

Airbnb's 'connected disruption' model

 By [Ann Nurock](#)

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Brian Chesky cofounder and CEO of Airbnb, kicked off his keynote presentation at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity with the following rather staggering quote: "Tonight in Cannes, 5,100 people are staying at Airbnb and 1.3million people are staying in an Airbnb somewhere in the world."

This is the company that a few years ago coined its name after its first guest stayed on an inflated mattress and was served a fabulous breakfast. Chesky sums up the humble beginning as: "They were greeted as strangers and left as friends."



It's a statement that highlights Chesky's belief that all people are fundamentally good. They wanted to create a sharing and trusting world, where people who travel always feel they belong.

Good intentions aside, it hasn't always been smooth sailing. For example, in 2011 a woman's apartment was trashed after a guest's visit and the backlash was severe. People posted messages with the hashtag #RIPAIRBNB. As a company, they had to make a decision on how to deal with this crisis, was based on the difference between a business decision and principle decision. They did what they believed was right: They wrote a letter to a million people apologising to the owner of the trashed apartment with a \$50k guarantee as well as Chesky's personal email address. "If you are not willing to risk anything, do nothing," states Chesky

This ties into the trend of people moving from trusting big brands to trusting people. This is evident from social media in all forms, where the people have a voice.

Mobile: Beyond the smartphone

Travel is one of the least informed industries there is, as tourism promotes things that locals would never do themselves. Chesky uses the analogy of travelling on a cruise ship vs. staying at an Airbnb. When a traveller comes off the ship, they are an outsider. When you stay at an Airbnb, you get to know the area and community. You are an insider. You are connected.

“We are in the business of providing amazing trips for people. An end-to-end experience where you get to interact with the people,” he explains. Chesky believes the future is all about mobile, “and this is not to just about the smartphone. More people are more mobile in their cities. Live a month here and a month there.”

That’s why Chesky says politicians like Donald Trump wanting to build a wall and the possibility of Brexit or Britain’s exit from the EU are creating a world of “hunkering down” and isolation, which younger people do not want. They want to be global citizens. They want a world where they feel they can be trusted and where they can belong, and Airbnb wants to provide this.

ABOUT ANN NUROCK

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