



Embracing disruptors facing Ontario's livestock industry

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What is it?

A disruptor can be defined as a shock to a system that causes fundamental shifts in how the system operates. These days, they seem to be all around us.

We can break disruptors into at least two categories. One type are natural disasters (e.g., disease outbreak, fire, flood). We view these through an emergency management framework. The emphasis is on managing our collective risk and the work is divided into 4 categories:

- Prevention/mitigation
- Preparedness
- Response
- Recovery

There is often a legislated role for government ie, to lead the response. Industry associations sit at the table and assist. Businesses essentially follow directions (evacuate, biosecurity etc.).

We see other types of disruptors through the lens of societal evolution and innovation. (e.g., animal welfare, cellular agriculture). These disrupters threaten some but provide great opportunity to others, including new players. Although government may have a role in smoothing the transition and setting new standards, there isn't the same expectation of collective action. Businesses who "get it" will thrive. Others will not.

We can think about these types of disruptors using an innovation framework:

- Define: What exactly is going on? Can this be an opportunity for my business?
- Discover: what are the potential responses?
- Develop: the prototype solution
- Demonstrate: test the model
- Repeat.

Type of Disruptor	Nature-based	Society/ Technology
Risk	Collective	Individual
Lens	Emergency management	Innovation
Role of government	Lead response	Policy?
Role of industry organizations	Cooperative leadership	Strategic intelligence
Role of business	Comply	Compete

Why it matters to the Ontario livestock industry:

By definition, disruptors knock you off your strategic plan. However, there are almost always early signs that something is changing. So, where do you start looking?

Within your sector,

- Follow the money. What's attracting investors.
- Talk with your customers.
- Watch where the workforce is headed.
- Listen to trade organizations and farm organizations.

The challenge is that real disruption occurs when different sectors collide. It's as important to look outside the industry as within. It's not as easy to do. We talk a lot about looking forward and planning for the future. If writer William Gibson is correct and the future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed, maybe we should talk more about what's happening beside us.

Climate change, new technology, geopolitical instability - it's a wild world. There are ways of breaking down the noise. Businesses, industry organizations and governments have different roles to play depending on the type of disruption that is emerging. Strategic agility – the ability to respond to something that knocks you off your strategic plan - has never been more important. That means being more thoughtful at what's coming at you, and how to approach it.

For more information

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