

Chapter 15

It's the Mindset, Not the Technology: The Grass Roots, Spain Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The consulting world employs millions of people and moves billions of dollars around the world. The high number of mobile phones, coupled with the fact that more than half the world is online, leads to a new paradigm in the way we think and behave as consumers. The appearance of COVID-19 is forcing all areas to urgently rethink their educational offer. The consultancy area is not immune to this “tsunami.” Spain was one of the countries most affected by the pandemic, as well as by the measures adopted in response to COVID-19, with very serious economic, financial, and social consequences. This chapter’s focus will be on Grass Roots Spain, a consulting company, and on the way it adapted its business model as a result of the pandemic crisis.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 gained worldwide awareness in January 2020 (“Corporate Learning,” 2020). Seeking to prevent the spread of the disease, many governments implemented lockdowns (Taylor, 2020), and these continue as of this writing. The global economy has been severely affected by COVID-19 by the direct impact on demand and supply, the disruption created in the supply chain and market, and finally by the financial

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impact on companies and financial markets (“Corporate E-Learning,” 2020). E-learning solutions have become a reality in all sectors of activity including high education and the corporate world (“Global E-Learning Industry,” 2020). The growth of e-learning is estimated at 13% for the period 2017-2022, in a market of more than 30 billion dollars (“Global Corporate E-learning,” 2020).

Modern society needs citizens increasingly capable of facing a future that is increasingly complex and with enormous speed. Worldwide, in recent years, there has been a rapid growth of students in higher education. The consultancy area is an integral part of the universe of education. The consulting industry went from a turnover of 2 billion dollars (Turner, 1982) to a global value of 160 billion US dollars, with the United States accounting for almost 50% of that value (“Size of the management,” 2019). In terms of employment, in 2018 the management consultant industry employed, in the United States alone, approximately 700,000 professionals (“Size of the global,” 2020). The global online education market in 2019 reached values close to 190 billion dollars and is expected to reach a total market size of more than 320 billions dollars in 2025 (“Global Online Education,” 2020).

Currently 50% of the world is online, compared to less than 7% in 2000 (Hillyer, 2020). Internet access to many regions in the world, as well as the sale of smartphones, leverages this market growth (“Global Online Education,” 2020). In this new reality composed of the ubiquity of online and the consequences of COVID-19, marketing must reinvent itself. Empathizing with the consumer, maintaining an open channel of dialogue, building and increasing trust, and planning for the future are examples of actions to be taken (Morgan, 2020). The new behaviors adopted by consumers as a result of the pandemic encourage brand managers to review their policies and consumer relationships. Combined with the creation and reinforcement of brands’ relationships with consumers, the responsiveness of brands, will make a difference, whether in new products, services, or experiences (Longo, 2020).

As these words are written, in Madrid Gran Vía, the avenue par excellence in a metropolis of consumption, almost 30% of its stores are closed (Zafra, Peinado, López, & Pires, 2020). Higher education and the area of education worldwide is estimated to be severely affected. That’s the case of the consultancy world, where the financial impact will be felt in an overwhelming way. Due to the outbreak of this new corona virus, it is estimated that global values will fall by US 132 billion dollars (“Size of the global,” 2020). After the lockdown imposed by the Spanish government on 14th of March 2020 (Minder & Peltier, 2020) twenty-four hours were enough for Grass Roots Spain’s business to drop 90%. For consultancy companies, an urgent, deep, and broad rethink of the corporate learning model is mandatory. Taking into account the pandemic situation that we are going through, this chapter focus on consulting, and consumer-brand relationships, highlighting the importance of the e-learning factor. Building upon a business reality at Grass Roots, the goal of this research is to present a case study: the UP Academy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher Education and E-learning

Due to the benefits in the development of research, knowledge and technological innovation, higher education is considered an important driver of development in the knowledge society (Allais, 2017). The objectives of higher education are very similar to those of all education: to prepare and develop citizens in such a way that they can have satisfactory performances, both individually and socially (Keniston, 1960). A modern higher education institution’s main objective is to understand the factors and circum-

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