

How to Disrupt an Industry

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Cupcakes that require a warning label and an ID to purchase? Why not? A chef and a bartender joined forces to disrupt the cupcake industry.

Like most things, my business [Prohibition Bakery](#) was the result of timing and who you know. After making a wildly successful cosmopolitan cake (with plenty of vodka) for a friend's bachelorette party, it occurred to me that I could create an entire line of boozy baked goods inspired by cocktails. As an under-employed chef with loads of time, I turned to my new friend and bartender **Leslie Feinberg** for her expertise on all things spirited. We paired up and together we revolutionized the cupcake industry. Four years later, **Prohibition Bakery** is still in business—this is how we did it.

1. Create the conversation.

When we first started **Prohibition Bakery**, it was at the height of cupcake stardom. Every clickbait website had a list of the best cupcakes in New York City, with the taste-testers pitting vanilla cupcake against vanilla cupcake and chocolate against chocolate. In order to avoid being lumped into the same conversation as all the other cupcake companies, we simply created a product that needed its own conversation—for example, a vanilla cupcake can't be compared with a pretzels and beer cupcake. When you create something no one has seen before, it immediately opens up an opportunity to let your company—and your product—stand on its own.

2. Say no.

The customer is not always right, and when that's the case, it's usually more beneficial for your business to just say "No" instead of making an exception. There are a lot of things that **Prohibition Bakery** doesn't do: We don't customize cupcake decoration, we don't alter our recipes for dietary restrictions, and we don't make cakes. Why not? Because it would slow us down, and our business isn't **designed** to handle these sorts of requests. Also, when it comes to things like dietary restrictions or intricate cupcake **designs**, there are others out there who are simply better at that niche than we will ever be. When your business is good at what you do, stick with that and say "No" to the rest.

3. Bridge the gap.

People love cupcakes. People love booze. Therefore, people must love cupcakes with booze. With one product, bring together two distinct demographics and create something that both groups love. Your potential clientele immediately doubles, your product suddenly gets in the hands of people who wouldn't otherwise be interested, and your direct competitors are nearly nonexistent because most companies fall into one category, but not the other.

4. Be predictive, not predictable.

Keeping an eye on trends has always been an integral part of our success. We've partnered with drinks **brands** for promotions, creating cupcakes that were both a representation of what we do while also hopping on board with some of the biggest trends of the year. Whether it's the latest specialty liquor, or a comical political meltdown, capitalizing on what people are talking about is always a way to make sure that you're talked about, too.

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