

## How Disruption created (and buried) some of the world's biggest brands and concepts?

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It was **Rome** of the **First Century**. An innovative glassmaker created *vitrium flexile*, flexible glass. Proud of his invention, he sought an audience with **Emperor Tiberius**. The emperor threw the drinking vessel down to the ground but it did not shatter. At the time all drinking vessels were made of gold and silver, which tainted wine with a metallic taste. Considering the glassmaker's creation, **Tiberius** realized it would completely disrupt the **Roman economy**. If goblets were no longer made of gold and silver their value will diminish immediately. Tiberius asked the man if anyone knew this secret formula. When the man took a solemn oath and replied in the negative, the emperor had him beheaded.

Today it's not so easy to thwart **disruption**.



Some years ago there was a **website** by the quirky name of **Tune In Hook Up**. It was designed by **Chad Hurley, Steven Chen and Jawed Karim** (all former **PayPal** employees) to **disrupt** the world of **online dating**. Most **dating sites** then featured still images of prospective partners but the trio thought that showcasing dating **videos** would be much better. While the dating site was a failure, Hurley, Chen and Karim all realized that people really enjoyed watching the uploaded videos. So abandoning the original dating site concept, the team pivoted and renamed the site **YouTube** which was eventually sold to **Google** for **US\$ 1.65 billion** in stock (that when **YouTube** was yet to make any revenues).

**Sir Richard Branson** founded **Virgin** as a record store but very soon realized that the real value was in **creating** not just selling records. The most successful disruptor in history, he has created billion dollar companies in eight different industries.

**Lowell ‘Bud ‘ Paxson** deconstructed the value chain of his failing **Florida Radio station**. When no one would advertise on his station, he bought surplus goods and sold them on his station instead of running commercials. The idea was so successful that he transformed his local station into the billion dollar **retailing empire** now known as the **Home Shopping Network**.

More than a century ago, **Joyce Clyde Hall** was going broke selling penny post cards, until he killed his big idea of people wanting to write home to loved ones. His realization that most people are not so good at writing made him fill out the postcard for them. With just one flourish of the pen he created **Hallmark** and the entire **Greeting Card** industry.

The 40 Billion US\$ **music industry** was born of one invention- the **gramophone**- and comfortably relied on one business model for almost a century of profits. Then disruption came from another technology-the Internet. Disruptive digital services such as **Napster, iTunes, Spotify** killed the mighty album, created a market for single downloads, eviscerated the music label's revenue model; and shot the industry dead. In the wake of digital distribution, **EMI**-the 100 year old company that invented **electric recording**, the company that signed **Beatles, Caruso** and thousands of mega artists-just ceased to exist.

In the twenty first century, billion dollar industries can be disrupted and waylaid virtually overnight-no sector of commerce or government is immune to that threat. A century ago, having a few thousand customers for your product made you a national household name. Now, over six billion potential customers are just one click away from becoming customers. **Cloud computing, Internet of Things, 3-D Printing, wearable technology** may be abstract concepts today but the kind of impact it will have on your career and fortune is inevitable. There are fortunes to be made by identifying and exploring the smallest aspects of these seismic shifts in **technology** and business organisations.

Lets take the obvious example of email. **Email** was able to disrupt the distribution link in the value chain of **postal mail** by enabling people to send and receive messages instantly and directly, rendering the postal service redundant in all matters of daily communication.

To thrive in the era of disruption, you don't have to invent anything new. There is no need to discover anything the world has not seen before. Rather, there are riches to be found simply by capturing the value released through other people's disruptive breakthroughs. **There has never been a moment in time when upward mobility has been so equitably disbursed.**

So, what are you waiting for? What are you going to disrupt?