

10 Key Design Trends For 2016 (And How To Make The Most Of Them)

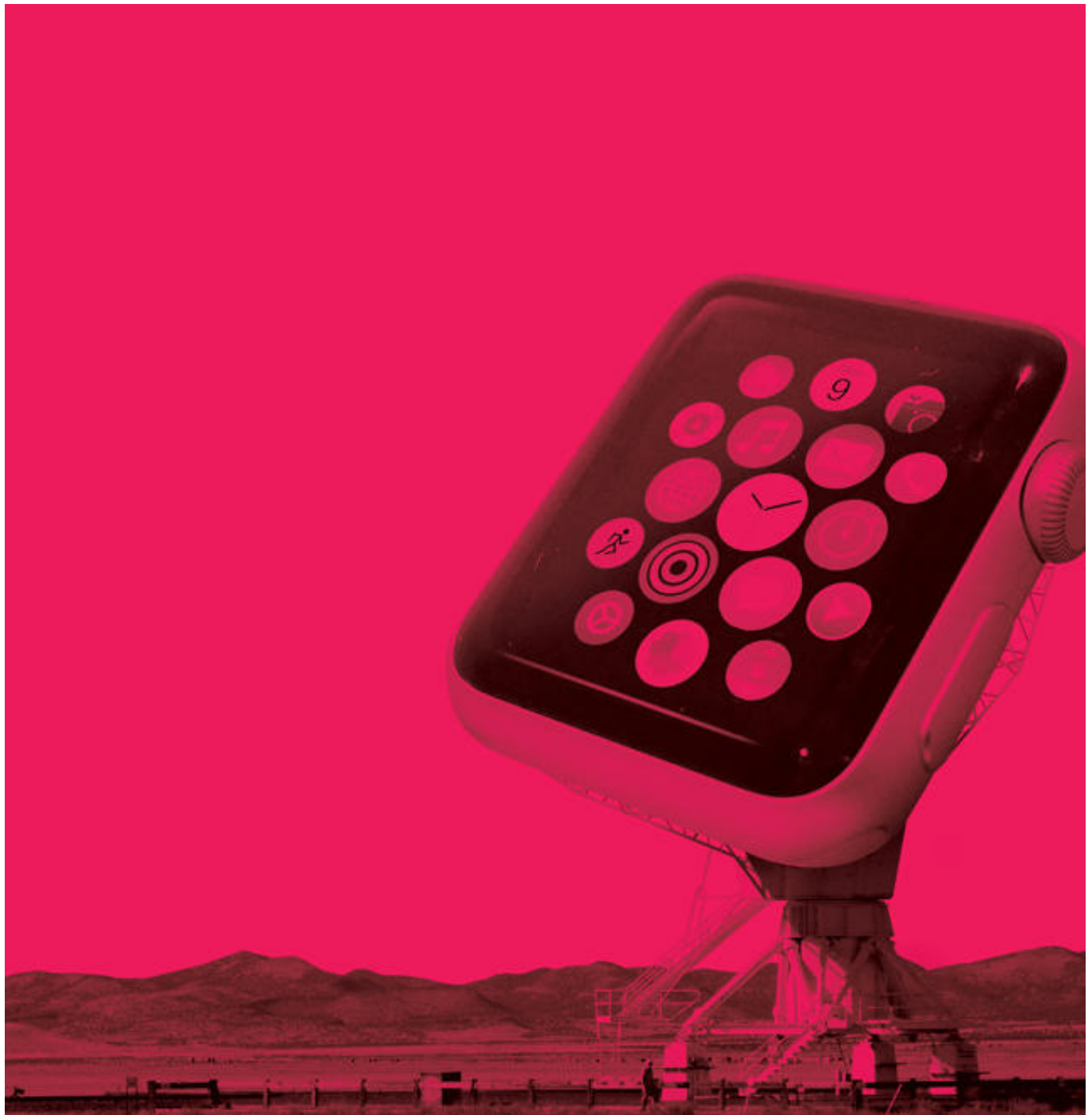
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THE GLOBAL DESIGN FIRM FJORD (PART OF ACCENTURE INTERACTIVE) DELVES INTO THE MAJOR IDEAS SHAPING MARKETS NEXT YEAR.

Apps as we know them will disappear. Luxury will trickle down to the masses. VR will go mainstream. These are just a few of the major **design** and technology trends shaping the world in 2016. The trends we've identified focus on issues we—a firm with over 600 **designers** and developers—expect to tackle in the coming year. They reflect what clients are asking for, our experiences as citizens and users, and our well-informed guesses (we hope!) on the impact of emergent technology.



1.MICROMOMENTS WILL BE MIGHTY.

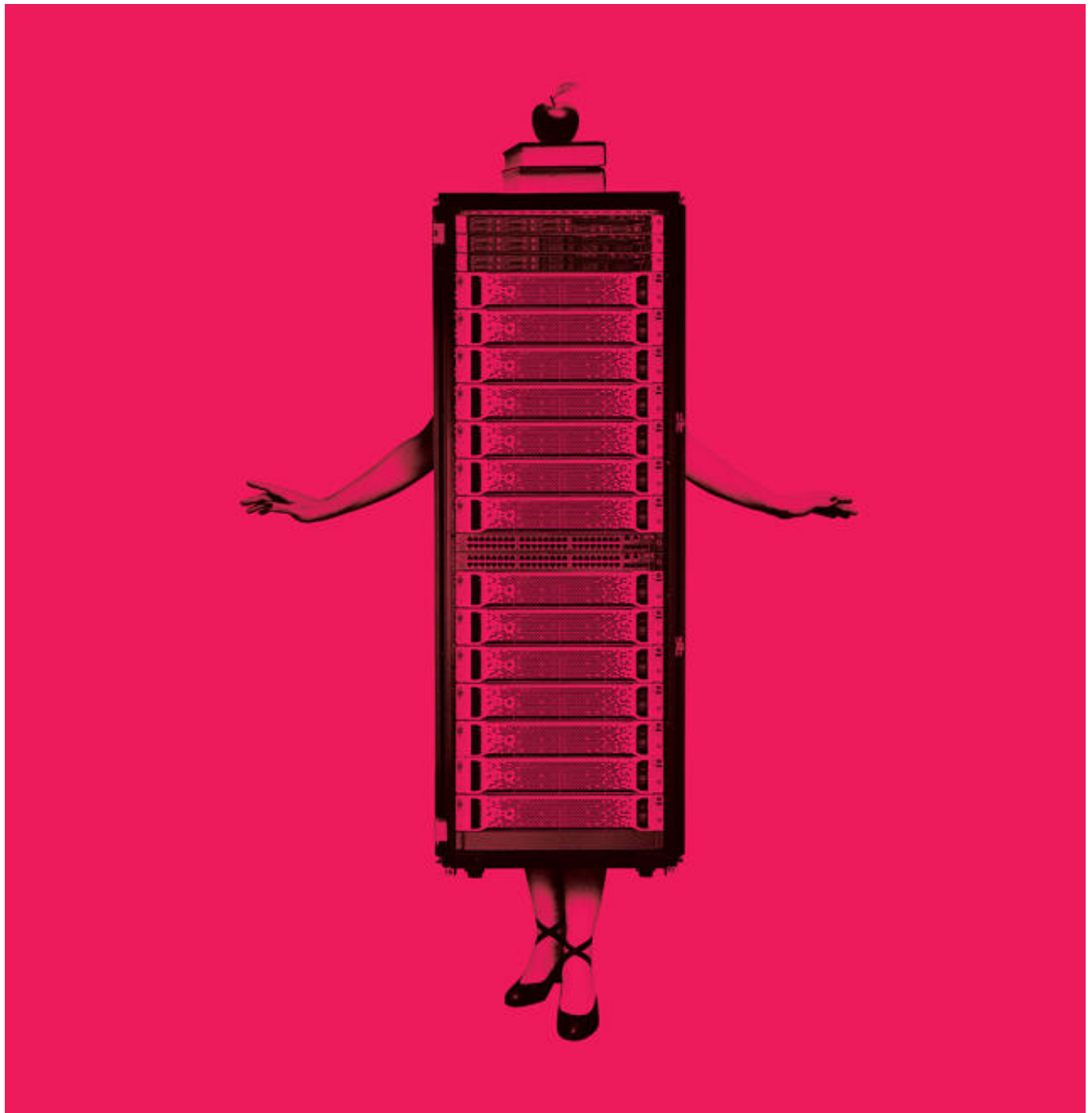
Today, someone is always listening. We have listening devices strapped to our wrists that encourage us to run farther or put down that extra slice of cake. Devices in our homes listen and respond. Listening technology allows us to act on any impulse whenever, which has broken down the customer journey into a plethora of real-time, intent-driven micromoments. It follows a very predictable pattern—immediate need, relevant reply, repeat—but in an unpredictable sequence. It's changing the way we consume. People go online more often, but don't spend as much time per visit.

Each micromoment is an opportunity for **brands** to shape our habits. And being able to detect exactly how and when consumers decide to reorder a recurring product could prove priceless. AI is key. **IBM's Watson**, which uses cognitive technology in a variety of applications from oncology to [cooking](#), is a [technology platform](#) that uses natural language processing and machine learning to reveal insights from large amounts of unstructured data." This type of cognitive technology is the start of the next wave of **digital** disruption.

WHAT TO DO

Be first or be non-existent. Early movers will have the ultimate advantage. Imagine a scenario where you ask Alexa for more yogurt, and she orders a **brand** you preselected. Instantly, every other **brand** is edged out with a single command. Not every **brand** should develop its own wearable, nearable or connected environment. Consider whom to partner with to distribute your service.

Listen and learn. **Brands** must be able to listen to the messages they are being sent, either explicitly or implicitly. At a minimum, **design** to show you have heard.



2. BIG DATA WILL GET SOME MANNERS.

Collecting personal data is nothing new. However, in the post-Snowden era, the public has developed an Orwellian sense of mistrust. Businesses can turn that anxiety into an opportunity by implementing services with manners. The concept of "privacy by **design**" is key here. Privacy by **design** is the notion that you embed privacy into technology and the product **design** process from the get-go. Companies like **Microsoft** have already implemented strong privacy programs, and the EU's impending General Data Protection Regulation includes privacy by **design** standards, will mark the first time they have been incorporated into law.

WHAT TO DO

Act it out. Act out interactions as if they were a conversation on stage. Make your experience a human one. Imagine you were asking a stranger on the street for private information. How would you go about it in a way that would make him or her feel comfortable? Empathetic **design** changes the camera angle and puts you in other people's shoes.

Be real. Be explicit. But also be nice. Make sure the intent of a data exchange is upfront, friendly and clear. Find etiquette allies.

Seams matter. Yes, seamless experiences are the goal, but be transparent about transition states. People want to know when they're getting locked into something.

Hire a Chief Security Officer. Beef up resources dedicated to data privacy and security. On a systems level, invest in new platforms and technologies equipped to handle data responsibly through the supply chain.



3. ORGANIZATIONS WILL DESIGN AND INNOVATE FOR THEIR MOST IMPORTANT ASSET: THEIR EMPLOYEES.

Career paths are no longer linear journeys. Employees once started with a foot in the corporate door, paid their dues, and worked their way up the proverbial ladder. Now, employees are treating their careers as a series of "tours," using each new employer as a way to establish a self-determined path, build critical skills, and grow. As a result, we are seeing the emergence of employee experience (EX) **design**, where workplace processes, structure, and culture are reimagined at an organizational level. (It was the fastest growing category of work at Fjord in

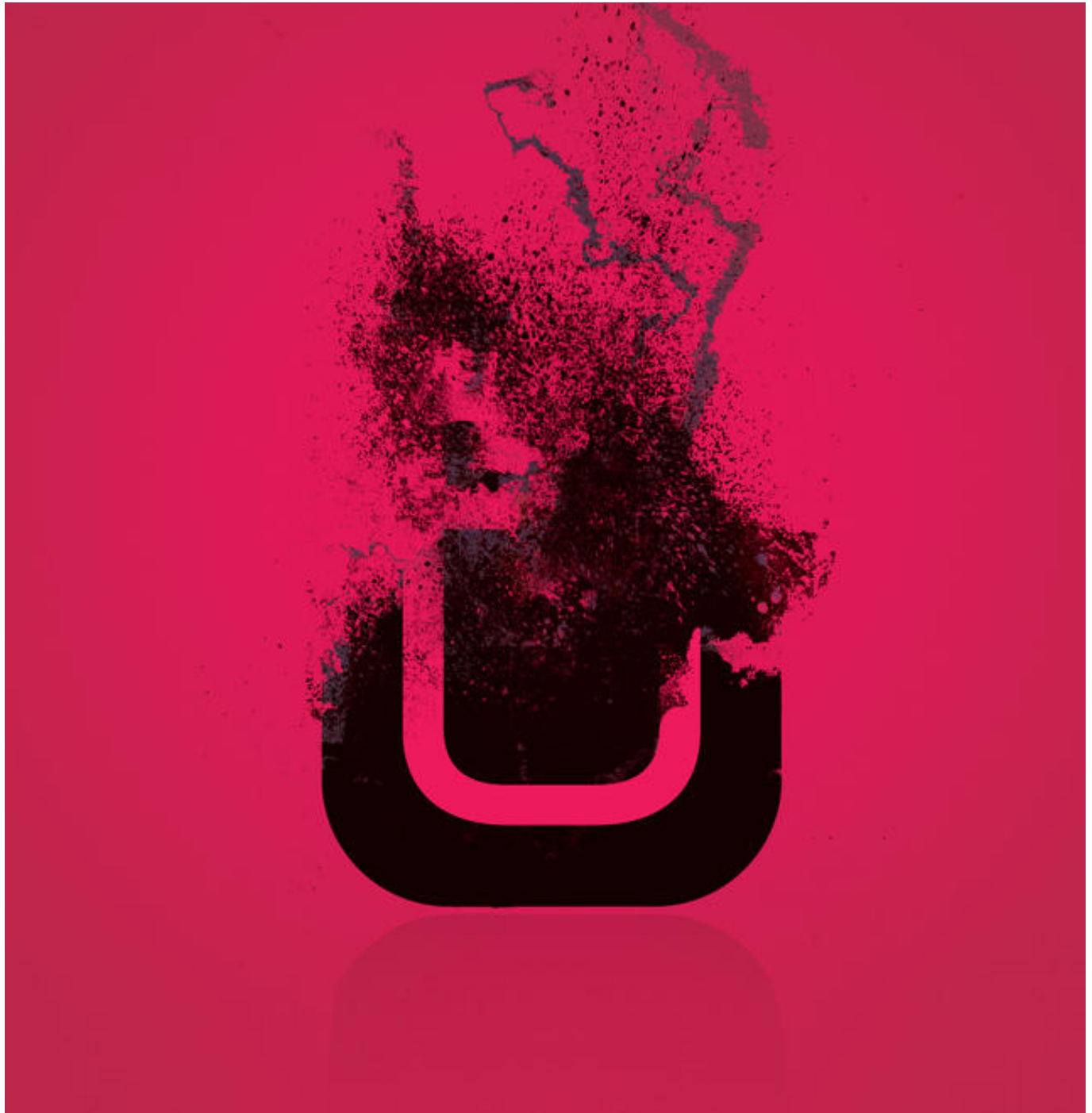
2015 across many industries, from banking to telecom to pharma.) The smartest companies will build cultures of purpose.

WHAT TO DO

Empower your people. Autonomy breeds motivation. No one wants to feel like part of the machine, nor do they want to feel that taking initiative at work is daunting because of unclear processes. Employees tell us they want to feel inspired to work and focus on what matters to them, be essential to the success of the company, and be trusted to make important decisions autonomously.

Embrace the person in your professionals. Who we are is as important as what we do. Employees want to feel assured, open, and included. Work should be a peer experience that is an extension of their **social** world.

Reward and recognize regularly. Money isn't the only payoff. Employees also want to be acknowledged, feel unified, and have support with the right tools.



4. APPS AS WE KNOW THEM WILL DISAPPEAR.

The act of toggling between apps may disappear. Look at **WeChat**, a Chinese messaging app with nearly 600 million monthly active users. Known as the "everything app," **WeChat** functions beyond the traditional definition of an app or even a browser, with 10 million third-party apps hosted inside. One feature controls the lights, temperature, and settings of your hotel room. Visa is another example. The company is researching a commerce-connected car that pays for groceries, takeaways and fuel—literally payments (and collection) on wheels.

The future of "app" **design** will be counterintuitive. Most organizations currently focus on the transaction of a service—and rationally so. However, if you focus on the interaction, or "point of x," and make it as smooth as possible, the transaction will happen naturally. It's about **designing** for humans, focusing on interactions instead of transactions.

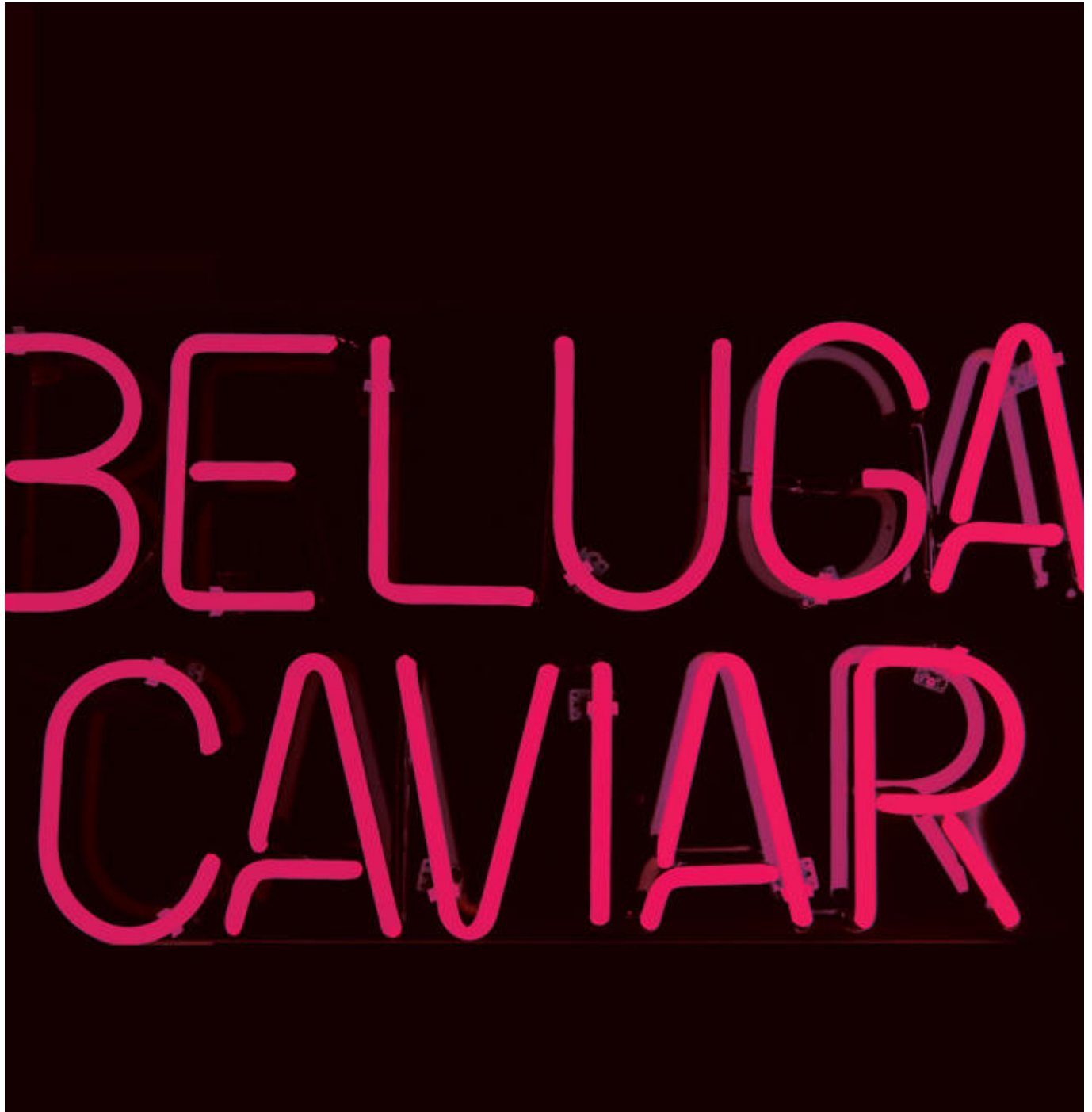
We've reached a point where all the technologies and services we have created over the years can intersect and interact with each other autonomously and independent of hand-held devices. Nest is a promising "point of x" that could evolve quickly to be a home hub in rivalry with **Amazon** Echo. Imagine banking apps seamlessly integrated within a domestic device like this, allowing a user to pay bills, bring in a cleaning service, order groceries, share pictures and more. Cars present another environment where "point of x" thinking will trump apps.

Companies should invest in understanding what future "points of x" will be for users and **design** around them.

WHAT TO DO

Think outside the screen. We are moving beyond apps as "things" and into services that may or may not require human interaction to activate. We can untether ourselves from the need to **design** an app for everything; very often we can find better entry points for services than mobile apps. There must be incentives to motivate this shift—ease of use and fewer steps, for instance.

Service design tools reveal opportunities. Journey maps, service blueprints, touchpoint reframing: these are standard tools in the **design** kit these days and they are becoming even more relevant as the self-contained certainty of apps dissolve.



5. LUXURY SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ALL.

In the past, highly tailored experiences were reserved for the wealthy, with cost and scale being the main barrier to entry. But with **digital** technology enabling scalable yet personalized experiences, luxury is available to the masses like never before. Examples abound in a variety of areas like personal assistants from **Facebook** with M, affordable luxury getaways with Tablet Hotels, pampering with Birchbox, and your own personal fashion stylist through Trunk Club.

As we see the flattening of services, expect to see the emergence of a new strand of luxury,

enabled by **digital** and available to the only to the top of the wealth class. Think personalized technology platforms, or rather, a platinum iOS. After all, mankind is still a status-driven animal.

WHAT TO DO

Build multidisciplinary teams. Business analysts, **designers**, **marketing**, product and service managers should work hand in hand. A collaborative and diverse work environment will become an intangible asset that will help companies better aim their efforts toward understanding the users of the future.

Look for the platform. Seek to transform one-directional businesses into scalable platforms that will empower future users not just to consume services but to find solutions to their problems.

Redefine luxury. In the luxury business? What does it take to remain a true "luxury" **brand** in an era of **digital** democratization? Examine your role from the consumer perspective and ask how you can disrupt your service model now that delivering luxury can be done by anyone. In the era of liquid expectations, what exactly is luxury and high-end?



6. GOVERNMENTS WILL EMBRACE DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE HOW THEY SERVE THE PUBLIC.

Digital natives are entering junior ministerial ranks, bringing with them their knowledge of, and passion for, technology. This is the year technology will be used in service of the public good. And more importantly, technology will enable a new breed of citizenship.

We've already seen promising developments. In the U.K., the Government **Digital** Service team **designed**, built, and ran the gov.uk alpha site in 10 weeks. In Washington, D.C., the U.S.

Digital Service's goal is to ship a minimum viable product within, at most, three months of a project's initiation. Both the U.S. and U.K.'s **digital** government departments have published **digital design** guidelines that are simpler and more sophisticated than those of many commercial organizations.

We're also seeing a rise in private **digital** citizenry, where technology enables **social** good. In the case of the recent Syrian refugee crisis, Berlin-based Refugees Welcome, described as "Airbnb for refugees," has helped refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia. So far it has allowed 26 German citizens to invite refugees into their private homes. Mobile Justice is a mobile app responding to the rising awareness of race-driven conflict with police in the U.S., resulting in the #BlackLivesMatter movement. The app has a simple feature allowing smartphone owners to send video footage directly to the American Civil Liberties Union—all with the simple shake of a phone. The ACLU then systematically reviews it for potential legal action.

WHAT TO DO

Use plain language. Governments should use simple language focused on content, structure, navigation, grouping, and completion. Sweden, for example, has legislation that requires all government communications meet plain language standards.

Employ outside-in design. Use a research-led approach to generate new ideas. By considering the entire ecosystem, and using research to uncover insights, service **design** reveals an outside-in view of:

- The people in the ecosystem (citizens, intermediaries and government staff)
- The places in which the service is experienced (face to face, online, on the phone)
- The products used by everyone (software, **digital** tools, printed material, physical products)
- The processes that people follow •The performance of the whole system

Be sensitive. Too many government services, tools, and processes are opaque and cumbersome. Immigration, taxes, lawsuits, adoption—these are very important but also anxious experiences for most. All the more critical that governments inject some humanity into their interaction with citizens.



7. HEALTHY IS THE NEW WEALTHY.

Health is no longer a complex cost managed by a closed set of entrenched players. With the rise of self-monitoring technology, like fitness trackers, health is now something we can all keep track of, learn from, and reward. This allows us to emphasize preventative care and positive behavioral changes; facilitate more productive and timely interactions with healthcare practitioners; and minimize avoidable and costly healthcare emergencies.

WHAT TO DO

Imagine your products and services as wellness agents. Companies like Kaiser Permanente and Aetna are opening their platforms to third parties to enable them to build new services on top of their data connecting third-party wearables, apps, and services.

Think beyond the pill. The emphasis in health care is changing from product-focus to outcome-focus. Pharma companies are now taking to heart the idea that in every product there is a service waiting to get out, which means integrating a holistic service offering providing added value through **digital** services like telehealth, wellness programs, connected devices, and smart pills. They will also have to invest in consumer-facing **brand** development.

B2WE wellness. On the employer side, companies across all industries can tap into the nearly \$2 trillion in health savings that can be realized through guided behavioral change. Examples of this are data-powered companies like Vitality, Castlight Health, and HealthSparq. Under the U.S. Affordable Care Act, employers can give their employees up to a 30% discount on insurance premiums for participating in company wellness programs.

Facilitate cultural change. To rebuild healthcare in a sustainable way, we need a new mindset. The customer journey has to be rebuilt from the ground up, moving the "point of care" (or as we might say, experience) from costly hospitals to the patient's home and the level of care from specialized care to self-service.



8. VR'S DREAMS COME TRUE.

Virtual reality will make its mainstream debut in 2016. Not too long ago, VR was a technology so bulky and expensive that it was relegated to military flight simulations. Fast forward to 2016, the "critical year for virtual reality," as Sony, Oculus, and Samsung will release consumer versions of their products in the first half of the year.

VR will obviously offer the next dimension in gaming, but it's the unexpected applications that we are intrigued by. From education to tourism to health, VR will begin finding its place in our

work, play, and homes.

In order to look into the future, sometimes you must look back. Technology like augmented reality has been in the market longer than VR. Take for instance, the Blippar app, which brings ordinary objects and posters to life with an augmented layer. QR codes are yet another precursor to the VR wave. **Designers** instinctively recoil at the thought of QRs' visual clutter. But in the Asia-Pacific region, QR codes work surprisingly well at a mass level. They signal to the user that an AR layer exists, albeit in an ugly manner. Will AR and VR merge to create an entirely new experience?

WHAT TO DO

Try it. Oculus, Sony, OZO or Samsung Gear? It may be difficult to know where to start with VR, but we believe that market leaders will take the view that anywhere is better than nowhere. Google Cardboard makes it easy to obtain a low-cost initial experience with VR.

Resist starting a VR unit. Many of us know the challenges of having an organization that mirrors a device ecosystem. As new technologies such as VR emerge, resist the urge to create a specialized team only dedicated to that device. Instead, think about how the overall user or business process should be supported by the technology, and they'll work together with a unified, device-agnostic team.

Think beyond gaming. It will be crucial for businesses to understand how the technology can be used for business processes as well as customers. Will VR conference calls be more productive? Can travel be eliminated or scaled back, in favor of virtual collaboration? Can you work on-site, while staying off-site?



9. SIMPLICITY WILL WIN IN AN ERA OF ALL-YOU-CAN-CHOOSE.

Thanks to the digitization of everything, we now have the most hyperreactive markets in history. However, **innovation** at this speed comes with an unintended consequence—a never-ending glut of options. From more than a million apps in the Apple Store to your grocery's milk aisle, every aspect of our lives now requires making a choice. It is becoming increasingly difficult for consumers to make sense of all the noise. In 2016, **brands** will help people take things off the "thinking list."

Companies have already enjoyed some success doing so. Aldi built a successful and disruptive business model while offering significantly fewer choices than traditional supermarkets. When Proctor & Gamble cut its Head & Shoulders line from 26 products to 15, the organization saw a 10% increase in sales.

Services that are able to automate low-maintenance decisions will be an especially important step. We're already starting to see this with Google Now, while Australian startup Pocketbook prompts users of their upcoming payments and bills to avoid missed payments.

WHAT TO DO

Remove the burden of ordering. Think of ways to help your consumers stop browsing. Find the things they like and don't know about. And get it right. For example, the point of a snack subscription like Graze is not to be a grocery store to order from, but a service that does the selection for you.

Use diverse interaction paradigms. Gestural, environmental or ambient interactions are able to interpret an input and provide a response that is available when needed, and not demanding when it's not. Traditional push/pull interactions typically require a user's attention, decision-making ability, and learned behavior.

Use algorithms and expert curation. We don't necessarily want a music service to clean up its music to just the most popular. Bottom line: While simplification wins, don't oversimplify and sacrifice thrill of discovery.



10. DESIGN FROM WITHIN.

In 2016, corporations will bring **design** thinking in-house. The average lifespan of an S&P company has gone from 67 years in the 1920s today to just 15 years today. The pressure to innovate has never been stronger. In 2014, \$1.6 trillion was spent in R&D globally. Yet, in consumer goods, for example, research shows that more than 85% of the products fail.

As a result, we've seen corporations invest directly in business incubators and **innovation** labs, bringing **design** thinking and problem solving in-house. It's almost become the price of entry in

the consulting and financial industries, with the recent acquisitions of Adaptive Path by Capital One, Spring Studio by BBVA, and **Designit** by Wipro **Digital**. Why? Arguably it's harder than ever to differentiate yourself with technology- and business-focused **innovation** alone. Culture—as experienced through **design-led innovation**—may be the best way to claim sustainable territory, because it is so much harder to copy.

More of our clients are asking us to set up **design** studios in collaboration with them. We asked our studios how their clients are handling **design** within large organizations. The conclusion? There is no one consistent solution clients are applying. In particular, the most asked question is, "Where does **design** sit? With the CIO, CMO or elsewhere? Or even as a separate unit?"

WHAT TO DO

Success looks like this. Consider having C-level support, pilots and MVPs use a common language for **design**. Drive conversations from principles and bridge organizational silos. Encourage collaboration and co-creation workshops.

Size doesn't really matter. Obviously, it depends on the business but the central number in an in-house **design** "swat" team seems to be around 30. The important part is having the right mix of players. Hire change agents and create the conditions for them to thrive. Make sure they are nimble at facilitation, concepting, prototyping and experimentation. Cultivate a great culture.

Isolation = bad. Be wary of the temptation to have a totally separate **design**/UX team. It may be better to build small groups into the existing organization, alongside **design**-savvy product owners.

Space does matter. Create spaces where **design** can thrive and foster creativity in everyone. Make places where the walls become the workspaces and everyone sees the collective progress being made.

This article was adapted from Fjord Trends. Read the full report [here](#).

[All Images: via Fjord]

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