

Who's afraid of digital?

Jean-Luc Ambrosi | 25 February, 2014 09:39 | Comments | Share this post |

No matter where you look, marketers are torn between excitement and apprehension about the new digital landscape. In fact, the questioning the digital evolution is raising can turn marketing operations on their heads for a number of valid reasons.

First, the rapid evolution of technology makes it difficult to stay up-to-date with the most effective use of digital mediums. Differentiating the truly ground-breaking from a new fad is at times very difficult. New technologies or channels require in-depth understanding to produce optimal impact on prospects and customers. These channels can also be multi-faceted, meaning that they need to be comprehended within context and against specific customer and business segments.

Take social media. The reality is that social media incorporates many tools, many channels and technologies, each requiring a different approach generating different impacts on customers segments. Social media is not one medium but hundreds. The same perspective can be applied to online advertising, email marketing or websites. Therefore time, dedication and proper testing to build this understanding are required.

Secondly, marketers know a multi-channel approach is necessary to build effectiveness, but the digital world offers many channels and multi-channel integration is increasingly growing in complexity. Most research points to the fact that while organisations are advancing further into multi-channel marketing, they lack confidence in understanding and determining the best multi-channel strategies. In other words, marketers understand this is the right course but are unsure as to how to achieve it.

The third factor relates to the impact of technology on the role of marketing within organisations. On one hand, corporate affairs have been successful of late at taking responsibility for the brand. The brand, the sacrosanct domain of marketing and the Holy Grail all marketers aspire to hold in their palms from the moment they graduate. Is under threat. While marketers have spent years trying to demonstrate the value of brands within organisations, this value is finally becoming more recognised and as a consequence, other areas are vying for its ownership.

For example, following the relative success at grabbing a chunk of social media, corporate affairs are using this momentum to take hold of the brand. We would have thought corporate strategy would become more successful at grabbing brands and digital ownership, but they seemed too worried working out numbers that don't make sense to those lacking an initiation in alchemy, leaving others to care about the intangible nature of brands.

Last but not least, a new battlefield has emerged between marketing and IT as to who owns the digital strategy. CMOs and CIOs are going head-to-head in their attempts to look at digital from a customer-centric perspective as opposed to a technology centric one.

The digital landscape offers new opportunities to deliver communication strategies based on a true multi-channel approach. More than ever, building a factual understanding of how digital works in direct response communication, brand building, demand generation and relationship management requires relying on true multi-channel experts.

This places marketers in an ideal position to lead. But in doing so marketers must also understand that they do not sit outside the organisation. For years marketing has been battling its integration, or lack of, with sales but now it must also integrate with corporate affairs, IT, client services and business strategy.

Those who understand that the old demarcations between vertical areas are a thing of the past century will be able to gain a significant strategic advantage. They will take their organisations above and beyond the limitations of their internal boundaries to use digital like any other mediums, focusing on the only thing that really matters: Customers.

Tags: customer engagement, digital economy, brand strategy

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