7 Trends in 7 Minutes with Martha Cotton

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

M. Cotton: Every year, we look at how humans are engaging with design and technology to create our annual trends report. Our Fjord Trends 2021 Report describes seven key trends that are going to be key for products, services, and brands now and in the immediate future.

So our first trend is called collective displacement. This past year, how and where we experience things changed, leaving us with a shared sense of displacement as we sought new ways and places to do the things we need and love to do: working, shopping, learning, socializing, parenting, and health care all changed for many of us. Because of this displacement, brands must question everything they thought they knew about their customers and understand which behavior shifts will be long term.

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In health care, for example, most patients seem to have naturally accepted digital technology as an option. It will take new solutions to deliver experiences in a context outside of a brand's control. They'll need to find ways to deliver joy through immersive experiences and a sense of agency, the loss of which we're feeling deeply.

Our second trend is do it yourself innovation. In an age of displacement, what happens is we see a rise in human ingenuity. This trend is about how

people have been getting creative to solve their pandemic problems, from home workers repurposing their ironing board as a standing desk to entrepreneurs launching entirely new businesses. Innovation has shifted from technology first to people first. Lifehacks have been a thing for a while. People hacking technology, products, and services to work better in their lives. But what we're seeing here is people radically repurposing entire platforms for their own experiences.

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The era where brands were expected to deliver a finished solution has gone. We need to think about platforms now as half-painted canvases people can use to create the solutions they need. Virtual personal training has become widespread, so the health sector should take notes and shape similar options.

Our third trend is sweet teams are made of this. This trend is about the recent change in the reciprocal agreement between empower and employee, and the many assumptions around it. Who has final say over what people wear for a work-related call when their home is in their office? Who pays for the coffee? Whose responsibility is it to preserve homeworkers' right to privacy? For employers, there are responsibilities and opportunities to innovate

around four areas: technology that supports the way we work now, culture and a sense of belonging that is inclusive of remote-working constructs, borderless talent, and control over employee privacy and the client experience.

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As companies across the world go back to their offices, the future will not be the same for everyone. And the workplace is not dead, but it's become a mindset supported by technology.

Our fourth trend is interaction wanderlust. This trend builds on how people communicate, and the dullness that permeates many of our interactions. Many of us have been spending much more time on screens to interact with the world and even with our neighbors. Consequently, people are bored of the sameness caused by templated design in digital. Interactions are ripe for a reboot to challenge, inspire, excite, and bring serendipity back into our every day. We've seen experimentation that leverages gaming and social platforms, and mixed-reality environments as a stage. There are already VR innovations for surgical training, and a gamified approach to medication control.

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Organizations must reconsider design, content, audience, and the interaction between them to interject greater excitement and joy into screen experiences. It's time to innovate by redesigning to draw people into an experience and bring a freshness to the tools we need.

Our fifth trend is liquid infrastructure. How and where we get things has changed, forcing businesses to reshape how they manufacture, ship, store, and deliver. This trend is an expansion on liquid expectations, which we've talked about for a while. People expect the same immediate gratification delight from a delivery experience that they know they'd get in store. Brands need to rethink the tradeoffs between experience and cost, and design for the last six feet of the experience. Organizations can and should build agility and resilience across their supply chains so they can adapt quickly to change while

considering more local and sustainable alternatives.

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Within five years, sustainability will be the biggest influence on infrastructure decisions. So businesses must start figuring out how they design for sustainability now.

Our sixth trend is the empathy challenge. People care deeply about what brands stand for and how they express their values. With many inequalities that should be addressed old and new, companies must manage the narratives that shape their brand. Empathy is fundamental to good design, but the rise of design thinking over the years made empathy seem like an item to be ticked off a list. We must shift this notion of empathy as a thing you do to a way to be, while understanding the fact that it's impossible to empathize with everyone all the time. Stories have always mattered as a central part of the human experience. And now they're a core part of a brand's image, too.

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So think of empathy as the way your whole company behaves, not just a one-off project.

Our seventh trend is rituals lost and found. 2020 was emotionally challenging because of the disruption to the small things we do often that have a big effect on our mental well-being. Our rituals. Rituals associated with brands tend to fall into four categories: rituals that serve as a portal (a transition point between different versions of ourselves), rituals that offer us a sense of belonging with the social structures that matter to us, rituals that offer comfort and self-care, and rituals that serve as an anchor (the moments that give us a framework and mark the passing of time).

Through necessity and a search for new meaning, people have developed new rituals like subscribing to regular online wellness classes. Brands can help people regain a sense of control and empowerment to reconnect and heal. It starts with understanding the blank space left by a lost

ritual.

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