

An excerpt from [Saving The World](#) at Work by Tim Sanders

The end of the last Ice Age, which occurred between 9,000 and 13,000 year so, was a highly disruptive time for the woolly mammoth. Long adapted to the cold, this mega-mammal flourished in a frozen environment. But as the ice sheets started cracking and then retreating, life for mammoths got ugly. They lost their food sources (a by-product of the changing climate), their reproduction rate decreased, and their numbers shrank. To make matters worse, they were losing their habitat to the mammalian revolutionaries of the times: the humans who were crossing the Bering Strait from Asia to North America. No match for their new predators, the mammoths, living in the wrong place at the wrong time, disappeared forever.

Unlike in the Ice Age, in today's Information Age, survival is a choice rather than a destiny. The just-for-profit mammoths of the world have the ability to recognize cracks in their economic ice, a fast-changing business climate, and the arrival of revolutionary predators. They can embrace the changes, adapt, and thrive—if they can see the signs and make the moves.

The disruptive phase is a period during which companies that don't adhere to the new values suffer losses in critical business areas. Disruption generally begins in the industries where the new value is most lacking. Eventually, it spills over into every industry. This phase is often marked by incumbent industry leaders being toppled or, at the least, highly diminished by market pressures.

The disruptive phase of the Responsibility Revolution will cause tens of thousands of American businesses to suffer great losses, forcing them either to adapt or to shrivel. They will lose customers, talent, and capital. And, especially for those companies whose leaders live in a state of denial, interlopers will chip away at their remaining profitability until finally they can no longer survive.

Those companies that do survive the disruptive phase of the Responsibility Revolution—I call them the late followers—will experience tremendous upheaval. The laggards will dig in their heels, deny there are cracks in the ice, and foolishly try to wrestle with the revolutionaries. They face the same future as the mammoth.

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