

A RESOURCE FOR BUSINESSES



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THE BIG LEAF

Management Consulting

RAHI S. TAJZADEH

Consulting in a Post-Pandemic World

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

June



BUSINESS LINK
MEDIA GROUP

Dear Business Link Readers,

The Business Link Media Group has spent the last two decades connecting businesses with their audiences, their partners, and their communities. In that time, we have worked hard to improve our value proposition to our readers and our neighbours in the Niagara Region.

Digitization is an inevitable trend. Web 3.0 is the future. Business Link takes pride in transforming into the Web 3.0 era. To that end, we are developing new channels of service and consultation on Web 3.0 enablement for businesses.

We are proud to celebrate business leaders in our community, and our 19th annual Top 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards celebration will be held at Club Italia in Niagara Falls this July 7th! We look forward to seeing you there, and invite you to see page 66 (whichever page the 40U40 poster is in the end) for more information..

The focus of this issue is on strength. Be it through resilience, diligence, or resolve, strength is a universal trait of a great organization, great leaders, and great people. We will look at businesses old and young, Canadian and International, and in various industries and markets. We will see how their ability to identify and develop their strengths has given each a unique value proposition that differentiates and adds tangible value.

We will look at our community in the Niagara Region, and listen to the voices of young writers from around the world, and interact via survey to get your thoughts on one of our articles. This issue's contributors worked hard to highlight the best of what great businesses and great leaders bring and we are proud to share their stories with you.

We hope that this issue is informative, empowering, enheartening, and enlightening for you. We wish that you are engaged with each article. We work hard every month to make each issue much better than the previous.

I wish you health, wealth, and happiness.
Yours in business,

Marilyn Tian, M.B.A
President & Co-Publisher
Business Link Media Group

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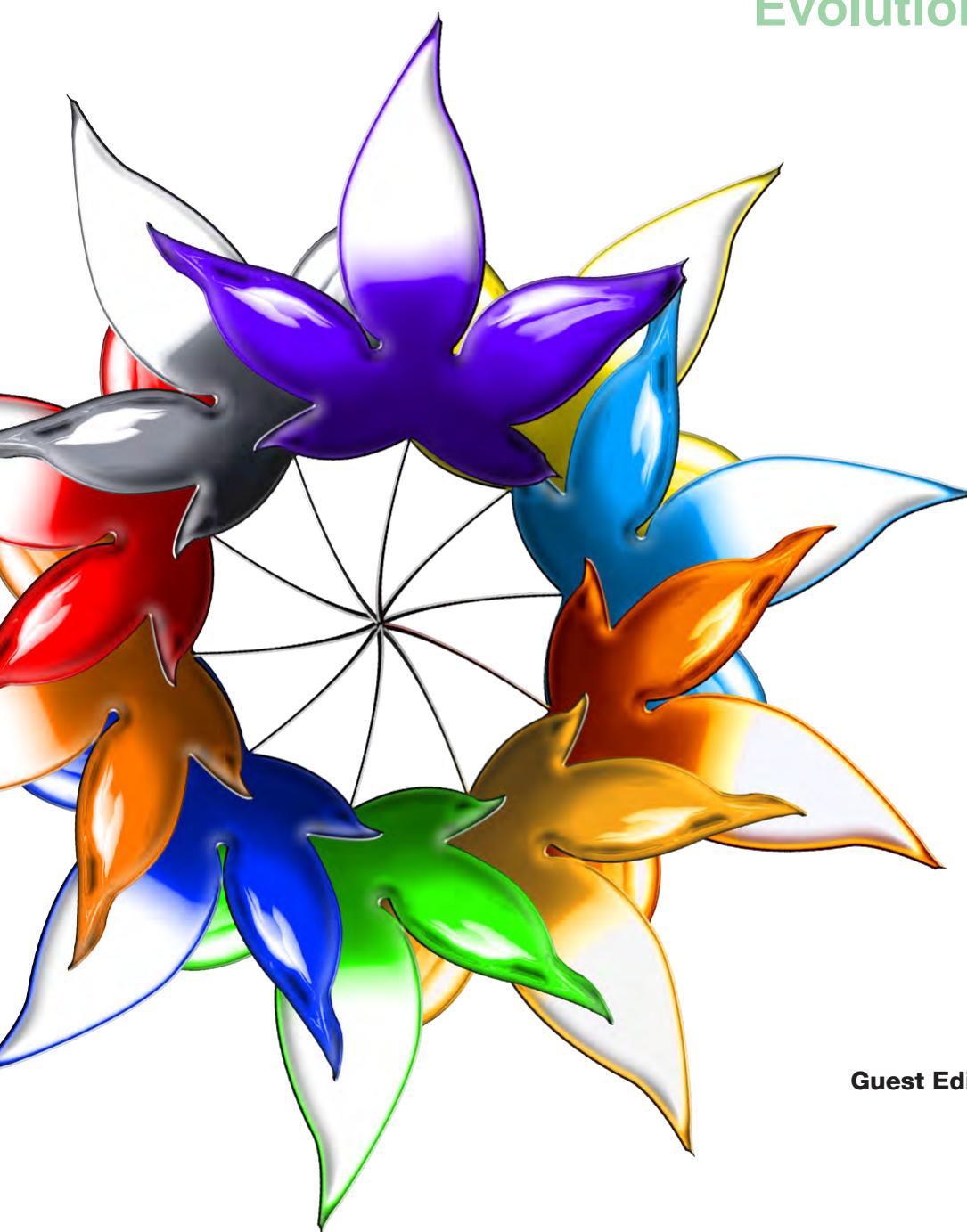
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BUILDING YOUR SUCCESS

ETHICAL CONSULTING...

Evolution or Revolution?

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH



What is Ethical Consulting? Should Ethics be an important factor in Consulting? What are the ethical standards that Consultants should or must abide by? This article looks at whether Ethics in Consulting is an evolutionary step forward, or a revolutionary change that is long overdue.



Rahi S. Tajzadeh
CMC, MScM, BComm
Guest Editor, Business Link Media Group

CONSULTING

Consulting is a business-to-business service that is as old as written history, with experts and the experienced lending their guidance and wisdom to help businesses improve, grow, and succeed. However, the industry today (NAICS Code 54161, 541611, and 541612) is saturated, fragmented, and fraught with the inexperienced, and non-experts. The challenge in finding the right consulting firm is a growing one with few solutions on the horizon. Something that can help a consulting firm stand out from the competition is its ethics, or code of conduct and ethics.

The value that consultants bring to an organization can range from negative (i.e., offering advice based on unfounded claims, or adding unnecessary risk

to a company), to game-changingly positive (i.e., helping a company pivot towards higher profitability and competitiveness). They can bring years, if not decades of experience, expertise, networks, and wisdom that would otherwise take an unreasonable amount of time and effort for a company to acquire. Consultants are there when change needs to take place, causes of symptoms need to be diagnosed, and opportunities spotted. Truly, the value of consultants has not diminished in the last several millennia.

CERTIFIED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS (CMC)

There is only one internationally recognized Consulting Accreditation, the Certified Management Consultant (CMC) designation. The CMC designation is recognized by more than 50 nations internationally thanks to the tireless work of the national and international (iCMCi) CMC Bodies, and the great work that their members



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C M C

“. THE CMC DESIGNATION IS RECOGNIZED BY MORE THAN 50 NATIONS INTERNATIONALLY THANKS TO THE TIRELESS WORK OF THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL (ICMCI) CMC BODIES ...”



carry out daily. Apart from the exclusivity of being a CMC, the designation requires its members to follow a strict code of conduct and ethics; something that differentiates itself from all other consulting designations.

The importance of Ethics and a Code of Conduct in consulting cannot be understated. They help to protect stakeholders including the client, they set the stage within which the consulting can take place, and they set the ground rules for which a given project can proceed; ideally following the values of the client's firm as well as the consultant's firm. However, most consulting firms' codes of conduct and ethics have more to do with internal interpersonal engagement and protocols, rather than an overarching set of rules and guides that include external stakeholders, the project itself, and in some rare cases, Humanity itself.



ETHICS AT THE BIG LEAF

As The Big Leaf's founder, and as a CMC who sits on the Greater Toronto Area's CMC Board, as well as the National FCMC Board, and as the Chair of the GTA's Professional Development Committee, it was easy for me to see the value in adopting a Code of Conduct and Ethics. A properly authored Code can help protect Humanity, Stakeholders (internal and external), Members of The Big Leaf's Team, and reduce many kinds of risk.

The Big Leaf consists of a diverse group of professional consultants, with accreditations ranging from CMCs and FCMC, to MBAs, PhD, CPA/CMA, OCT, and more. The team is made of women and men born in and out of Canada, living in and around the Greater Toronto Area and Niagara Region, and from a variety of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. This diversity is a major asset for our clients as it empowers our team to approach each project with a

holistic view including, strategy, entrepreneurship, accounting, finance, leadership, operations, investor-readiness, and value-creation.

As such, I knew that while diversity is an advantage for the firm, it comes with its own set of challenges, such as a lack of cohesiveness. Thus, I designed our Code of Conduct and Ethics, matched closely with the firm's Mission, Vision, and Values, to bring the team together under one banner, under one philosophy, and under one set of expectations.



THE BENEFITS OF ETHICAL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

Cohesion was just the beginning of the advantages that the Code of Conduct and Ethics brought our firm: we were able to better identify ideal clientele, ideal projects, and ideal uses of our limited time and resources.

Peace of Mind is another benefit of operating an ethical consulting practice, as it necessarily decreases exposure to risk. We cannot take on roles for which we are not able to carry out our duties to the satisfaction of the client. We cannot promise more than we can deliver. We cannot expose ourselves to unnecessary risk, nor can we take on a role if our fees jeopardize the project itself (i.e.,

if our fees are \$50,000 in a project that may have a \$75,000 benefit to the client).

Marketing and differentiation have become more important benefits in adopting our Code of Conduct and Ethics. As our team grew, and additional opportunities presented themselves, we were taken aback by the sheer number of potential clients that found us due to our Code of Conduct and Ethics, rather than our geographical location, mix of services, or overall value proposition. We felt that perhaps this is indicative of the direction that consulting needs to go in general; one that is driven by ethics.



"PEACE OF MIND IS ANOTHER BENEFIT OF OPERATING AN ETHICAL CONSULTING PRACTICE, AS IT NECESSARILY DECREASES EXPOSURE TO RISK..."

THE REAL QUESTION

Is ‘Ethics’ something that drives the decision making of clients of business-to-business consulting firms? If you look up ‘ethical consulting’ or ‘consulting with ethics’ or ‘ethics in consulting’ there are numerous resources touting the value and virtues of ethics in consulting...another indication. As indications go, these two instances are not enough for any consulting firm to come to any meaningful conclusions about the value, importance, and demand for ethical consulting.

Thus, we are at an interesting crossroads, is ethical consulting an evolutionary step forward, or a revolution that can change the consulting world significantly? To say that there is no room for unethical consulting is to engage in naiveté. So, should consulting firms and consultants give up and abandon their ethics due to some bad apples, or should they, like CMC, set the standard for which all consultants can aim to operate?

To answer this question, we seek input from you the reader! We have set up a quick survey at the following link that we invite you to look at: <https://forms.gle/yZbFd3EvS2kq9wau8>.

Your insight will help to give all businesses a clearer understanding of the demand for ethics in consulting, and drive future content in this publication, in which we can continue to look at the value of ethics in consulting.



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TECHNOLOGY & THE LUXURY INDUSTRY

How Technology Can be Leveraged to Create Value

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH



The Luxury Industry is dynamic, exotic, and growing. As the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic wane, the industry is bouncing back and continuing its journey towards a more technology-rich future. However, with so many technologies, platforms,

mediums, and tech-strategies, how can a Luxury Brand leverage technology to suit its unique needs, and create meaningful value? In this article we explore that question, and how technology is shaping the future of Luxury.

THE LUXURY INDUSTRY & MARKET

The global personal goods luxury market is a healthy \$300bn with the United States comprising about \$65bn, or about 21% of the total market (Sabanoglu, 2022). Although the COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a slump in sales in 2020, many of the industry's leaders, such as Hermes, LVMH, Richemont, and Kering saw an increase in sales as of 2021. However, luxury travel has still not rebounded as of the writing of this article in June



of 2022 (Graf Dijon von Monteton, 2022). Among the personal luxury segment, shoes, jewelry, and leather accessories are the only categories to beat 2019 sales as of 2022, while the total market is about 10% below 2019 levels overall (Danziger, 2022). Apparel sales have not recovered as well as other luxury segments (D'Arpizio, Levato, Gault, de Montgolfier, & Jaroudi, 2021).

Most luxury buyers are making their purchases to reward themselves, and want an excellent or pleasurable experience or product, but Gen Zs were more interested in value. The least important, or influential factor on the purchasing decisions of respondents to a Kearney Luxury Study 2021-2022 was a given brand's support of what they consider to be a good cause; an indication that sustainability is not at the top of mind for said buyers (Graf Dijon von Monteton, 2022).

From 2020 to present, many major luxury brands have focused on online channels to better alleviate the pressure from the lack of in-store purchases. Brick-and-mortar locations have become less relevant overall, and are less meaningful to Gen Zs as well. Overall, the divide between online and in-store luxury purchases were relatively similar among Millennials, Gen Zs, and older buyers, with around 49% to 60% of buyers choosing to purchase online (Graf Dijon von Monteton, 2022).



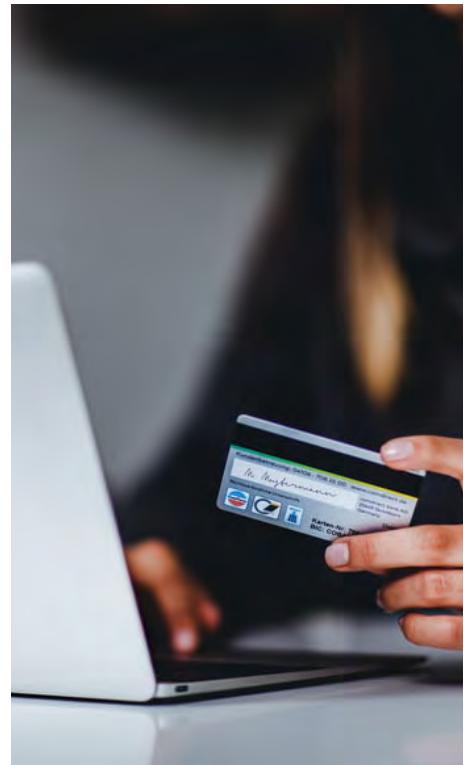
ONLINE LUXURY & TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION

More customers demand more from luxury brands than ever before (D'Arpizio, Levato, Gault, de Montgolfier, & Jaroudi, 2021). From customization to personalization, from shipping and unboxing experiences to the sales journey, luxury brands big and small are being asked to be more flexible, more capable, and more adaptable; all challenges that can be, and are being addressed by technology-based solutions.

Millennials and Gen Zs are responsible for most of the growth in luxury sales (about 85%), and account for upwards of 30% of all luxury purchases. As technology continues to create new opportunities for brands to communicate their value and engage with

their target audiences, its importance and influence on the future of luxury is growing. From Augmented Reality solutions such as smart mirrors for brick-and-mortar stores to artificial intelligence such as improved personalization recommendations for online purchases, technology's role in the luxury product or service purchasing process is becoming more intertwined with customers' expectations (Woodworth, 2021).

■ ONLINE LUXURY & TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION



Customers are more familiar with making online purchases, indicating that the marketspace is healthy and not about to slow down. Luxury car sales represent the largest single category in luxury sales, topping out at about \$620bn. Total luxury car sales are up slightly from 2019, and online luxury car sales are increasing steadily as well (Danziger, 2022). As distribution channels narrow and brick-and-mortar stores close in preference of online-only sales (or online-focused sales), the online sales experience is becoming more important, more relevant, and a larger driver of total sales.

A close-up photograph of a woman's face, which is partially obscured by a digital overlay. The overlay consists of a grid of colored squares (red, green, blue) and binary code (0s and 1s). In the background, there is a blurred display of more binary code and some text, suggesting a computer screen or a data visualization.

*“More customers demand
more from luxury brands than
ever before (D’Arpizio, Levato,
Gault, de Montgolfier, & Jaroudi,
2021).”*

LUXURY INDUSTRY TECHNOLOGY



Online sales channels nearly doubled since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic, with more brands taking more control over distribution, including an increase in directly operated channels. Retail is almost ready to take over the wholesale market in the near future (D'Arpizio, Levato, Gault, de Montgolfier, &

Jaroudi, 2021), placing a larger emphasis on the business-to-customer experience and value proposition that each luxury brand offers.

Another factor in the online sales channel's growth is the second-hand luxury market. Having grown to more than \$30bn in 2021, this sub-segment of

the luxury industry is not only healthy, but also more dependent on technology (D'Arpizio, Levato, Gault, de Montgolfier, & Jaroudi, 2021). While the market overall is consolidating and defragmenting, rising stars still exist, and are leveraging the power of technology to gain a foothold in the market.



Technology also empowers luxury brands to better target their ideal audience / customer base. Whether it is through social media, or online events, or virtual / augmented reality (AR/VR), reaching the right people is becoming more accessible to luxury brands, and they are taking full advantage of the opportunity (DeAcetis, 2020). Through artificial

intelligence, brands can better predict purchasing behaviours, which product lines they should focus on, better control the online purchasing experience through feedback and analysis of online buying behaviours, and better target their ideal audience overall (DeAcetis, 2020).

Technology can have even

■ ADDITIONAL USES OF TECHNOLOGY IN LUXURY



With additional technological solutions, more luxury brands can offer one-on-one customized services to their customers without the need for a brick-and-mortar location, significantly simplifying the process for both parties, and reducing overhead costs as well. Today's luxury customers want the freedom to shop anywhere anytime, and the mobility of technology-driven online sales fulfills that need perfectly. Lastly, Experiential Stores, in which online stores increasingly utilize virtual and augmented reality to 'sell an experience' rather than just a product, are increasing in number and complexity, as well as adoption and acceptance among luxury buyers (LS Retail, 2018).



more influence on the overall luxury manufacturing, distribution, retail, and purchasing processes, including but not limited to: Alternative Materials, Customized Service, Mobility, and Experientials Sales.

Alternative Materials are making a splash in the luxury industry, with more technology companies partnering with luxury brands to create what they believe to be materials that will gain them a competitive advantage.

Sustainability is often touted as the main driving force behind these alternative materials (LS Retail, 2018), but the technologies that enable their crafting, and the desire to increase profits and sales are the larger influencers.



However, technology can also level the playing field, offering small start-ups in luxury the same opportunities to engage with customers and create valuable experiences that fulfill their needs. As such, many brands are seeking additional differentiation factors, and despite data indicating that sustainability is not a major influential factor on luxury purchasing decisions, more sustainable options and solutions are popping up in the industry every year (Cais, 2021).



■ STANDING OUT

Luxury products and services often sell themselves, requiring less marketing and awareness creation than their less expensive counterparts. However, technology has made it easier for Luxury Brands to reach their target market(s), create a unique experience for them from awareness through to post-purchase touchpoints, and differentiate themselves

through the leveraging of new technologies like AR or VR.

So, how does a Luxury Brand decide what combination or mix of technologies and tech-strategies to utilize? We always recommend taking a cogent, rational, and logical approach with plenty of validation. The easiest route that yields the most useful and reliable information with which to make strategic decisions is the Business Planning Methodology.



THE BUSINESS PLANNING & TECHNOLOGY STRATEGIZING IN LUXURY

The Business Planning Methodology is an age-old idea in which consultants, strategists, executives, and leaders utilize the logic and rationale of a business plan to help them make important decisions.

In brief, the methodology first looks at the industry by attempting to paint a complete picture including (but not limited to) the NAICS Code (North American Industry Classification System), its history, the Metrics utilized within, major players, its out-

look, supply and value chains, trends, factors affecting change, etc. The goal is to spot opportunities within the industry, for which (a) clear market(s) can be identified.

The next step is to carry out a full Market Analysis on the market(s) indicated by the opportunities spotted in the Industry Analysis. Here, much like the industry analysis, the goal is to paint a complete picture, but this time, of the

market(s). Demographics, Psychographics, trends, cohorts, wants, needs, gaps between wants / needs and (an) available solution(s), and the value they place on it (them). This leads to more opportunities being spotted; this time at the market-level.

Now we can look at the industry and market opportunities together to better understand them overall, and whether there are overlap-



ping themes, ideas, or in the case of this article, technologies that can address the gap between wants / needs and available solutions. This is the Opportunity Spotting stage, and it leads to the Validation Stage.

Validation takes place when a brand validates its premises about the opportunities it has

spotted, and the value placed on the strategies that the brand uses to take advantage of them. Without validation, opportunities are no longer opportunities, but just a ‘good idea’ (at best). Once validation is complete (utilizing secondary and primary research and objective analyses), the Value Proposition has been developed.

“THE GOAL IS TO SPOT OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE INDUSTRY, FOR WHICH (A) CLEAR MARKET(S) CAN BE IDENTIFIED ...”



LUXURY INDUSTRY

The Value Proposition drives the Marketing Plan (how do we take advantage of this opportunity and get our value proposition including any product or service in front of our target markets?), which in turn drives the Operations Plan (how does operations facilitate marketing and sales?), which in turn drives the Financial Plan (how do we pay to operate?).

The benefit of using this methodology is that it is an all-encompassing look at your industry, market(s), internal capabilities, value proposition, marketing strategy, operations strategy, and financial strategy, in a single, coherent, cogent, valid argument that is sound; this is what great Leaders, Entrepreneurs, and Executives are hired to do.

TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN THE BUSINESS PLANNING METHODOLOGY

- The Industry Analysis (what technology is utilized, why, what is the value it offers, what are the alternatives, what are some major shifts therein, what is on the horizon for said technology, what value does it add, etc.)
- The Market Analysis (how does technology factor into the Market, their behaviours, their wants / needs, etc.)
- Opportunity Spotting and the Value Proposition (can technology unlock new markets, reduce costs, increase exposure, reduce complexity, add value, help differentiate, offer a better experience, etc.)
- The Marketing Plan (what technology do we use in our marketing campaigns, customer relationship management, touchpoints, etc.)



- Operations (how do we leverage technology to reduce overhead, improve efficiency and efficacy, find, and hire and train better employees and team members, etc.)
- Finance (how can we leverage technology to reduce our financial burdens, raise funds, better prepare for the unexpected, and have healthier cash flows, etc.).

What isn't easy to answer is 'Which technology should a given company adopt and when?'; that is something that requires something as comprehensive as a business planning methodology. So, the takeaway is to approach technology as a potential ally, that requires serious vetting, lots of testing, and plenty of analytical prowess to get the most out of it.

What is easy to answer is 'How can a company go about starting the process of discovering which technologies to adopt and when and how?'. That begins with a consultation with employees, managers, executives, directors of the board, shareholders, industry experts, researchers, the target market(s), and suppliers...or they could hire a consultant!

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THE BIG LEAF

MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Consulting in a Post-Pandemic World

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH



THE BIG LEAF

Consulting in a Post-Pandemic World



In this article we will look at Resiliency. What is it? Why is it important to businesses today? How has it become more important since the COVID-19 Pandemic? How can a business plan today to be more resilient tomorrow? And how do we look at resiliency at The Big Leaf?

WHAT IS RESILIENCY?

Resiliency... a concept that is more important, and more 'top of mind' after the COVID-19 Pandemic than ever before. At no other point in modern history, apart from a world-war, has a single event had such a profound effect on so many businesses, industries, nations, and peoples. At no other time in modern history has resilience been more important to more businesses, as the volatility in inflation, commodity prices, transportation and fuel prices, demand, and

supply chain reliability increases.

Resilience is also called business continuity, and it is manifest in many different plans depending on the organization, industry, environment, and other factors. Thus, one company's resiliency plan will differ necessarily with that of another, be they in the same industry, the same geographic location, or the same market.

Volatility breeds opportunity, but only in a vacuum. When the entire system is

taking a major hit, due to a ‘Black Swan’ event such as COVID-19 (in which an unpredictable event has wide-spread effects), volatility becomes a drain, creating less opportunity and a net-loss in total value created.

So how does a business protect itself, or at least prepare for a ‘Black Swan’ Event, and increase or improve its resiliency overall? This is a complex question with complex answers, so, let us dive right in, and discover the importance of, the components of, and the value of resiliency planning.



RESILIENCY PLANNING

What drives one organization’s resiliency plan must differ from that of even its direct competitors, as the internal circumstances are not the same, the vision and mission are not the same, the foundational strengths (and weaknesses) are not the same, and the motivational forces behind strategic decision making are not the same.

This has led to a resurgence of demand for consulting, especially continuity planning and ‘Black Swan Consulting’, especially for organizations that are aware of the potential risks that another event with as wide-reaching effects as COVID-19 has on operations, profits, human capital, and supply chains.

Thus, businesses and organizations have reached out to consulting firms to help them be more resilient, more adaptable, more malleable, and more flexible. As such, more consulting firms have started to specialize in resiliency planning and continuity planning.

As more consulting firms enter the resilience planning market, their differentiation factors become more important, and their value proposition to clients become more important. Tangible value, ac-

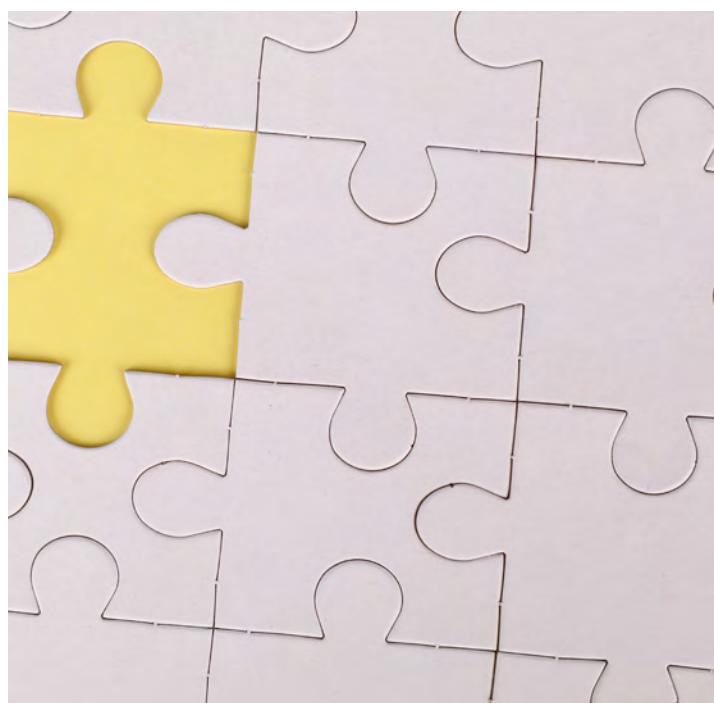
tionable goals, and effective planning are just some of the demands of said clientele, and as consulting firms race to come up with solutions, firms that have offered similar services in the past are learning how to, and how not to differentiate in the 21st Century, the Century of Resilience.

THE BIG LEAF

The Big Leaf (<https://www.thebigleaf.com>) has been a consulting firm since the late 2000's, and at its heart is an entrepreneurial approach, a foundational code of conduct and ethics, and a holistic team of professionals that utilize their combined expertise to offer a more robust consulting service and experience to clients. In the last 16+ years of consulting for firms big and small, domestic and international, with simple and complex needs, we have recognized the need for a resiliency plan that itself is flexible, malleable, and adaptable; every company, every firm, and every organization has a unique set of circumstances, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and wants, and a resiliency plan should take into account all these factors and more if it is to be accepted, adopted, and utilized to its fullest.

Many articles and reputable sources, both in academia and in professional consulting ecosystems, will give a variety of recommendations, keys to success, and guides to becoming

more resilient. Some recommend addressing Culture, Leadership, Change, and Discipline to best prepare for a more resilient organization (Evans, 2021), while Harvard Business Review's article recommend building Redundancy, improving Diversity, adopting Modular strategies, encouraging more Adaptable leadership and employees, Prudence (i.e., being prepared for the unexpected), and Embeddedness (in which the company's goals are aligned with broader systems) (Reeves & Whitaker, 2020). Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) recommends looking at resiliency in terms of operational or functional teams / departments including Technology and Operations, Workforce, Data, and



Financial, and utilizing a three-step process to deal with the unexpected: Anticipate, Respond, Sustain (Price Waterhouse Cooper, n.d.). What stands out among these leaders in consulting, is that their advice for improving resilience is fragmented, proprietary, and only as useful as their implementation's success and sustainability.



THE BIG LEAF'S APPROACH TO RESILIENCY

At The Big Leaf we look at resiliency a little differently: we see resilience as a function of an organization's Business Plan. If resilience, Black Swan events, and the unexpected in general are not planned for, they will necessarily be more difficult to implement, more risk-laden to adopt, and face more pushback from employees when their buy-in is needed most.

So how does an organization incorporate resilience into their business plan?

We start with the definition of a 'good' business plan: A 'good' business plan is one that is written as a detailed argument that is cogent, with premises that are sound, and utilizes sources of information that are uncontroversial and reputable. A 'good' business plan first



looks at the industry itself, spotting opportunities within, which leads them to then focus on the Market(s) that said opportunities apply to. A Market Analysis is then carried out to better determine which (if not all) are ideal for entry. Opportunities in the Market Analysis are then looked at together with the opportunities in the Industry Analysis, and they are analyzed as a whole; the idea is to identify the best combination of opportunities overall.

Once opportunities have been whittled down to an ideal set, they need to be validated. Validation is dependent on the opportunity or opportunities, and often requires primary and

secondary research, as well as an internal feasibility (i.e., can we take advantage of this / these opportunity / opportunities?). Once the ideal set of opportunities are validated, and internal feasibility analyses determine the organization's ability to take advantage of them, the actual planning begins.

A Marketing Plan starts with a summary of the industry, market, and opportunities, as well as the culmination of all these analyses and validation: the Value Proposition. A Marketing Plan should also have opportunities spotted within (i.e., how to increase awareness, innovate with respect to marketing, decrease costs,



CUSTOMIZABILITY IS A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF BUSINESS PLANNING

improve virality, etc.), after all, it is the job of the CEO, President, or Entrepreneur to spot opportunities! Next the Operations Plan is developed to ensure that all Marketing Activities can be carried out, as well as daily operations. The Operations Plan also has opportunities spotted within, including cost reduction, complexity reduction, protocol simplification, etc. Finally, the Financial Plan is crafted, highlighting its support for operations, as well as opportunities to reduce finance, investment, and fund-raising costs. As you can see, business planning is complex, and utilizes ALL the information that an organization has amassed.

So, where does resiliency fit into the Business Plan? As indicated by the many disparate articles from reputable sources, the wide-ranging topics and focuses of said advice, and the many options that any organization has with respect to improving resilience, this

challenge is also complex. Unlike a standard menu from a fast-food restaurant, resilience is something that needs a custom ‘recipe’ to ensure that it is ideal for the organization in which it is being applied.

Each organization has a different set of opportunities that it is seeking to take advantage of. Each organization has a different set of strengths, weaknesses, and dependencies. Each organization has a different mission, vision, and values. Each organization has a different set of people (human capital), machinery / equipment, and intellectual property. You can see that a customizable solution will have a more meaningful impact on an organization, much like any other consulting solution.

Customizability is a critical component of business planning. A business plan’s pivot point, or its key strength, is in its value proposition (what is the organization selling, for



which their customers are happy to pay?). However, resilience, or the lack thereof, may impact any or all of the components (operations, marketing, finance, IT, human resources, etc.), and as such, a custom solution will engage in scenario planning, as well as detailed analyses of the changes in the value proposition, the target market(s), and the marketing / operations of an organization, to craft a solution that is easier to adopt, easier to adapt, and easier to stand behind when introducing it to key stakeholders (especially staff).

THE BUSINESS PLANNING METHODOLOGY AND RESILIENCY

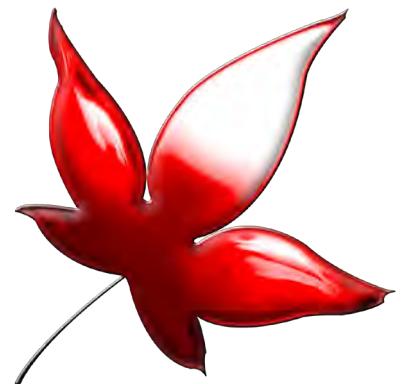


The Big Leaf has been utilizing the Business Planning Methodology for more than 15 years in diagnosing challenges (or the source of the problems for which only a symptom has been measured), as well as value proposition development, opportunity spotting, and supporting start-ups / new business development opportunities. We have become the de facto consulting firm for new and established organizations that are seeking solutions with cogent, sound, and valid arguments behind them.

By using the Business Planning Methodology, an organization (and

/ or their consulting partner) can treat each as a unique entity with unique needs. The methodology is the scientification of planning, and can better empower the consultant, CEO, or business planner to isolate variables, relationships, dependencies, and other factors, to identify what needs changing and to what degree and in what direction, to improve resilience.

Whether an organization's potential weakness in a 'Black Swan' event is operations, marketing, finance, supply chain management, distribution, management, leadership,



THE BIG LEAF Management Consulting

Rahi S. Tajzadeh
CMC, MScM, BComm

Guest Editor, Business Link Media Group



or any other of the hundreds of factors that go into a business plan, the Business Planning Methodology can better identify it / them, and help a consultant (or organization's leadership) to strengthen it / them such that reasonable 'Black Swan' events can be navigated with aplomb.

So, what is the takeaway...what is the 'day after retention' portion of this article? It is an age-old saying "If you don't plan, you are planning to fail", and by using the Business Planning Methodology you are making the job of identifying 'how' to improve resilience easier, clearer, and more likely to succeed.

Should you wish to reach out to our team at www.thebigleaf.com for more insight, consulting, or to discuss opportunities (including how to improve resilience) we encourage you to visit our website, or contact us at www.thebigleaf.com/contact-us.

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LUXURY CONFERENCE 2023 ITALIA & CANADA

Leveraging Technology, Geography, and Sustainability

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH



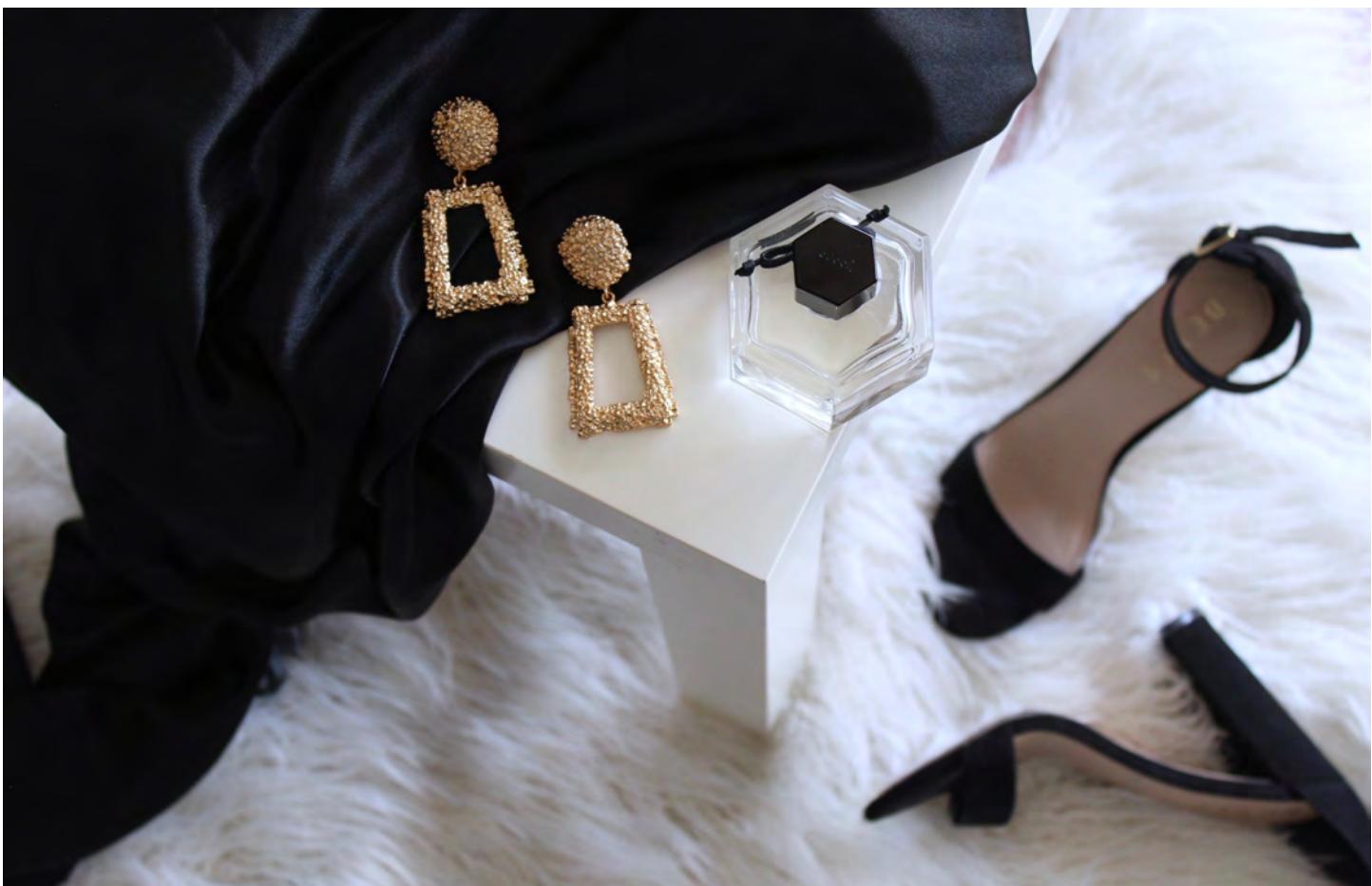
On behalf of Business Link Media Group, San Pio X Az. Agr. (est. 1708), The Big Leaf, and our partners in the 2022 Luxury Conference would like to invite you to join us at next year's event!

This year, the conference will be held at the San Pio X Farm and Villa in Padova, Italy in June, and its sister-event will be held at Club Italia in Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada in July. Each event will present research and analyses into the Luxury Industry, Markets, and the impact of Technology and Sustainability on each. There will also be special guests, a fireside chat with Dr. Agostino Menna PhD and Mr. Donald Ziraldo of Inniskillin and Ziraldo Wineries fame, as well as the findings of more than 150 Univer-

sity and College students from across Canada and the United States, into Luxury trends and sustainability strategies. Lastly, we are hosting an International Case and Pitch Competition for higher education students across North America and Europe. The winners and the insights we gain from these great students will be shared, along with our research, with each attendee, partner, and sponsor.

The events are designed to generate an open dialogue, share knowledge, and foster innovation. In Italy, the focus is on adding value to the Italian Luxury Brands, while in Canada, the focus is on the value that Italian and Canadian Luxury Brands can offer the Niagara Region, and vice-versa.

"THE EVENTS ARE DESIGNED TO GENERATE AN OPEN DIALOGUE, SHARE KNOWLEDGE, AND FOSTER INNOVATION ..."



LUXURY CONFERENCE 2023 ITALIA & CANADA

While this year's event is already underway, we would like to invite you to join us in 2023 as an attendee, participant, partner, or sponsor. Tickets are limited as this is an exclusive event. The Italian venue can hold 40 attendees per day, while the Canadian venue can facilitate 500. We will accommodate additional demand for the Italian event by extending the number of days for which it is held.

In the meantime, if you are in the Luxury Industry or Market, if you are a supplier or distributor for Luxury goods and/or services, if you are a Luxury Manufacturer or Producer, if you represent interests related to Luxury in Canada and/or Italy, if you are in the Fashion Industry including its media arm, and if you are a group of students in higher education, then you are in the right place.

Join us in the Summer of 2023, and visit our current Conference website at www.thebigleaf.com/italia to find out more.

Feel free to contact us at italia@thebigleaf.com if you have any questions.



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MY PERSONAL HERO

BY GUEST AUTHOR ALEX XIA, 6TH GRADE, SHANGHAI, CHINA



We all need special people to help us in times of great needs to inspire us, to challenge us, and to motivate us to go on in our journey no matter how difficult it may be. We call them the pillars and stars that guide us, and the heroes in our lives. For me, that person who has always been there in all my ups and downs, is my mom. She is my modern-day hero, who loves, cares, and helps me the best way she can.



Global Youth Philanthropy (GYP) is a non-profit organization that builds youth-friendly environments for the next generation of leaders passionate about making the world a better place. GYP has been hosting events across the globe for more than a decade, and in

partnership with Business Link Media Group, have their aspiring young writers featured in this publication as guest authors.

This issue's guest authors are: Alex Xia, Angelina Li, and Mona Liu.

MY PERSONAL HERO

Although my mom is very busy with teaching, she does a great job taking care of the family, especially her son, me! For most of us, when we are busy working, we might feel tired and want to take a rest, and put away the things we are doing. But for my mom, she doesn't have much time to rest. She does not complain about

how exhausted she is after a whole day of hard work, considering that she does all the work by herself in an almost perfect manner. Since we do not live together with my father, and my grandparents are not living with us either, it is truly amazing how my mother manages to shoulder all the responsibilities by herself.



On taking care of me, she also does an awesome job! She helps me to get opportunities to talk with influential people in society. For example, she facilitated a meeting with Mr. Fu, a great and famous cross-country runner. Thanks to her help I had the chance to have a one-on-one interview with him. She guided me through how to prepare questions for the interview, and it was indeed a total success. What's more, she always encourages me to teach other kids English reading, go hiking for 100 kilometers (in four days), read difficult books, and enroll in public speaking class to develop my English communication skills. She always listens to me when I am talking to her, and gives me the freedom to plan my own schedule. Sometimes, she even listens to my ideas and follows some of my advice.

Moreover, to her friends, she is always helpful, especially in their times of great need. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, she bought hundreds of masks and donated all of them to her friends in America. One of the beneficiaries has three children's museums built in different cities in America! Unfortunately, few people visited these places due to the pandemic. Because of this, my mom

launched a donation campaign for the museums, and collected more than 5,000 dollars to help sustain their condition.

To her students, she is truly one of the best teachers in their lives. Many of them want to be a teacher or find a decent job, but they need help and guidance to go about it. In effect, my mother organized a community meeting and invited some of her friends from different sectors of society to help answer her students' concerns. In the

end, the students were all enlightened.

All in all, I think she really does a great job being a mom, a friend, and a teacher. She always takes good care of me, and provides me many opportunities to grow. More importantly, she helps other people too, by giving her best in her teaching profession, helping students reach their dreams, and offering them timely help or support in their hour of distress.



***“ALL IN ALL, I THINK SHE REALLY DOES
A GREAT JOB BEING A MOM, A FRIEND,
AND A TEACHER...”***

- Alex Xia, Student, and Proud Son of a Great Mom



AN INTERVIEW WITH LIU DAMING

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY ALEX XIA, ANGELINA LI, & MONA LIU
ARTICLE BY MONA LIU, G5, OMAN



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This issue's guest authors are: Alex Xia, Angelina Li, and Mona Liu.

Daming Liu has a Bachelor of Psychology from the University of Manchester, is the founder of Beijing Axis Technology, and a tenured professor at Ningxia Institute of Technology. He suffered from a rare disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta due to a genetic mutation in his childhood. As a result, he has experienced 9 fractures, 11 major surgeries, and nearly died twice. He has had to

overcome the limitations and challenges of his body again and again. He became the first student and entrepreneur in a wheelchair in China, the youngest contract author of the People's Publishing House

in China. His novel “命运之上” has 60,000 copies published already! In 2014, as a national self-improvement role-model, he was greeted by President Xi and other national leaders.

QUESTION 1

Hello Mr. Liu Da Ming, since today's Mother's Day, I want to wish a Happy Mother's Day to your mom and wife! What do you want to say to all the mothers on this special day?

In my opinion, Mother's Day has two meanings: First, a mother is a perpetual motion machine that keeps lives going for generations. I want to convey my deep personal appreciation and admiration for all

mothers around the world. Second, there is a mother's unconditional love. Mothers are unique, wonderful, and fantastic, and I want to show my gratitude to my mother and all the mothers out there.

QUESTION 2

Your parents must be very proud of what you have achieved. What aspect of their parenting style has benefited you the most? What are some memorable moments from your childhood?

I am proud to say that my parents did not provide me with any special schooling. Their tolerance was mainly reflected in not having particularly high expectations for me. So, my parents' desire and expectation for me was that I be healthy, have fewer medical complications, be safe, and happy. My physical condition does not allow my par-

ents to have high expectations of me, and on the other hand, they are indeed very generous and tolerant towards me, giving me a relaxed and healthy environment.

But I think it is more important to accept the one's own characteristics and talents, and then give them the environment and conditions to

grow up. In 2011, I had a chance to go abroad for surgery, to which my dad agreed, but my mother disagreed. She felt that if a person could live, no matter how they lived, there was no need for them to undergo an operation that could possibly kill them. But my belief is that if a person simply lives without qual-

ity and dignity, then they are dead. The meaning of life is measured by the quality of life. Their love doesn't mean that I can do whatever I want. But they wanted me to be comfortable growing up in a safe, comfortable, hopeful, and controlled environment.



QUESTION 3

Mr. Da Ming, I would like to know, who or what has had the greatest influence in your life, and how did they influence you?

Apart from my family, it was my teacher who guided me to complete the writing of my book "命运之上". Thanks to my teacher, I learned a lot about writing and communicating. Some writers had an average education in elementary school and were mostly from rural areas. But



among these 34 people in my class, 34 books were finally completed, forming a manuscript of about 6.8 million words, covering about 25 diseases common in China. I think the effort, seriousness, and responsible attitude towards writing about such a sensitive subject are lessons that I follow in my daily life.

I understand myself in three different stages. The first stage is age of 14 to 24, and the third stage is after the age of 24. Before I was 14, I didn't think I was much different from everyone else. As for the second stage, when I was 14 years old, I had an operation on both legs when I had to lay in bed for 181 days. That's when I realized I was different from others my age. At that time, I had three wishes: I wanted to find a cure to keep myself alive, to publish a good book, and to get an education in a world-class university. I thankfully fulfilled all my wishes, and when I graduated from college at the age of 24, I realized that there may be higher pursuits in life.



QUESTION 5

When you wanted to publish a book, you reached out directly to the People's Publishing House in China, and when you had policy suggestions, you wrote to the British Parliament, and when you wanted to take more control over your health, you asked doctors from all over the world for help. You are obviously outgoing and courageous...how were you inspired to be so bold?

I believe that the value and quality of life that each person creates differs. Maybe all I wanted to do is improve my quality of life. Maybe all I wanted to do is something cool, something courageous, and something out of the ordinary. For me, this is a very appealing point. For example, I understood that before I was an adult, I could publish a book with Chi-



LIU DAMING

LIU DAMING

LIU DAMING

na's greatest publishing business, which I felt extremely proud of at the time. I believe it is this desire to improve that drives me to always push myself to new limits.



QUESTION 6

This pandemic has affected everyone, and many people have different stories to tell. How has this pandemic affected you and in what ways specifically?

The pandemic affected me in two ways. The first was at work. We don't have a speedy way to go back and forth. Our entire life has been altered in terms of speed, efficiency, and rhythm. Upstream and downstream, this Pandemic has had a measurable impact on entrepreneurs. For example, in a partnership, you may not appear to be impacted, but your partner may be. The impact on daily life is the second. We must stay at home for an extended period, submit to PCR testing everywhere, and wear masks every day. For me, this is a completely new challenge and way of life.





QUESTION 7

With your physical condition, you have many reasons to warrant staying home to live an easier life. Would you still choose to go to a top tier, difficult school should you

have been born without your conditions? Would you still be willing to go through such a challenging journey, or would you prefer to have a less challenging life?

I believe I will continue to do the same thing if my memory and ideas remain the same, because I believe the greatest meaning of life is to challenge, achieve, and fulfill. Challenge your own limitations and impossibilities, realize significant aspirations and hopeful pursuits, and help

others realize their dreams, all while making the world a better place. As for the willingness to be a normal human being in good health, it is an attractive idea...If I could change my way of life, I would love to try it.

QUESTION 8

What inspired you to write the book “命运之上”? What do you want to express with this book?

I was having two leg surgeries at the time, and I had a brilliant idea: I wanted to compile all my childhood stories into a book to document my unique journey. When you reflect on your past life and realize that you are unique in every manner, that you look different, think different, do different things, have different experiences, you will want to make these differences stand out. Write them down to document your unique existence; that's what I based the book on.



QUESTION 9

Do you have any advice for people with the same or similar diseases? What would you like to say to inspire them?

Let me just make one thing clear: Try to be the best version of yourself. Everyone's circumstances and experiences are unique, even if two people appear to be identical, their real-life experiences are not. Being your best self is the foundation of everything good. Whatever you want to do or achieve, you must always be able to clearly identify your own resources, strengths, and limitations, and be able to maximize your strengths while avoiding your drawbacks. This applies to people of various ages and living situations. They should do their best under any circumstances.

QUESTION 10

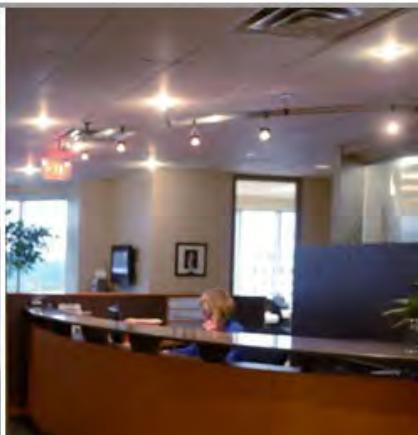
Finally, I would like to ask you to share your thoughts on the future. What do you think of the future of society? What impacts do you think the epidemic, wars, and technology will have on the future?

We are living at a period where everything is uncertain. For the time being, there is no obvious technological change in society, and the efficiency of all production appears to have remained relatively constant, but its production relations have undergone significant changes, and the productive forces are constantly being adjusted, so what will the world be like? I have no idea how it will turn out. My knowledge and abilities do not allow me to predict how the world will evolve in the future, although extreme uncertainty is a common theme. Under this theme, it is hard to say whether we will move towards cooperation or multi-level confrontation. So let us all look forward to observing how this civilization evolves over time as we grow older. Many great thinkers and scientific experts may appear and reappear, and there will always be someone who can guide humanity into the future. I'm not sure who will carry the torch, but I believe such great people will always exist; we'll have to wait and see.



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**WHAT IS IT
AND WHY IS IT
IMPORTANT?**

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH

SUSTAINABILITY & THE LUXURY INDUSTRY





SUSTAINABILITY DEFINED

“Sustainability is a topic with a great deal of controversy and debate (Julnes, 2019). Sustainability has been defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (United Nations Brundtland Commission, 1987).”

WHERE SUSTAINABILITY CAME FROM

The idea of Sustainable Luxury was made more relevant and popular in 2007 in the Bendell and Kleanthous's World Wildlife Fund report, in which the authors also highlighted the strategies that luxury brands were taking to increase or improve their sustainability, including: Increasing Operational Efficiency, Enhanced Employee Relations (reducing the time and energy required to hire, train, and motivate staff), Support for a more Welcoming Community (which is not de-

scribed in detail in the report), Enhanced Brand Reputation (again, no additional detail given), Connecting with Voluntary (or high social value) Organizations, Gaining New Market Intelligence to Gain Access to New Markets (the authors do not explain how this is sustainable or how it contributes to sustainability), a More Secure and Sustainable Supply Chain of Raw Materials, Improved Relations with the Financial Sector (Bendell & Kleanthous, 2007).



WHERE SUSTAINABILITY CAME FROM

“THE IDEA OF SUSTAINABLE LUXURY WAS MADE MORE RELEVANT AND POPULAR IN 2007 IN THE BENDELL AND KLEANTHOUS’S WORLD WILDLIFE FUND REPORT...”

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ECO-CENTRED VALUE EGO-CENTRED VALUE SOCIO-CULTURAL-CENTERED VALUE

WHAT IS DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY

Millennials and Gen Zs are the major driving force behind the demand for more sustainability, as they are less interested in non-sustainable raw materials, seeking culturally sensitive brands, and expecting retailers to be more progressive (sometimes exaggerated as ‘wokeness’).

There are three major angles to view value creation from the point of view of customers for whom sustainability is important: Eco-Centred Value, Ego-Centred Value, and Socio-Cultural-Centred Value. Eco-Centred Value is comprised of strategies that seek to ‘Do No Harm’ and ‘Do Good’, while Ego-Centred Value is comprised of ‘Hedonism’, ‘Durability’, ‘Health/Youthfulness’, and ‘Guilt-



LUXURY

Free Pleasure', and lastly, Socio-Cultural-Centred Value is comprised of 'Conspicuousness', 'Belonging', and 'National Identity'.

As per the many disparate and vague recommendations and strategies highlighted by Bendell and Kleanthous in 2007, and the wide array of types of sustainable value that customers are seeking, any one luxury brand can be forgiven for now knowing what strategy to utilize, to what degree, and in what area, to ensure that it has a mean-



ingful impact on their sustainability, and that said impact can be communicated to their major stakeholders, and that said communication will result in increased sales, value, or goodwill (or brand image).

Thus, most of the luxury and fashion industry that did respond to the growing demand

for sustainability, took the following actions: Increasing their alignment with major stakeholders, increasing fashion-tech initiatives and investments, formulating their own sustainability strategies, and providing Environmental, Social, and Governance reports (ESG) and/or Corporate Responsibility Reports.





HOW BRANDS UTILIZE SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

Currently, sustainability disclosure is voluntary, but is expected to be mandatory in the future. The Global Report Initiatives framework (GRI) is the most wide-ranging framework to date, articulating the sustainability indicators including Economic, Environmental, and Social (Di Leo, Mattia, Pratesi, & Principato, 2019).

The variety of frameworks, key indicators, metrics, philosophies, and strategies that

each luxury brand is exposed to when selecting a sustainability strategy can be overwhelming. As such, a recent study into sustainability implementation in the Luxury Fashion Industry showed that most Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were not met, including Energy Savings, Water Usage, Biodiversity, Emissions, Waste Discharge or Spills, etc. The most commonly addressed indicators seemed to be Energy Consumption, Process & Packaging, Waste & Emissions, Biodiversity, Materials Sourcing and Use, Water Usage, and Supply Management (Karaosman, Brun, & Morales Alonso, 2015).

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The ESG Rating also seems to be taking a foothold as more institutional investors, asset managers, financial institu-

tions, and other stakeholders prefer its metrics and evaluation method, but their ratings and methodology and scope and coverage are still varied at best. However, Bloomberg, Corporate Knights Global 100, Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Institutional Shareholder Services, MSCI ESG Research, RepRisk, Sustainalytics Company ESG Reports, and Thomson Reuters ESG Research Data are all third-party ESG Report and Rating Providers, indicating a general trend to continue its adoption (Huber, Comstock, Polk, & LLP, 2022).

Luxury Brands are actively taking on sustainable solutions and strategies. Stella McCartney is not using animal skins or furs, Kering has established a Materials Innovation Lab as of 2013, Hermes announced new materials for use in its travel bags, and Chanel has invested in sustainable silk (Ekhtari, 2022). But what is common among all the Luxury Brands that are engaging in sustainable fashion practices is that all their solutions are comparatively disparate.



So, what is a company in the Luxury industry to do with all the disparate information and non-uniform guidelines? How can a business organize its strategy to take advantage of the changes needed to improve sustainability, to also improve their competitive-

ness, or their margins, or cash flows?

The first step is to reassess the company's value proposition; what is the company selling and what are its clients buying? Many Luxury companies sell an experience, some

HOW TO NAVIGATE THE DISPARATE WORLD OF SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



sell exclusivity, while others sell quality (materials and workmanship), or an image of (or association with) luxury.

The value proposition must be in a position in which adding an element of sustainability, or improving sustainability somewhere in the company's operations or strategy, will directly improve or benefit said value proposition to the company's current or future target market.

Once a gap is discovered in the value proposition (from what it is to what it could or should be), then the company can begin strategy development.

Understanding what sustainability strategies to incorporate will require primary and secondary research among stakeholders and the target market(s). Additionally, engaging in sustainability strategies comes with an unexpected requirement: for a Luxury Company to be more agile.

Agility is a requirement in sustainable luxury because there is still no clear consensus on what sustainable

luxury looks like, where the industry should focus its efforts to have the most meaningful impact(s), and what the low-hanging fruit is (i.e., what can a Luxury Brand do today to have an immediate meaningful impact?). It is evident that 'what' sustainability in luxury is today, will be different from what it will be tomorrow, and as such, Luxury Brands that take it seriously need to be agile enough to quickly pivot towards that direction, and to do so with as little disruption to operations and cash flows as possible.

Once a Luxury Brand is confident in its new value proposition, sustainability strategy, and adequate degree of agility and resilience, it is time to communicate the new strategy, update brand guidelines and media kits, update copy and messaging in marketing materials and campaigns, and begin the implementation of sustainability strategies into operations. Additionally, it is highly recommended to not only report on the progress of said sustainability strategy implementation, but to also measure its impact objectively.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A DIFFERENTIATION FACTOR

Measurable and meaningful impacts of sustainability strategies are what differentiate the good from the bad, and reinforce a Luxury Brand's commitment to making a real difference. At the heart of the sustainability movement is the importance of having a positive impact on the environment, society, and setting up the industry to continually improve.

For a Luxury Brand to move from follower to leader in sustainable luxury, there needs to be a transparent desire from its management, employees, executives, board of directors,

shareholders, suppliers, and target market to see a marked difference towards a more sustainable long-term strategy. Sustainability is not a ground-up or top-down initiative, it is truly an all-around initiative, as its impacts affect all stakeholders.

What remains to be seen, is the actual impact on a given Luxury Brand's competitiveness, attractiveness, and bottom line, that utilizing sustainability strategies have.



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THE FUTURE OF QUALITY

SU DI TONO® & HANDLERS

How an Italian Farm and a Canadian Start-Up are Changing the Way We Look at Quality and Integrity

BY RAHI S. TAJZADEH



SU DI TONO®

The wind in your hair is the perfect companion to the warm sun on your shoulders. The smell in the air is that of freshness, flowers, and that unmistakable sense of authenticity. As you walk through the green grass and look up, there is endless blue sky, and a deep rich green carpet below your feet.

This is exactly what you needed to unwind, to relax, and to get in touch with yourself. With every breath you forget about daily life a little more. With every step you step away from stress, deadlines, and city traffic. With every passing minute you are letting yourself go to a place that exudes beauty and the best of what mother nature has to offer.

As you pass by a wide variety of garden beds you see potatoes, turnips, zucchinis, and perfectly round and ripe carmine cherry tomatoes. You can taste them just by looking at them, and soon your mouth is watering. You are here to reset your palate, and move away from simple sugars and easy answers. You are here to move closer to complex flavours, organic vegetables, ripe fruits, and fresh herbs.

You are here to live life to the fullest, and your senses are already overwhelmed with layers upon layers of the pleasant odours and flavours that can only be found in Italy. The old-world charm is working its magic, and you didn't realize you could fall in love with a





moment, but here you are, doing just that. You feel lucky to have taken the time to visit a local organic farm.

The San Pio X Organic Farm and Villa in Padova, Italy is the perfect setting to reconnect with nature and to engage in active nurturing through a love affair with delicious food. Su di tono® is the high quality Italian Organic produce line at San Pio X, a family farm and villa since 1708, located a short drive from

the majesty of Venice.

The owner/operator, Mr. Gianni Tono has combined old-world tradition with modern experience-focused strategies to offer his growing base of customers a one-of-a-kind opportunity to connect with nature.

All the fruits and vegetables are grown on the farm using ‘integral agriculture’ methods to get the most flavour and nutrition from each crop. The entire yield is certified organic, but that is the only the beginning. “We user nothing but what the earth gives us: green manure, fresh water, and plenty of sunshine without any added pesticides or fertilizers.” (Tono, 2022).

For customers that want to taste the tradition and quality of Italy, San Pio X and the Su di tono® product range are the perfect combination of experience and value. From naturally dehydrated vegetables to preservative-free ready-mixed soups, Su di tono® is demonstrating the perfect marriage of quality ingredients and high-integrity farming and preparation methodologies; they are marrying tradition with modern knowledge and science to create a better product, a better experience, and a better value.

The Su di tono® brand has at its base four keystones: Raw Materials, Methodology, Taste,

and Safety. They perfectly embody the modern zeitgeist of what people are looking for in what they can typically only imagine an organic Italian farm and its product lines. They produce sauces, dried soup mixes, vegetable-pasta, condiments, dried vegetable snacks, Italian Wasabi, chili pepper powder, spices, vegetable broth mix, and edible flowers.

The raw materials' purity is closely protected and nurtured. Crops are grown based on their own natural rhythms, without external pressure from added chemicals. The vegeta-

bles and fruits are harvested at the peak of their flavour. The entire facility has been modernized and designed to be as safe as any competing high-volume production facility, but with the human touch that makes it uniquely Italian, and uniquely local. The dehydration method used to prepare select vegetables and herbs has been refined over many years, and is developed to preserve as much of the nutritional value and the taste profile of each ingredient as possible. With no dyes, no preservatives, no added salt or sugar, and ensuring that everything is field-ripened-only



***"THE RAW MATERIALS'
PURITY IS CLOSELY
PROTECTED AND
NURTURED..."***

means that every time someone experiences Su di tono® products, they are tasting quality and integrity.

Truly, Gianni and the San Pio X Az. Agr. (est. 1708) team are a step ahead and levels above their counterparts at the grocery store, and have become a destination for the discerning palate, and the kind of cli-

ent that values sustainable farming, organic flavours, exclusive quality experiences, and a deep desire to reconnect with the earth.

You can learn more about San Pio X and Su di tono® at <https://www.sanpiox1708.it/en/> and <https://suditono.com/en/home-en/> respectively.

HANDLERS

It is a dark and quiet evening, but there is a buzz in the air. The anticipation is palpable, and there is a growing urge to make the most of every minute. Your ride takes you to the front entrance, and there are already crowds of people trying to get in; no red carpets needed. The lights and the sound emanating from within are more than just inviting, they are inescapable. You don't want to walk in, you want to run!

But you are here to do more than have a drink and a dance, meet an acquaintance and a laugh. You are here to see and be seen, to draw a crowd, and to be the centre of universe. You are here to enjoy every second, create new uncopiable memories, and to let go of your daily woes.

You are here to Live!

Inside it is even more beautiful than you imagined. The layout, the lighting, the music, the atmosphere, the people...it is a sight to be seen. You wish everyone you cared about could be here, enjoying this evening, this momentary lapse in daily life with you.

You look over and see your loved one smiling back, and you squeeze each other's hand in recognition of each other and what is about to happen. The night is young, the music is playing, the food is to die for, and there is nowhere else you want to be.

...Sounds good, doesn't it? Does it describe an exclusive black-tie party in the roaring 1920's, or a posh social-media-oriented event in 2022? Handlers is here to deliver an experience worthy of both eras: Exclusivity, Quality, and Integrity, combined with an attention to detail unrivalled by traditional event planners. What hasn't changed in the last 100 years, is people's desire to purchase a great experience, and to know that they are getting real value in the form of an unforgettable time.

EXCLUSIVITY QUALITY INTEGRITY

Handlers is a woman-led start-up out of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. It is bringing back the laser-focus on experience into modern event planning, management, and staffing. If you want a one-of-a-kind experience that will stay with you forever, Handlers will handle it; as their motto goes.

So, how can you tell that you are at a Handlers event? Prior to each event, Handlers' team checks for visual appeal: is the event 'social-media friendly'? The Handlers' team also brings with them a level of high-quality experience that is often sought-after, but rarely found.



HANDLER

Focusing on events that bring out the beauty and timelessness of celebration and youthful vigor, Handlers has found a niche that is reaching a wider audience. Millennials and Gen Zs prefer to spend their disposable income to purchase an unforgettable experience, and Handlers has its thumb on the pulse of today's youth.

Sara is Handlers' CEO, and she has several decades of experience working at the best events in the world. She has worked her way up from server to bartender, from event manager to event staffing lead and planner. Sara was tired of working for event management firms that did not share her vision for a higher quality event that combines visual beauty with the sounds and smells that make each moment one to remember, and one to capture for social media!

The youth today want to see and be seen. They want to experience new sounds, new sights, and new flavours as they move through their life's journey. Each Handlers event is an opportunity for them to celebrate their achievements, milestones, and special occasions without worrying about the details; Handlers handles the details!

Sara has spent the last few years working with The Big Leaf's team to develop a unique value proposition for attendees and organizers: a one-of-a-kind event that will have people talking for years to come. Her tenacity, drive, and years of experience working together with planners, staffers, managers, and staff have given her the tools and the vision to set Handlers on the path to offering its clients something unique.

As more people head back to work, and as the COVID-19 Pandemic (hopefully) keeps winding down, the demand for an unforgettable experience is going up. Handlers' unique value proposition of creating an event that is social-media-friendly, visually stunning, audibly entralling, and emotionally ebullient is perfectly poised to make a dent in the traditional, profit-over-people event management industry.

If you are looking for an event that will wow you and your attendees, and celebrate your life and achievements in a way that better reflects your expectations, Handlers will handle it.

Sara and the Handlers team can be reached at events@handlers.ca.



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