

Same Disruption, Different Technology

Lessons from Media for the AI Era

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Emmy Award-winning producer. 20+ years across traditional media (ESPN, ABC Radio Networks/Citadel). Now working at the intersection of organizational agility, digital strategy, and AI adoption for small businesses and nonprofits.

"The goal isn't to automate everything — it's to amplify the parts of your work that shine because of who you are and how you do it."

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How many of you, when you try to explain what's happening with AI right now, think back to the dot-com bubble?

It feels short of the mark.

The Closer Parallel is What Began Twenty Years Ago in Media.

I know this not because I was inside it.

ESPN

Early streaming era
& broadcasting

ABC Radio / Citadel

The digital crossover
in radio

1105 Media

From Print to Digital

When technology disrupts an industry,
the temptation is to *follow the tools*.

The better approach is to listen to *the people*.

Inside the Disruption

ESPN · ABC Radio / Citadel · The Facebook Moment

The Center of Something That Matters.

In Early 2000s, ESPN was still the center off sports.

The confidence that comes from being in the center of something that big is amazing.

You know your audience.

You know your product.

You know exactly what a great day looks like.

Early Streaming Audience was Small.

THE INSTITUTIONAL LOGIC

Early streaming numbers were tiny next to SportsCenter ratings. But new media is on the horizon. We need to use it to bring new eyeballs to the TV.

We'll use devices like phones and the web to do this.

THE CONSEQUENCE

ESPN in 2026 is spending billions to acquire streaming rights — NFL Network, MLB.tv — buying back access to an audience they could have built a relationship with twenty years ago.

That audience went somewhere else. Because other gave them what they wanted.

*"Dismissing a small early audience
is how you lose the long game.
Not dramatically. Quietly. Over years."*

Small Signals Compound.

A Conference room. A Chart. Two lines.

The lines were crossing. And the room — full of people who had spent careers building something real and valuable in radio were focused on the down trend line.

Radio Ad Revenue



Declining

Streaming



Rising

They Weren't Ignoring Digital. They Were Transposing it.

They spent too much time evaluating old numbers to understand where new opportunities could be built and where new metrics mattered.

Apple Podcasts, later Spotify, and the independent podcast economy filled the gap and built the relationship with the audience that radio assumed need them.

That revenue didn't come back. It doesn't come back.

Once an audience finds a home somewhere else, you don't retrieve them.

You Need to Name the Pattern

Your Greatest Asset Becomes Your Greatest Obstacle.

When you know deeply how a system works and when you've spent years developing instincts, pattern recognition, the ability to read a situation quickly, you use that knowledge to evaluate what comes next.

Until the thing that comes next doesn't work the way you've learned to read.

THE PATTERN

Disruption Arrives as a Signal, Identify the Opportunity.

In every case, I sat in a room where the most experienced, most invested, most certain about how things worked were the last to take the signal seriously.

ESPN

Dismissed the early need to build streaming infrastructure for the audience

ABC Radio

Missed the podcast economy because digital was “always” going to be secondary

A solid orange vertical bar is positioned on the left side of the slide, extending from the top to the bottom.

The Same Disruption, Right Now

Different technology. Same choice.

The automation arc.

2022–2024

Automate

~700 customer service workers replaced. AI handled two-thirds of conversations. Avg. resolution under 2 minutes. Hiring frozen.

May 2025

Recalibrate

CEO: cost had become "too predominant an evaluation factor."
Quality suffered. They had gone too far.

Feb 2026

Hybrid

Formal hybrid model. AI handles routine. Humans handle complex, emotional work. Agents recruited from their own customer base.

The conference room didn't disappear. It just got a different logo on the wall.

60%

of organizations had already reduced headcount in anticipation of AI.

2%

had AI actually performing those jobs.

Researchers call it: AI Washing.

You Know Agile Theater. This is AI Theater.

Standups that aren't really standups.

Retrospectives that don't change anything.

Transformation programs that produce certificates instead of outcomes.

55%

of employers regret AI-driven layoffs

Forrester

1 in 5

AI investments delivers any measurable return

Gartner

1 in 50

delivers transformational value

Gartner

EVERY DISRUPTION FORCES THIS QUESTION

Are you letting the technology
shape your organization?

**Or are you deliberately deciding
how your organization is going to
shape the technology into?**

Your Skills are Exactly What's Needed Because of AI.

The organizations that are failing at AI are failing at organizational change. They're failing at measurement design, at culture, at the human systems work that determines whether a tool becomes a capability or a liability.

Your expertise is not made irrelevant by AI. It becomes the thing that determines whether AI works at all.

WHAT WORKS INSTEAD

AI's Limits are Almost Never Technical. They are organizational.

KLARNA

Automated first. Measured by cost per ticket and resolution time. Quality, trust, and brand eroded quietly. Reversed course publicly — at significant cost.

IKEA

1-year internal education program. Trained the workforce to work alongside AI. Retained 8,500 workers. Not despite the technology — because of a deliberate decision about what it was for.

TAKEAWAYS

The Translation

Lesson from the story · Present-day parallel · Specific actionable move

Learn to Read the Quiet Signal. Get Uncomfortable.

Find the person in your organization leaning into AI in a way that makes you kind of uncomfortable or insecure.

Ask them to show you what they're doing and why.

TAKEAWAY

Build Human Capability Alongside the Tool.

As AI makes more things cheaper and faster, the things that remain genuinely human become rarer.

And rarity drives value.

When technology disrupts an industry,
the temptation is to follow the tool.

**The organizations that survive
follow the people.**

Stay human in an AI-native world.

That's the work.

ELECTRICK MEDIA

THANK YOU

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Let's keep the conversation going.