WeThink. Differently.

Our society has changed — dramatically — over the past few decades. We often talk about these changes in the context of business (flattening), technology (opening) and community (connecting). But changes are being seen everywhere, in every community, and by every sector of our society.

Technology and the Internet, and their role in our lives, has changed how we communicate, get and share information, the media we consume, and the reasons we engage with each other — online and offline. The effects of these changes are being felt by all of us, every day, all the time.

Information moves faster. People are more closely connected. The expectations we all have for what we want to see and hear have changed. The kind of relationship and support we want from organizations have been redefined. Our connection to the issues and events that define our world has been transformed.

The ubiquity of technology and the reach of the Internet make it possible to spread a message farther and have it be embraced by more people than ever before. The rise of social platforms leaves no doubt that we are one global, interconnected community and capable of taking action on issues we passionately share. The available tools make it possible for everyone to have a platform from which to speak, and anyone to spark a bottom-up, grassroots-fueled revolution that has power no individual or entity could generate.

The result: these massive, disruptive changes to our society force us to change. How organizations operate, organize, and communicate must be re-imagined. The passion and interest of individuals all around the world must be refocused and redirected. The ways that companies measure success should be re-envisioned. The way we promote big ideas, fund new ventures, and pursue different opportunities must be re-configured.

The first step is to think differently.

WeThink is a conversation about innovation and the future of our society — an effort to explore new ideas and promote solutions to the challenges that our society is facing.

WeThink is driven by a simple concept: We Media changes the way we innovate. It forces new approaches to the ways that we create, sustain, and grow successful ventures. We Media enhances the structures, models and economies that support human communication, interaction and achievement. And it challenges us to review our existing approaches, break apart our established structures, and re-build our approach to the future.

We Media changes everything. We Media makes us think differently.

We Media is a movement — a concept — that helps explain how we know what we know, who we trust, and how we learn. It's about power of the community. We Media is part of the infinite quest to harness the power of media, communication and human ingenuity for the common good.

WeMedia is central to the work of today's business leaders, technologists, investors, entrepreneurs, news and product managers, social activists, public policymakers and knowledge creators. It is a simple way of describing how everything in our life is fragmenting and blurring.

For those who pursue innovation We Media is an invitation to use media and technology to establish new lines of

communication and intelligence gathering. For those who support and promote change, We Media is an opportunity to reinvent the process of entrepreneurship, and explore new ways of motivating people and positioning organizations to communicate, solve problems and conduct business differently.

To create change, we have to begin by recognizing that the ways that we reach, educate, engage and mobilize audiences aren't working anymore.

A total reset in thinking

Today, we live in a globalized, smaller, more tightly connected and more deeply intertwined world than ever before. Each one of us has the ability to transform the way the world thinks about critically important issues. Each of us brings a different set of insights, experiences, and perspectives that challenge the established structures and call into the question the agreed-upon protocols for how work gets done. Even the most successful companies and leaders will now have their ideas challenged. But the radical shifts that we expect to see haven't happened yet. Not fully. Not in the ways that we think, and sometimes know, are now possible.

The tools and channels that have been created in the last few years have generated a lot of excitement and attention, but the underlying models and structures that are driving innovation, and creating the marketplace for new companies hasn't fully changed. To create change, we have to begin by recognizing that the ways that we reach, educate, engage and mobilize audiences aren't working anymore – that technology can facilitate the activities and behaviors we believe are needed, but the content we deliver and communities we support are critical components as well.

The structure and focus of business must change.

In today's world, success doesn't come as a result of good communications or creative marketing. A flashy launch doesn't generate the same kind of excitement it has in the past. Most new ideas, no matter how good, don't break through — and the ones that do are struggling to scale, or generate revenue. It is not easy to embrace an approach that hasn't been tested. It is even more difficult to try something truly different. But it's necessary.

A challenge to the existing structure

The public is more engaged than ever before, more capable of collecting and sharing information with a wider audience — for free — than at any point in our history. This drives greater interest in media and a greater opportunity to foster and promote new ideas, that include a larger, more diverse audience in the shaping and supporting of companies and innovations than ever before. A more diverse and interesting culture is emerging. We have an unprecedented opportunity to engage, drive participation, and mobilize action in new and exciting ways.

This is an invitation to act.

We should look for more opportunities to bring together disparate ideas, across sectors and disciplines — so the silos that exist within organizations, and the self-reinforcing beliefs that stifle true creativity and change, can finally be abandoned.

Think bigger. The potential for technology and the Internet to redefine how people pursue big ideas is huge. But we have to recognize that the majority of the population doesn't live in Silicon Valley, cares little about the community that builds and

deploys new technologies and platforms, and never realizes even the most basic benefits of the ventures that are created. What the audience wants, and cares about, is finding value in the things they buy, support from the services they are offered, and fulfillment from the time they spend – however it is applied. The way(s) that new ventures are supported today don't offer that in most cases. They favor old models, slight changes to existing approaches, and safe ideas. They care more about narrow metrics than broad impact.

To break this cycle, the organizational structures and approaches that are in place to support ventures and foster innovation should be abandoned. Instead of measuring success by attracting a mass audience for a simple offering, we should look to build ventures that benefit from the unique and powerful commitments that small, dedicated, passionate audiences can make. We should look at how to shift, and adapt, the commitments that organizations are making, and how they share them with the world — how the reach and influence of the crowd can help individual companies, as well as communities, to achieve their desired results. We should look for more opportunities to bring together disparate ideas, across sectors and disciplines — so the silos that exist within organizations, and the self-reinforcing beliefs that stifle true creativity and change, can finally be abandoned. When we do this — if we can think bigger — we can make innovation a shared interest and common opportunity, not the domain of only a handful of people and groups.

Be the media. No single publication, channel or service has the ability to cover the full range of what is happening in the world, or satisfy the diverse interests of people who are interested, or even already involved, in the quest to push the boundaries of innovation. The mainstream discussion of new ideas and ventures is paltry, and to the extent which any coverage exists,

there are huge gaps in the knowledge and perspective that is offered. There are blogs and feeds to follow and so-called experts who share their thoughts and perspectives, but many people simply aren't aware of what is happening or what opportunities exist. New ventures, and the community that supports them, spend most of their time talking to each other, despite the infrastructure that allows them to communicate, educate, engage and mobilize audiences everywhere.

The concept that any organization can be its own media is far from new. Organizations can seize the opportunity to create coverage, to share information, to explain more issues, and to tell more compelling stories. The venture community can help inform its audience and support their interests. Those who push innovative solutions can use their influence and credibility, the partnerships that they have developed, and the channels that are widely available today (and in some cases were built thanks to their support and funding), to elevate the discussion, increase awareness, and invite feedback and discussion.

We need to do more. We need to do better. There should be more voices, more access to information, more collaboration, and more ambition.

Do More! Our world is obsessed with big: big business, big audiences, big excitement. But size and scope are not always the most effective ways to create change, or do interesting things. When it comes to fostering innovation and creating successful, sustainable ventures the results are still pretty disappointing. For every success story there are hundreds, maybe thousands, of mismanaged opportunities. For every new model that is developed or game-changer that emerges, millions of dollars and hours were wasted on projects

that never should have been pursued. We need to do more. We need to do better. There should be more voices, more access to information, more collaboration, and more ambition. Fueled by technology, we all have the ability to learn or discuss whatever we believe is relevant, to produce and distribute information so that it reaches audiences any time, any place, with a more diverse (and deeply invested) audience, and through any device.

Instead of a few dozen funders and validators, there should be thousands. Instead of holding competitions to highlight the best ideas, we should be organizing more opportunities to make the ideas even better. Instead of rewarding ownership and encourage secrecy, we should be facilitating openness and encouraging collaboration.

Everyone has an ability to find solutions, break down barriers, and help address complex issues and challenges. The venture community must do more to expand the reach and impact of its work, and make connections with people who aren't currently involved. The people who foster innovation, at every level, must do more to help shape and define the ways we respond to the challenges that exist in our society – not by taking on the burden themselves, but by distributing the responsibility and supporting learning and action.

The Time To Change Is Now

We haven't seen many startups fully embrace the potential that technology and the Internet has created, or the funders who enable their work demand even greater outcomes than we are currently realizing. We haven't seen many organizations making the kinds of changes that are necessary. Even the largest and most highly regarded organizations are barely scratching the surface of what is possible. Everyone is failing at something.

Organizations are still spending too much time trying to contain the conversations,

to shape and channel their interests and behaviors of people in the world to suit a particular agenda or advance their particular efforts. Most people are trying to sell a new tool, a widget or a structured approach. Organizations still focus mostly on how to communicate most effectively, the best ways to deliver a message, and the tools that can help them broadcast their message to the most people. People still want to have control. But no organization or institution has control anymore.

The community has greater potential for influence than any one organization can even begin to imagine.

The content of those messages, how they relate to their audience, or the ways that their ideas might fit with the rest of the information experience that people are having every day, is what will motivate action and drive outcomes. The community has greater potential for influence than any one organization can even begin to imagine. Organizations should be looking to support and enhance the interests of their audience, to engage them in conversation, and to listen to what they are saying. An organization's willingness – and ability — to meet the needs and satisfy the interests of the individuals who demonstrate an interest is what will determine whether your work is meaningful and measurable in the future.

Anyone can use the tools, or build their own. But technology is not the answer. What you do with those tools is what matters. How well you know your audience is what should define your actions. Organizations must spend more time adapting and evolving, focusing on improving their activities based on what they hear, and the opportunities that people beyond their walls are helping to create for them.

We need to fundamentally shift the way we think about how innovation is pursued, ventures are supported, and success is measured. A new approach is needed. The venture world has an opportunity to embrace technology and the Internet in ways that few can — and play a unique role in mobilizing the public. The funding community can, and should, go beyond their current levels of commitment — in dollars — but also in terms of energy and focus, time, and expertise.

Change is hard. There are huge barriers to overcome and challenges that will need to be addressed. Every new venture is competing for attention with thousands of other organizations, brands, and media. Their staff and partners, many of who have been successful in the past with other methods, or more standard ways of operating, may not be willing to embrace either the significant shift in approach that is required, or the effects those changes. Those challenges are important and must be understood. To be successful we have to find a way to calm the fears, address the questions and respond to the criticisms. But the fact that these significant shifts might be difficult, or noisy, occasionally messy, or even produce outcomes that are not anticipated – and not necessarily welcomed at first – is not a reason to keep from making changes. It's the reason you should.

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