through technology but expect to speak to a real person and have real interaction when we require it or when we have a problem that needs to be resolved. Companies that get the combination of technology and personal interaction correct will see immediate benefits over those pursuing a purely technology based solution.

Trend 6 - Complete exhibition experience

Recent years have seen a worldwide increase in the exhibition industry of specialised and focused exhibitions, but these (especially in SA) have seen a decrease in footfall over recent years based on the fact that the same exhibitors are just attracting the same crowd. Consumers are looking for greater experiences and are no longer interested in just seeing a living version of a Pinterest board.

Exhibitions will start including different parallel industries but focus on the entertainment aspect in order to draw the crowds and add real value to exhibitors. Expect expo's to add more of a theatrical experience that will draw the entire family and have them spend longer by being immersed in an overall experience that will encourage more personal interaction.

Trend 7 - Handmade luxury

The luxury market will start to focus on more regional and bespoke manufacturing and limited editions. This means that exclusive brands will produce limited runs of products manufactured in emerging markets and by documenting the process and aspects of differentiation, will connect with consumers on a completely new level by putting money back into the development of those communities.

The benefits are two fold in that they require up-skilling to maintain the level of quality whilst investing in genuine job creation. Don't be surprised if in a few years we have groups of craftsmen creating products for brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci, which will be in high demand due to their authenticity.

Trend 8 - Me health

With continual advances being made with technology allowing for self-diagnosis and progress already showing that these will soon become more accurate than a panel of doctors. The entire consumer attitude towards running off to the GP with every ailment is bound to change.

Couple this with the controversy surrounding theories and case studies on alternative medicines and specifically with cancer and related illnesses, we will begin to see a complete distrust with the medical profession. Medical practices will have to reinvent themselves just like other businesses; which may include the entire fraternity starting to investigate alternative remedies, as well as working alongside technology instead of against it.

ABOUT DAVE NEMETH

Dave Nemeth is a trend forecaster and business consultant; and founder of Trend-Forward.

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