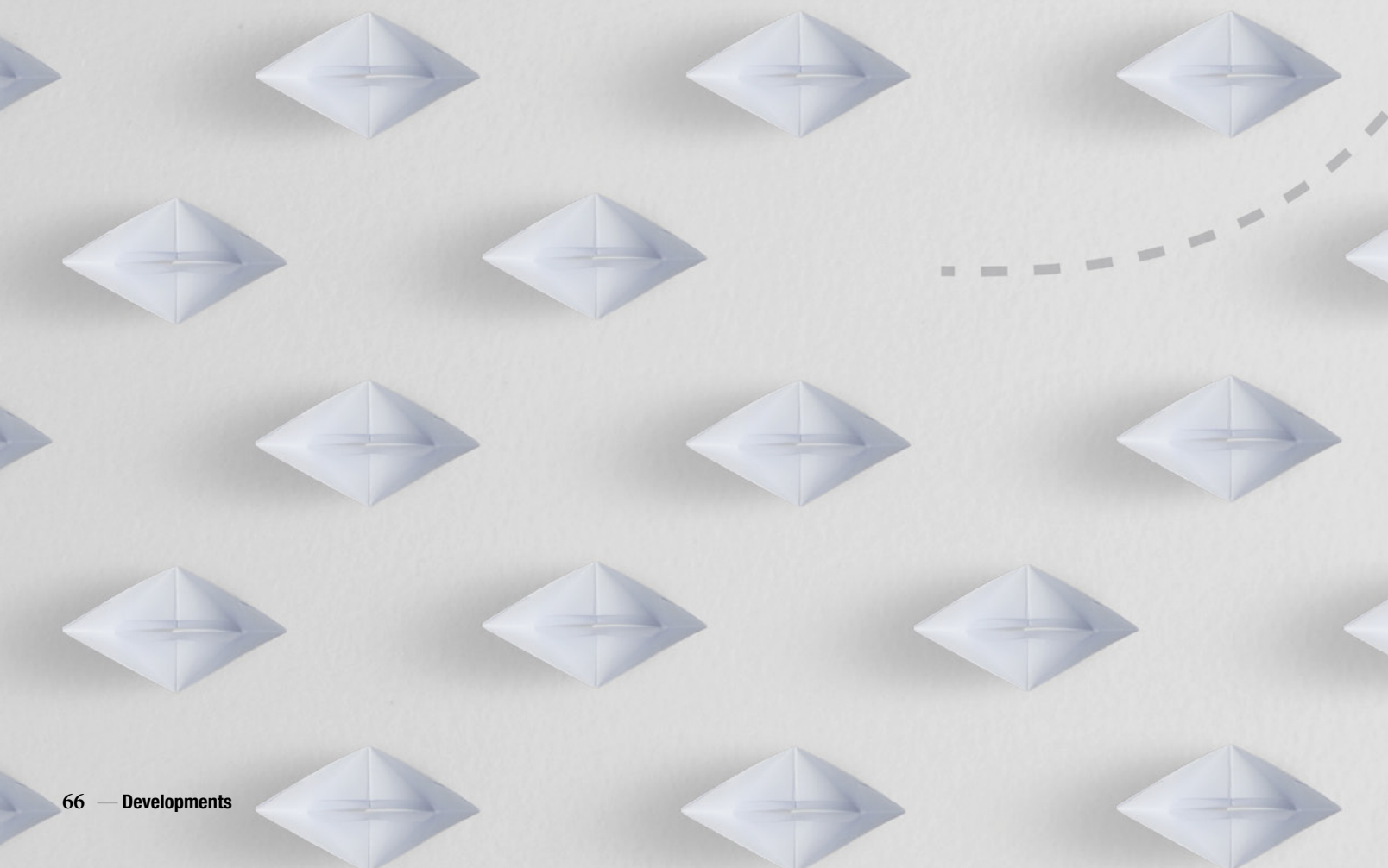


Changes Aren't Permanent

Timeshare is no exception to the shifting tides of blurry futures

By Stacey Sutherland, RRP



– But Change Is

Editor's note: This article was written and ready to publish back in early March, before the coronavirus crisis hit our nation and the timeshare industry. So the author was not writing with COVID-19 in mind — and yet it seems even more relevant today than it did a couple of months ago.



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Along with death and taxes, change is one of the few things in life that we can count on.

“The competitive pressure to innovate, and change established markets, is far too powerful for companies — and the people who lead them — to disregard,” said Faisal Hoque, the founder of Shadoka, which develops accelerators and technology solutions. “If leaders don’t wake up their organization from their slumber within, they will struggle to stay relevant and compete.”

This is called *disruptive leadership*. And as colleges are adding this subject to their curricula, it is something all businesses need to embrace to survive.

We are surrounded by examples of companies that have failed to interrupt the normal way of doing business. Take Blockbuster Video, for example. The rise of on-demand streaming meant Blockbuster’s business model needed to change. Digital could have changed the dynamics of Blockbuster’s business, but that wasn’t its killer. The credit belongs to Blockbuster’s leadership.

Netflix may have learned a thing or two from this unnecessary death spiral. Though they started as a DVD subscription business, they evolved their business model and are one



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of several companies currently owning the online streaming space.

Change is as certain as death, though. If Netflix doesn't start differentiating themselves from the herd of subscription streaming services continuously appearing, they, too, might find themselves traveling the same path as Blockbuster. Enter Disney. With their loyal fan base that grows from generation to generation, Disney already has a market differentiator called “brand love.” How could they not take advantage of this loyal fan club, dedicate a subscription-based channel for all ages, and then create and dominate their own space? And, voila — Disney+ is on demand.

What makes the timeshare business any different? For one, the industry has been successful by creating its own demand. The best sales teams are armed with all the right processes and tools to create need. But we have yet to see any real market differentiators evolving the product to not only fulfill a need, but also create natural demand — until recently. And believe it or not, it's not coming from developers.

In fact, the industry's travel benefits and exchange providers are beginning to focus on more than just exchange for timeshare. They are expanding their business models and leading change with flexible new options, platforms for creating immediate value and brand loyalty. And, they are expanding beyond timeshare into commercial markets. Their disruptive leaders are focused on evolving their platforms to be relevant to larger markets, as sellers of travel with highly transactional business models.

Companies with disruptive leaders realize the future is often blurry. But as they enter uncharted waters, the good ones are realizing they need to keep their ships steady as they steer in a new direction. Striking a healthy balance between new options and core business — technology and the people who keep the lights on — is critical to all of this.

To move this process forward, communication is key. Leaders can't just wave their arms about the new and exciting opportunities and speak at 50,000 feet. Just like the captain of a ship, they need to be

transparent, concrete, and practical all at the same time in explaining how change meets business objectives and how teams (a la the crew) can be involved in their thinking.

Leaders must innovate and iterate, as they set sail in calm water and the wind suddenly kicks up. You may not understand what just happened, but you will be better informed the second time. Of course, things will continue to change, so your business platform had better be agile and easy to adapt.

Partnering with companies who are leading change, with agile platforms that offer a balance between self-serve tech and high-touch customer service, offers a path to explore and create new market differentiators. Developers can keep their ships on course and benefit from these companies taking charge of change.

It is time to embrace disruption. While you break the rules and change course, you need to communicate what and why, get your valuable teams onboard, and find the right partner in order to create better solutions. After all, you don't want to find yourself on the shelf with Blockbuster. ■