

Blue Marlin

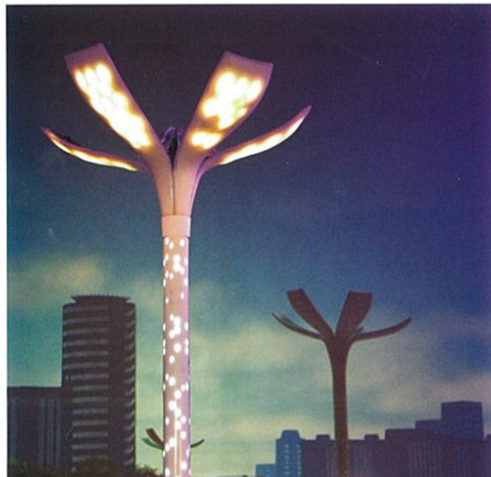
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CONSTANT CHANGE DEFINES OUR ERA

In the new world order change is the only constant and uncertainty is a given. The right culture of innovation is vital to success, with branding and design at its heart

by **Andrew Eyles, group managing director and CEO**



Seeing the light
 Philip's solar- and wind-powered 'light blossom' intelligent street light is an example of its future-focused approach to innovation

We live in uncertain times. The UK is saddled with a greater debt burden than Greece and is in the hands of its first formal coalition government for 65 years, for however long that may last. Meanwhile marketers are battling with bean counters and trying to make sense of a new age where none of the old rules apply.

"The only constant is change, continuing change, inevitable change... no sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it is, but the world as it will be." So said the brilliant scientist and author Isaac Asimov half a century ago. His words have never been more relevant.

The key to thriving on uncertainty is fostering a culture of innovation that enables you to identify and anticipate opportunities. Process alone won't deliver success; culture is the key. Culture has transformed Virgin from a record company to a sprawling empire extending its reach into space travel.

Not everyone can be a Virgin. Organisations usually fall into three culture typologies: logical evolutionists, brand opportunists and future visionaries.

Logical evolutionists are the Darwinists of marketing. They focus on product evolution, and believe in survival of the fittest and the natural selection of products and brands. Their mindset leads to incremental change to perfect existing products and stay one step ahead of the competition. Think Gillette.

Brand opportunists operate a brand idea-led approach to innovation. Their focus is on stretch and they believe in creating a universe of offerings around their core brand idea to widen the brand footprint wherever and whenever possible. The opportunistic mindset is about leveraging brands into new markets and into new consumer occasions, using format, flavour and channel marketing to grow volume. Pepsi exemplifies this approach by inventing new offers to meet a global market that is constantly evolving.

Future visionaries are committed to creating the future and the necessary consumer demand to

accompany it. They work backwards, starting with a detailed vision of the future and applying radical innovation to achieve. They are customer experience-driven and their new products and services improve people's lives in a way few could imagine and often before we even realise the need. Their focus is to quite literally change the world. Philips epitomises the visionary approach. As Stefano Marzano, its design CEO and chief creative director says: "Our research is based on the idea that the future happens because of us, and that we have an active role in shaping it."

Many organisations use a blend of these approaches. The most successful understand the central role design and branding plays in shaping their future destinies. Agencies such as ours are taking on an external custodianship role where we act as long-term partners, helping marketers to husband their brands by understanding brand DNA, protecting and articulating core values and collaborating on brand exploration.

That may seem a million miles from packaging but we believe that branding and design are indivisible. What you see on shelf is the visual expression of in-depth strategic understanding of brand values.

Great design is grounded in both intellect and intuition. It is both immediately lovely and has longevity. It is aesthetically pleasing and commercially effective. This requires a genuinely collaborative approach with clients, and within the disciplines in an agency. Our strategists work seamlessly with our designers; 2D and 3D are conjoined twins; realisation is at the beginning, the middle and the end of the process. You can't just bolt on creativity.

In these changing times, brand is the fulcrum around which all forms of communication must balance. The "big idea" is no longer an ad campaign or a smart digital push; the big idea is the brand itself. Its look, feel and tone are the portal to its world and its potentiality. In the 21st century we must all be better by design. ●