

*4. Design is not just what it looks like. Design is how it works, said Apple co-founder Steve Jobs. You claim that the presence on the web is no longer determined by having a nice web site only. And yet, contemporary web-based design can be used to generate business. Where do you see specific triggers at the interface between design, usability and conversion?*

In general, design of a web site matters – but content matters more than colors, pictures and logos. Specifically, many companies forget that customers will enter their web site not through the front door – i.e., through the home page – but directly into any page visible, often through search engines. This means that you must design your web page not just to be esthetically pleasant – it must also be logical in its structure, be consistent in its message and quality no matter where the customers come from, and, most importantly, easy to find and link to for customers. If you type in the name of your product or your product category in a search engine, your site better be the one that pops up on top – or you have done something wrong.

*5. For a few years already another buzzword has been on everyone's lips: social media. In brief, where do you see the most poignant relation between higher sales and social media - if there is any at all.*

Social media can be important – especially if you sell branded, high-end goods and services. They can enhance your value offering by providing customers contact with each other – many technology companies, for instance, use electronic forums to let customers help each other use, fix and even extend their offerings. They can also be a threat – news travels extremely fast on social networks, and you certainly don't want to be the company whose poor service or stiff prices everyone is talking about. That being said, social networks offer you a chance to quickly fix mistakes – and to communicate how fast you fixed them. In short, social media offers you and your reputation everything a small town offers – only on a much larger and much faster scale.

*6. Online business and e-commerce promises opportunities. On the downside, like everything, e-commerce is not only related with opportunities, but also with threats.*

For most companies, e-commerce is a good opportunity, but for many it can be the first chink in the armor, the first sign that an industry upheaval is on its way. For the music industry, for publishers, for newspapers and for anyone selling access to information or entertainment, e-commerce can, long-term, be a threat to the company's whole existence. The key lies in recognizing this threat early and turning the digital marketplace into an opportunity. For every industry facing a disruptive innovation threat such as e-commerce, there are companies that go out of existence, but also existing companies that seize the initiative and thrive in a digital environment. Often, these companies owe their existence to executives who had the foresight to see what was going to happen before it showed up in the financial results – and the legitimacy with their shareholders and their workforce to take action before everyone could see that it was necessary. Surprisingly often, these executives were not technical specialists – but they understood their business thoroughly, and that makes all the difference.