VISIBILITY

Case Study

Marketing Public Relations Campaign

LAST EXIT
www.LastExit.tv

Phase One
March 2009 - March 2010

Program Goal
Establish a voice of authority for emerging
digital strategy / advertising agency.

Develop concepts for and place bylined columns
for agency principals and discipline directors
in key marketing industry media.

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Len Stein – President

TRENDS

10 digital tre

Nuri Djavit, partner at Last Exit, highlights the expected key trends in digital marketing in the coming year

This year has seen a flurry of activity in digital marketing. Brands and digital agencies alike are fast reacting and gearing up for yet another year of rapid changes that will incorporate both the transformational and the incremental.

All eyes seem to be on social marketing and, while it will certainly be at the core of many campaigns, it will not be the only thing commanding a shift in how we communicate.

This year will see the hype calming around Facebook apps, Twitter campaigns and ROI models for social media. Digital experts at Last Exit have put together the following list of top digital marketing trends for 2010.

FACEBOOK REPLACES EMAIL

1 Google has it; Hoover has it (in the UK, anyway); TiVo had it, lost it, got it back. Xerox had it. What is it? It's when a brand name becomes the verb associated with its use: rather than searching online, you Google; or Tivo it, when recording a television show.

Arguably, a more powerful phenomenon occurs when a brand becomes a noun, like Polaroid. The newest is Facebook, as in 'I Face-booked you' – I added you as a friend, or sent a Facebook message. No-one has owned such communication before. No brand ever became synonymous with email.

The disruption of Facebook is its displace-ment of personal email; it's completely permis-sion based, with no spam and no address book – all your friends are there. Where does this leave marketers? While brands are not included in the conversation, they can be part of, or hosts of, the party.

Opportunities in social media market-ing seem boundless; the best do not seek to disrupt conversations but to integrate – to add something useful and compelling.

OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE MAKES MONEY IN THE CLOUD

2 Something is happening in the open source software world. Projects that were once the purview of program-mers are now available to the masses, such as Beanstalk, a hosted, version-controlled code repository that uses the Subversion open source project. While it's a big deal to set up and maintain a Subversion repository (you need a server), Beanstalk creat-ed a low-cost, subscription-based service that removes the hassle. Such services can only exist with cloud computing, so Beanstalk doesn't have huge upfront capital outlays but pays only for what customers use. With the right skills, any open source project can be commercialised.

It becomes possible for big ideas, with cutting-edge online experiences, to be devel-oped. Ideas can be 'beta' tested with limited investment without costly fat-piped environ-ments. Even developers can test on modules that won't disrupt core application work.

MOBILE COMMERCE – A PROMISE YET TO DELIVER

3 Tantalising as 'convergence' has sounded for the past decade, mobile commerce hasn't delivered. The game changer is the iPhone/iTunes platform. In-app purchases tempt users to buy upgrades and updates, while iTunes holds their credit card information. All is handled seam-lessly enough to promote impulse purchases. It would seem an easy task to extend to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout.

Mobile commerce has the power to drive 'paid' models. Brands can test subscription models, including micro payment systems, which have potential for news/magazine media. If the experience is good enough, people will pay for what's on offer.

FEWER REGISTRATIONS – ONE SIGN-IN FITS ALL

4 I use a Mac application that securely holds my login details for some 50 sites. However, I now resent having to register for anything. If I want to leave a pithy comment on a blog, why must I register again? That's why Facebook Connect and OpenID are being adopted at great speed. Perhaps next year, I'll be able to buy something using my Facebook login.

Brands must alter policies dictating what they require from people regarding inform-

ıds for 2010

ation and measurement. By embracing open ID/Facebook Connect-type registration, brands will see a lift in traffic and conversion.

DISRUPTION VERSUS CONTINUITY – ALTERNATIVES TO THE 'BIG IDEA'

5 As social networks grow, businesses are investing in community building as a market driver. According to Deloitte's recent *Tribalization of Business* study, 94% of businesses will continue or increase their investment in social media and, for the majority, their marketing function will drive this investment. As shown by the release of 'free floating' social tools like Google Wave and Sidewiki, there is also a shift towards social activity integrated into networks, rather than concentrated within discrete platforms. While advertising seeks to distinguish itself by disruptive 'big ideas', the emphasis is shifting toward persuasion – fitting organically into the consumer's social sphere.

THE EVOLUTION OF WEB-DRIVEN, OPEN SOURCE DIY CULTURE

6 Much has been said about the potential of collective intelligence (crowdsourcing) to reconfigure industries by harnessing a network of independent suppliers. On the other hand, the power of networked resources has emboldened individuals to tackle complex

undertakings themselves. From drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and university open courseware, to services such as Ponoko, Spoonflower and CafePress, that facilitate small-scale production, and offline resource pooling (such as pop-up retail and collective office spaces), people are discovering that it has never been easier to do it themselves. Maybe this is a chance for brands to view the growth of online boutiques as a distribution shift opportunity. Big brands might consider extending their retailer networks by offering online tools for ordering wholesale, or APIs for retailers to white-label and sell directly.

INFO-ART

7 Where once we had pop-psychologists, we now have pop-statisticians and pop-economists. The growing flood of data, and access to rich data sources, has made data analysis a defining skill. By the same token, the skill of elegantly visualising data has become a defining art, with infographics becoming increasingly pervasive as we seek to sift mountains of data.

A common example is the phone bill – a frustration for those who want to pay it, rather than comprehend it. Infographics might be a way to look at usage behaviour matched to services via visual mechanisms. This strategy might one day extend to all touchpoints in daily behaviour – banking, trading, utilities, grocery shopping and even taxes.

CROWDSOURCING

8 Crowdsourcing will become a growing part of 'elance' (online freelance) outsourcing strategies. Organisations will mobilise 'passionista' (consumer brand advocate) groups to carry messages but, more importantly, to take part in collaborative activities.

From political canvassing and software development to citizen journalism, expect growth in crowdsourcing models led by social media strategies. Brands must be part of this movement. Consider the car; while major automotive companies have teams of designers and engineers, there are potentially many people with better ideas outside the network.

MORE FLASH ON MOBILE DEVICES

9 Outside brand, micro and media sites, Flash has faced an uncertain future as a tool for serious website development. But Adobe's rich media tool has enjoyed the staunch support of the development community. New tricks, authoring tools, and server-side scripting workarounds mean Flash-built websites now serve up deep, searchable sites that allow detailed analytics and SEO.

The adoption of Flash on mobile devices will dramatically increase the desire for brand transporting, conversion-orientated experiences. For those in the agency world, this could mean a focusing of skills. Currently, to be relevant to every brief for integrated campaigns, an agency must maintain diverse skill-sets.

As Adobe pushes Flash deeper into the market, clients will benefit from contiguous experiences and the rapid deployment of new technologies, such as Adobe's coming iPhone development platform.

OPT-IN TO BIG BROTHER – LOCATION BASED SERVICES

10 For many of us, the concept of volunteering real-time, geo-locating notes on where we are, and how often we go there, goes against the grain. The first apps off the starting grid, such as Loopt, didn't seem to catch on. Initially, it was because people didn't want to constantly publish their whereabouts. Perhaps with the passing of a few years and the rampant adoption of Facebook and other social platforms, the idea has grown on us. Now, along comes FourSquare, a lovely, simple app that allows you to gather points based on the frequency of visits to the establishments on your social calendar – and the uptake is incredible.

More and more location-based games and utilities will start to launch. From shopping, to social hook-ups, to strategy gaming and good old, straightforward boozing with your pals, the idea of being always 'on' will increase dramatically over the next 12 months and brands will be able to offer highly targeted and geo-relevant services.

Published: February 24 2010

10 neglected interactive marketing best practices

By **Fred Brown**

10 neglected interactive marketing best practices

Writing an article about 10 often-neglected interactive marketing best practices assumes that there are 10 best practices to begin with -- let alone 10 that we manage to neglect. In an industry that started not so long ago -- and one that changes radically in the time it takes my iPhone contract to expire -- best practices are a hard donkey on which to pin the tail.

But luck is at hand. Mike Yapp, executive creative director at Carat Fusion, gave us 10 best interactive marketing practices on this very website. If I were to undertake a review of Mike's top 10, I could easily find examples of marketers failing to listen to his (very good) advice and be home in time for tea. However, Mike's article was written back in January 2006. Since then, social media and mobile have crashed the party and taken over the DJ's booth; everyone's dancing to a different tune now. And some people are not dancing at all. Rather, caught like rabbits in the headlights of the interactive marketing juggernaut, they're just wondering what to do next. Some don't even realize it is not 2006 any more.

Stay informed. For more insights into current interactive marketing best practices, attend ad:tech San Francisco, April 19-21. Learn more.

I remember working in New York in the late 1990s. Mary Meeker was the prophet, and we did Prince proud -- "Tonight I'm gonna party like it's 1999." And then it all went horribly wrong. We were put back in our boxes and FedExed back to wherever we had come from. Lots of people still feel neutered by the experience. Confident 20-somethings have become cautious, risk averse 30-somethings, eyeing the interactive marketing behemoth with suspicion. But this time, it will not crash into the dotcom barrier; it is fuelled by high-octane ROI and pulled along by consumers. We are at (some of) the controls.

With that in mind, there are certain levers in front of us that we are not pulling nearly as commandingly as we should be. Here are my top 10 tips for getting back on track.

Take risks.

We should take more risks -- like we used to when it all began. When the right opportunity beckons, go for something exceptional over something that will tick all the boxes. Our time has come. The spotlight is on us, and 99 percent of what is created online could have the logo swapped out and the customer wouldn't notice. With the possible exception of the nuclear sector, best practices in any industry involve taking risks to achieve progress. Be bold. We don't all admire Apple because it is mediocre.

To see mediocrity where excellence is deserved, just look at Boeing.com. In fact, don't look -- because it is dreadful and will spoil your day. I love this company. The 747 is my transport of choice -- so much sexier than the A380. It has presence -- and a soul. I am writing this article on one right now. How can the company that created this majestic airplane (and that is leading the world in advanced composites with the new 787 Dreamliner) have this as its website? It should be amazing, and it is not. Very naughty.

What Boeing does have is a research and development department, something that doesn't seem to exist in the marketing lexicon. Which leads me to my next point.

Invest a portion of the marketing budget in *marketing* R&D.

If you want to capitalize on the new opportunities that social media and mobile provide, you need to invest some time in exploration. If I had a dollar for every middle-ranking marketer who wants to try new things but has a boss who "doesn't get interactive," I would be on a private jet right now. Authorizing an R&D budget over which someone who understands interactive has purse-string control will enable the experimentation that can surprise everyone. "JetBlue and United give Twitter a try to sell airline seats fast." That's the ticket. Better to cannibalize your own marketing channels than have a competitor cannibalize your entire business.

Boeing also has a department filled with engineers, for whom I have a great admiration; before I earned my crust in interactive, I designed radiation monitors and engineered (slightly smaller) aircraft. At the time, I thought we had challenges -- but this industry is harder. It looks easy, but it isn't. Anyone who has tried to get a website working in IE6 will agree. It is no accident that engineering terms are everywhere -- wireframe, QA, version control. But I don't think the interactive engineers (usually called "geeks") get the attention, respect, and resources they deserve. And I don't think they have enough resources to make things work properly. If you need an example, try printing a statement from HSBC on a Mac and see what happens (or doesn't happen). Either the company's technical specification ignored Mac users, or its QA process doesn't work. Which leads us to best practice No. 3.

Think about people.

Sadly, people are often forgotten all round -- it's far easier to call them "users." Why else is it that we have functional specification documents an inch thick but

not an emotional specification? We spend all day thinking about what people can do online, and far too little time thinking about how the experience makes them *feel*. Traditional advertising never made this mistake. Thus:

Take lessons from best practices in more-established communication disciplines.

The more-established communication disciplines have a lot to offer the digital space. Traditional advertising has always pursued the big idea. Big ideas are memorable long after an endless stream of web pages is forgotten. As an Englishman, I was expecting rather more from your eponymous bank. But if there was an emotional specification for the Bank of America website, then it must have said: Don't show any.

Perhaps writing the technical specification and functional specification is taking us all so long we don't have the time for emotion. And when it comes to the build, would any other profession put up with having to comply with eight different standards, as we are required to with IE6, 7, 8, Firefox 2, 3, Safari 3, 4, and Chrome? That leads me to my fifth neglected best practice.

Get on the same page.

As an industry, we have not put in place the foundations of a profession, with standards that we work to. Perhaps the pace of the industry means formalizing today feels like a waste of time when tomorrow will bite us on the backside if we aren't careful. But this is costing us all a fortune, and that's not the kind of job creation we need. Not to mention, history is set to repeat itself with mobile phone browsers and applications. .Net magazine is running a campaign to end IE6. It is a start, and I salute you.

We need a gun for past standards and a crystal ball for the future.

Equip yourself with a range of tactical responses to what the interactive future might hold.

In order to be a thought leader, you have to have a thought that sounds right and is (more often than not) proven to be right. But if any of us knew with any certainty how the digital landscape will change in the next five years, we would be shareholders in the companies that don't yet exist but will have market capitalizations to rival the GDP of countries in 2015. Last Exit partner Nuri Djavit is fond of "The Art of War." Chapter 8 deals with "variation in tactics" and the need for flexibility in your responses. It explains how to respond to shifting circumstances successfully.

We need to equip ourselves with a range of tactical responses to what the interactive future might hold. History is littered with companies that didn't adapt quickly enough -- something that some competitors to the iPhone and Blackberry will soon no doubt be experiencing first hand.

One very good source of information about what people want is our customers. The internet is awash with opinions on almost anything by almost everyone, and yet far too few companies tap in to that in order to inform their marketing approaches. Which leads us to my next point:

Engage with your customers at all stages of the relationship -- before, during, and after the sale.

If we listen, they will speak.

Speaking is something we don't seem to be doing too well to each other in the marketing industry. In such a rapidly evolving landscape, you would think we would all club together and share knowledge like crazy. But I am not sure that we *really* do in the one area that matters most. In every new client meeting, the question that is asked with the most interest is "How much does what I want cost?"

In this sense, we need to:

Have a clear understanding of what can be achieved with the resources available.

The thing that would help most marketers (and agencies) is an established sense of what can be achieved at what price. The automotive industry is vocal about what it costs to develop a car (typically $500 million and up for a new model). The aviation industry is the same (about $1 billion for a regional jet). And yet how many marketers set out on a path to deliver the quality, functionality, and scale of the Apple website with no clear idea of how much that costs to do? And if you think the answer is asking an agency, then I assure you they are learning the hard way too. The lights are not on at night because the people prefer working at their Macs to being at home watching "The Wire."

So often, marketers do not have a clear understanding of what can be achieved with the resources available. Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was a cross-browser perfected website that integrates with XYZ in 10 languages.

Know your real goals.

This point is all about the numbers. All too often, marketers set out with what they want to do, rather than what they want to achieve. We want a website. We want to be in social media. We want to be in mobile. No doubt you do, but what do you want your business to achieve and how can interactive marketing help achieve it? Make the business case, show the ROI criteria, evaluate, and improve. The tools are readily available to help you.

So, we need bigger ideas and more tactics up our sleeve, a better grip on resources, and established professional standards. We need to be bolder. We need to respect the engineers, invest in marketing R&D, and listen to customers. And then we need to leave a legacy.

Pay attention to the digital contribution to your brand's heritage.

Heritage is a part of the brand's story that we can tap into and take home with us. There is a new Audi showroom in London on the way into town from Heathrow airport. It is supposed to be the largest in Europe, and I have no reason to doubt it. There are many floors, all full-height glass and displaying some very fine metal indeed. One floor is dedicated to the brand's glorious past -- the Quattros that ruled the rally world before they were banned for winning too much. It has been set at the perfect height to be visible when you are driving past on the elevated motorway next to it. The showroom causes a traffic jam, as drivers slow down to gawp -- and deservedly so.

How many marketers consider what happens to their interactive communications when they are (inevitably) replaced? We are throwing everything away. It is sad. In 20 years it will be fascinating to see a brand's digital journey, but all that will be left are some servers with a long history of deleted files, and whatever the Wayback Machine managed to preserve. We were the kids who could program the video recorder. We should leave a legacy that shows the evolution of the digital revolution.

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MediaPost NEWS

Marketing Daily

5 Trends In Digital Marketing

Nuri Djavit, Jan 08, 2010 05:00 AM

In 2009, digital marketing experienced major shifts in opportunities, budgets and attitude. Twenty ten will see the hype calming around Facebook apps, Twitter campaigns and ROI models for social media. The following five trends point up what marketers can expect as the new decade opens.

1. Facebook replaces email

When a brand name becomes the verb associated with its use -- you Google or TiVo it, that's power. The newest is Facebook, meaning "I Facebooked you" -- added you as a friend But the noun/verb Facebook represents an act of personal inclusion, or exclusion, to one's personal circle. No brand has owned such communication power before.

The disruption of Facebook is its displacement of personal email. Completely permission-based, no spam, no address book -- all your friends are there. While brands are not included in the conversation, they can join, or host, the party.

Marketing Implications - Social Media

Opportunities in social media marketing seem boundless; the best seek to integrate conversations, to add something useful and compelling. And while there's lots of social media hype, every marketer needs one! But let's consider the implications of social networks. Great ideas can ignite short, powerful flames, i.e. CPB's Un-friend a Facebook Friend campaign, but if brands hope to influence conversations, strategists need to become someone's "friend."

2. Mobile commerce - still promising

Annoyingly tantalizing as "convergence" has been over a decade, mobile commerce hasn't delivered.

The game changer is the iPhone/iTunes platform. Apps tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, etc., while iTunes holds their precious credit card information and handled seamlessly enough to promote impulse purchases. It seems an easy task to extend to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout.

Implications for Marketers - Going Mobile

Mobile commerce has the power to drive 'paid' models like test subscriptions, including micro payments, which seem particularly promising for news/magazine media. If the experience is good enough, people will buy the download. Special content, white papers, reports, etc., could be purchased through apps, providing new revenue streams. EBay and Amazon have done amazingly well with mobile applications. Figuring out new activities to do "on the go" will be the key to mobile success.

3. Disruption vs. continuity -- alternatives to the "big idea"

Businesses are investing in community building as a market driver. According to the Deloitte's "Tribalization of Business" study, 94 percent of businesses will continue or increase their

investment in online communities. Meanwhile, as evidenced by new tools like Google Wave and Sidewiki, there is a shift toward social activity integrated into networks.

Marketing Implications - Social Nets

With the increasing emphasis on marketing through social networks, brand objectives often conflict with advertising techniques. Advertising faces a shift from "big idea," disruption to an emphasis on persuasion in the social sphere. The way in will increasingly be through persistence and continuity.

4. Open source DIY culture

Much has been said of the potential of collective intelligence (crowd-sourcing) to reconfigure industries. On the flip, the power of networked resources has emboldened individuals to tackle complex undertakings themselves. From drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and university courseware, to services like Ponoko, Spoonflower, and CafePress, to offline resource pooling like pop-up retail and collective offices, people are discovering how easy it is DIY.

Marketing Implications -Networking for Growth

Brands might view the growth of online boutiques as a distribution shift opportunity. Small online retailers have cut through via well-chosen inventory, SEO and social broadcast elbow grease. Big brands might extend retailer networks by offering online tools for ordering wholesale, or APIs for retailers to white label directly!

5. Crowd-sourcing

Crowd sourcing will become a growing part of "elance" outsourcing strategies. Organizations will mobilize passionistas to carry messages but, more importantly, to collaborate.

Marketing Implications - A Gathering Crowd

From political canvassing to software development, citizen journalism to environmental activism, expect growth in crowd-sourcing models led by social media strategies. Consider the automobile industry. There's potentially many people with better ideas outside the corporate structure. How difficult to build a cloud environment and open development to a global team of engineers, whether bankers or school professors?

Happy 2010 to all.

Home » Archives » 2010 » Jan » 14 » The Pros and Cons of Crowdsourcing a Marketing Campaign...

The Pros and Cons of Crowdsourcing a Marketing Campaign

Crowdsourcing is expected to be one of the top trends for marketers this year, according to the digital experts at Last Exit. The concept certainly resonates with cash strapped companies: tap an online community for ideas on how to advance a brand, or develop a product or, in many cases, both.

However as the concept gains traction thanks to success stories - Netflix developed a better prediction engine for films by offering $1 million to the public is just one (via Brandweek) - marketers should also be aware of its dark side.

Shifting Through the Deluge

Companies, especially top brands that offer big monetary rewards such as Netflix, will find themselves with a deluge of offers that may become more work than first realized, according to Jez Frampton, CEO of Interbrand (via Forbes). "It is the ability to select and profitably execute an idea that delivers greatest value to the organization. This supports the old adage that success is 5% inspiration, and 95% perspiration."

Frampton tells of a creative director who tried crowdsourcing for a specific campaign and within 48 hours had received hundreds of ideas. "His office was flooded with ideas. So now he had an even bigger problem than not having the solution in the first place: how to sift through the offerings from the crowd."

The irony, Frampton said, was that the director and his team spent more time sorting through the input than they would have spent simply developing a good idea themselves. "At the end of the exercise they had nothing to add to their existing work on the brief. Much of the work was derivative, off-brief, superficial or just plain inappropriate."

Refining the Model

These are still early days, though, and as this model takes off supporters say such problems will be resolved. More industry resources are being devoted to crowdsourcing, which should also help. Last October, for instance, a new advertising agency, Victors & Spoils, was launched by former executives from Crispin, Porter + Bogusky, billing itself the first creative ad agency built on crowdsourcing principles.

Also companies are getting smarter about crowdsourcing in general, according to Matthew Greeley, CEO and founder, Brightidea.com (via DM News).

"Marketers need to be brought in to ensure that open innovation sites serve as an extension of the overall brand. A simple way to do this is through white-label innovation platforms, which easily enable marketers to influence the look and feel of a crowdsourcing initiative so that there is a stronger tie between the brand and innovation."

Smart companies are also applying crowdsourcing interally as well, he said. "Innovation can often come from unexpected places. Just a year ago, when one well-known consumer-facing Fortune 1,000 launched an internal innovation platform to help spur ideas within the company, one of its best actionable marketing ideas came from someone in IT."

Downloads:

2010 New Year's Resolution: Avoid the Fail Whale.
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Paul Newnes is a founding partner and commercial director of Last Exit. Newnes has been involved with commercial applications of digital communications and technologies since 1997. He is obsessed with the impact that new technologies have upon human behavior and is published frequently on this and related topics.

Nuri Djavit is a founding partner and creative director of Last Exit lastexit.tv, a digital marketing and design company based in New York City and London, UK. With more than 14 years experience in interactive media and technologies, Djavit is considered among the first movers in the field. Having begun his career in the early development of digital user interface design, he moved quickly into positions where early iterations of Web-based technologies could be exploited for consumer-based marketing opportunities.

As websites continue to increase in their importance as a company's storefront, the demand for rich, brand-extending experiences will also increase. Further proliferation of (lightning speed) broadband will reduce download issues, while the adoption of Flash on mobile devices will dramatically increase and fuel reach and the desire for highly usable, brand transporting, conversion-oriented experiences.

More Flash, not less
Outside of the obvious brand sites, micro-sites and media sites (video, games, etc.), Flash has often been looked down upon, if not completely discounted by techies and search engine optimizers alike. It seemed to face an uncertain future as a viable tool for serious websites and applications such as e-commerce tools and corporate websites. As it is, Adobe's rich media tool has enjoyed the grit and determination of its advocates and external development community. Several tricks, authoring tools and server-side scripting workarounds have meant that Flash-built websites no longer serve up a single, impenetrable page. They offer deep, searchable, indexable sites that will allow acute, detailed traffic and behavioral analytics and search engine optimization.

From political canvassing to software development, from people journalism to environmental activism, we will see huge growth in crowd-sourcing models provoked and led, largely, by digital social media strategies.

Predictions for 2010 are not as rosy as we all hoped, and budgets for just about everything continue to be cut, encouraging creative thinking regarding getting things done and done well.

Crowd sourcing
Across many industries and organizations, crowd sourcing will become a growing tool as part of outsourcing strategies. Organizations will mobilize the passionate special interest groups to not only carry a message but, even more importantly perhaps, to lead and take part in activities on their behalf.

With an ever-increasing need for real-time analysis of a growing torrent of raw data, expect to see greater innovation spurred by more elegant ways of capturing and visualizing information by a growing number of info-artists. See http://www.visualcomplexity.com for examples.

By the same token, the skill of elegantly visualizing those data has become a defining art of our time. The art of the infographic is becoming increasingly pervasive as people look more and more to the growing amount of data at our disposal for insight, and more refined as the interactions of those data becomes more complex.

Info-art
Where we once had pop-psychologists and pop-philosophers, we now appear to have pop-statisticians and pop-economists. The growing wealth of data and the access to rich and diverse data sources that are significant byproducts of information networks have made the art of data analysis a defining skill of our time.

While we find new ways to thrive in a still struggling economy, expect to see lasting changes coming from empowering individuals to work together to become more ever more self-sufficient.

On the other side of the equation, the power of pooled intelligence and networked resources has empowered individuals to tackle more complex undertakings themselves. From drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and university open courseware to educate themselves, and services like Ponoko, Spoonflower and CafePress that facilitate small-scale production, to offline resource pooling like pop-up retail and collective office spaces, individuals are discovering that it has never been easier to try doing it themselves.

The continuing evolution of Web-driven, open source DIY culture
Much has been said about the power and potential of collective intelligence. From solving complex problems through crowd sourcing, to reconfiguring industries to be leaner and more innovative by harnessing the expertise of a network of independent suppliers, many of the breakthrough solutions of tomorrow appear to lie in pooling the resources and intelligence of our increasingly networked world.

With the increasing emphasis on marketing and advertising through social networks and the increasing pervasiveness of social tools, marketing objectives come into conflict with advertising techniques. While advertising has often sought to distinguish itself and stop consumers in their tracks with a disruptive "big idea," the emphasis is shifting toward persuasion through fitting organically into the consumer's social sphere. It will always be the objective of marketing to provide creativity and novelty, but the way will increasingly be through persistence and continuity.

Disruption vs. continuity - alternatives to the "big idea"
As the significance of social networks continues to grow, businesses are investing more in community building as a marketing driver. According to the recent "Tribalization of Business" study released by Deloitte, 94 percent of businesses will continue or increase their investment in online communities and social media and, for the majority of these companies, their marketing function will drive this investment. At the same time, as evidenced by Google's recent release of "free floating" social tools, such as Google Wave and Sidewiki, there is an increasing shift toward online identity and social activity being an integrated part of the network as a whole, rather than concentrated within discrete platforms such as Facebook.

However, I'm starting to resent having to register for anything ever again. I don't see why, if I want to leave a particularly pithy comment on a blog or news site, I have to register all over again. I'm sure I'm not the only one, and that's why services like Facebook Connect and OpenID are particularly useful and will continue to be adopted at great speed through 2010. Who knows where these might go? Perhaps next year I'll be able to pay for something using my Facebook login.

Fewer registrations — one sign-in fits all
I use a great application on the Mac platform that securely holds my login details for upwards of 50 different sites. It means that I don't have to use the same password for each site and that I don't have to search around for Post-it notes (my 1998 method) to log into a site I joined a week ago.

The game changer is the iPhone/iTunes platform. App purchases on the iPhone can tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, etc., while iTunes holds their precious credit card information. All, of course, is done in seamless fashion - easily and reliably enough to promote impulse purchases. It would seem like an easy task for this to be extended to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout.

Yet, it's only recently that the nations that invented and first adopted mobile technologies have extended the use of these precious devices to pay for goods and services. With the advanced browsers of iPhone and the Android platforms, one could pay for goods through full e-commerce sites, but who really wants

to fiddle around with a phone in one hand and a credit card in another?

Mobile commerce - The promise that has never delivered, yet
As annoyingly tantalizing yet esoteric as the word "convergence" has been over the last 10 years, mobile commerce has promised much but hasn't delivered. However, mobile phones have delivered real benefits to societies worldwide, and in developing nations they are used commonly as devices for the transfer of money.

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It's when a brand name becomes the verb associated with its use. So rather than searching for something online, you Google it. Or you TiVo, rather than digitally recording a television show. Arguably, an even more powerful phenomenon is when a brand becomes a noun, such as using the word Polaroid to represent all instantly developed photography (although that didn't end so well).

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In 2009, digital marketing experienced some major shifts in marketing opportunities, budgets and attitude. 2010 will see the hype calming around Facebook apps and Twitter campaigns and the development of ROI models around social media marketing. The following trends are based on thoughts we have shared with our clients and now share with DMB's readers.

By Nuri Djavit and Paul Newnes

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Take the Last Exit for Digital Trends 2010

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It's the time of year when clients come asking for a list of digital marketing trends to take heed of in 2010 (and beyond). Here's my list, with thoughts liberally borrowed from Media Asia, ADMA and Last Exit – and some of my own. The operative word is *marketing*, which is why I've attempted to limit this to a strategic overview rather than cooing over the latest and greatest technology.

—

1. **Search and social media will continually evolve**

New search engines (Bing, Wolfram Alpha), new partnerships (between search engines, between search engines and social networks) and new forms of search (semantic web, augmented reality, voice-activated, visual-triggered – have you checked out [Google Goggles](#)?).

With the dynamics in constant flux, end-users can look forward to more precise, reliable search results. Brands have a real struggle on their hands as brand-owned content and personal recommendations jostle for pole position on SERPs.

Want to see who's dug themselves into a real mess already? Go to [Google](#) and search for 'borderless TV'. Compare the paid search result with the top organic result.

2. **Brand presence through interlinking**

Brand content and conversations need no longer reside within a corporate site. It can just as easily be decentralised and threaded back – which effectively amplifies the brand's online presence.

Published: November 05 2009

9 digital trends to watch in 2010

By **Nuri Djavit**

9 digital trends to watch in 2010

In 2009, digital experienced some major changes -- the rise of Twitter, the fall of the economy, shifting budgets, an explosion of new technologies. And 2010 is shaping up to be just as dynamic. But what changes and trends are poised to really take the marketing world by storm? Here are just a few predictions of what's likely to come.

1. Facebook replaces personal email
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Yet, it's only recently that the nations that invented and first adopted mobile technologies have extended the use of these precious devices to pay for goods and services. With the advanced browsers of iPhone and the Android platforms, one could pay for goods through full ecommerce sites, but who really wants to fiddle around with a phone in one hand and a credit card in another?

The game changer is the iPhone/iTunes platform. In-app purchases on the iPhone can tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, etc., while iTunes holds their precious credit card information. All, of course, is done in seamless fashion -- easily and reliably enough to promote impulse purchases. It would seem like an easy task for this to be extended to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout. (Though we have been here before, haven't we?)

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I use a great application on the Mac platform that securely holds my login details for upwards of 50 different sites. It means that I don't have to use the same password for each site and that I don't have to search around for Post-it notes (my 1998 method) to log into a site I joined a week ago.

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5. Disruption vs. continuity -- alternatives to the "big idea"

As the significance of social networks continues to grow, businesses are investing more in community building as a marketing driver. According to the recent "Tribalization of Business" study released by Deloitte, 94 percent of businesses will continue or increase their investment in online communities and social media and, for the majority of these companies, their marketing function will drive this investment. At the same time, as evidenced by Google's recent release of "free floating" social tools, such as Google Wave and Sidewiki, there is an increasing shift toward online identity and social activity being an integrated part of the network as a whole, rather than concentrated within discrete platforms such as Facebook.

With the increasing emphasis on marketing and advertising through social networks and the increasing pervasiveness of social tools, marketing objectives come into conflict with advertising techniques. While advertising has often sought to distinguish itself and stop consumers in their tracks with a disruptive "big idea," the emphasis is shifting toward persuasion through fitting organically into the consumer's social sphere. It will always be the objective of marketing to provide creativity and novelty, but the way in will increasingly be through persistence and continuity.

6. The continuing evolution of web-driven, open source DIY culture
Much has been said about the power and potential of collective intelligence. From solving complex problems through crowd-sourcing, to reconfiguring industries to be leaner and more innovative by harnessing the expertise of a network of independent suppliers, many of the breakthrough solutions of tomorrow appear to lie in more effectively pooling the resources and intelligence of our increasingly networked world.

On the other side of the equation, the power of pooled intelligence and networked resources has empowered individuals to tackle more complex undertakings themselves. From drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and university open courseware to educate themselves, to services like Ponoko, Spoonflower, and CafePress that facilitate small-scale production, to offline resource pooling like pop-up retail and collective office spaces, individuals are discovering that it has never been easier to try doing it themselves.

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Nuri Djavit is founding partner and creative director at Last Exit. Paul Newnes, partner and commercial director, and Adam Phillip, director of strategy and media at Last Exit, also contributed to this article.

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Branding Strategy Insider

November 06, 2009

9 Digital Trends For 2010

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Nine Top Digital Trends for 2010

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Top Digital Marketing Trends for 2010: Flash, Crowdsourcing, Info-Art

LAST EXIT
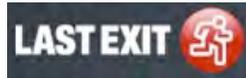
As 2010 fast approaches, digital marketers are gearing up for yet another year of changes that will incorporate both the transformational and the incremental.

From the economy's influence on the burgeoning "do-it-yourself" culture to an increasing reliance on collective wisdom, information-based art, and remote computing, digital experts at Last Exit (via MarketingCharts) have put together the following list of top digital marketing trends they believe will play out in the year ahead.

1. Facebook Replaces Personal Email: As Facebook becomes increasingly used as a verb (e.g."I Facebooked you today") in ways that Hotmail and gmail never were, it will be interesting to see the extent to which it will displace personal email as a communication tool. It's already completely permission based, there is no spam (yet), and no address book required - your friends are already there.

2. The Cloud Helps Open-Source Software Make Proper Money: Open-source software projects that were typically the purview of programmers and technophiles are now available to the masses. In one example, Beanstalk, a fully hosted, version-controlled code repository that uses the Subversion open-source project has created a subscription based service that - for a small fee - removes the hassle of setting up Subversions and maintaining servers. Services like this can really only be financially viable with cloud computing infrastructure - so companies such as Beanstalk don't have the huge upfront capital outlay for servers. With the right skills any open-source project can be commercialized this way.

3. Mobile Commerce - The Promise That Has Never Delivered, Yet: Though mobile phones have, for a while now, delivered real benefits to global societies by facilitating the transfer of money, only recently has mobile device use extended to payment for goods and services. The game changer has - and will continue to be - the iPhone/iTunes platform. In-app purchases on the iPhone can tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, etc, while iTunes holds their precious credit card information. All, of course, is done in seamless fashion, enough to promote impulse purchases. It would seem like an easy task for this to be extended to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout, but so far it has not been done.

4. Fewer Registrations - One Sign-in Fits All: As consumers grow increasingly frustrated and resentful about registering yet again on another website, juggling different IDs and remembering a dizzying array of passwords, information-managing services such as Facebook Connect and OpenID will becoming even more useful and will continue to be adopted at great speed through 2010.

5. Disruption vs. Continuity - Alternatives to the "Big Idea": As the significance of social networks continues to grow, businesses are investing more in community building as a marketing driver. According to the recent Tribalization of Business study released by Deloitte, 94% of businesses will continue or increase their investment in online communities and social media and, for the majority of these companies, their marketing function will drive this investment. At the same time, as evidenced by Google's recent release of "free floating" social tools, such as Google Waves and Sidewiki, there is an increasing shift toward online identity and social activity being an integrated part of the network as a whole, rather than concentrated within discrete platforms such as Facebook.

With the increasing emphasis on marketing and advertising through social networks and the increasing pervasiveness of social tools, marketing objectives come into conflict with advertising techniques. While advertising has often sought to distinguish itself and stop the consumer in their tracks with a disruptive "big idea," the emphasis is now shifting toward persuasion through fitting organically into the consumer's social sphere. It will always be the objective of marketing to provide creativity and novelty, but the way in will increasingly be one of persistence and continuity.

6. Self-Sufficiency: The Continuing Evolution of Web-Driven, Open-Source DIY Culture: Much has been said about the power and potential of collective intelligence, and many of the breakthrough solutions of tomorrow appear to lie in more effectively pooling the resources and intelligence of our increasingly networked world. On the other side of the equation, the power of pooled intelligence and networked resources have empowered individuals to take on more and more complex undertakings themselves.

From drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and university open courseware to educate themselves, to services like ponoko, spoonflower and cafe press that facilitate small-scale production, to offline resource pooling like pop- up retail and collective office spaces, individuals are discovering that it has never been easier to try doing it themselves.

7. Info-Art: Where we once had pop-psychologists and pop-philosophers, we now appear to have pop-statisticians and pop-economists. The growing wealth of data and the access to rich and diverse data sources that are significant by-products of information networks have made the art of data analysis a defining skill of our time.

At the same time, the skill of elegantly visualizing that data has become a defining art of our time. The art of the infographic is becoming increasingly pervasive as people look more and more to the growing amount of data at our disposal for insight, and more refined as the interactions of that data becomes more complex. Expect to see greater innovation spurred by more elegant ways of capturing and visualizing information by a growing number of info-artists.

8. Crowd Sourcing: Across many industries and organizations, crowd sourcing will become a growing tool as part of various outsourcing strategies. Organizations will mobilize the passionate special-interest groups to not only carry a message but also to lead and take part in activities on their behalf. From political canvassing to software development, from people journalism to environmental activism, expect to see huge growth in crowdsourcing models provoked and led, in large part, by digital social media strategies.

9. More Flash, Not Less: Outside of the obvious brand sites, micro-sites and media sites (video, games, etc.) where it appears absolutely necessary, Flash has often been looked down upon if not completely discounted by both techies and search engine optimizers. It seemed to face an uncertain future as a viable tool for serious websites and applications such as eCommerce tools and corporate websites. However, Adobe's rich media tool has enjoyed the grit and determination of its advocates and external development community. Now, several tricks, authoring tools and server side scripting workarounds have meant that Flash-built websites no longer serve up a single, impenetrable page. They offer deep, searchable, indexable sites that will allow acute, detailed traffic and behavioral analytics and search engine optimization.

As websites continue to increase in their importance as a company's storefront, the demand for rich, brand-extending experiences will also increase. Further proliferation of fast broadband will reduce download issues while the adoption of Flash on mobile devices will dramatically increase and fuel reach and the desire/need for highly usable, brand transporting, conversion oriented experiences

Digital consumer trends for marketers in 2010

Wednesday November 11, 2009

While predicting the evolution of the internet and online consumer-related technologies over the next few years will always be guesswork at best, digital strategists from Last Exit believe that there are several trends that seem to be here to stay.

Among the coming trends and predictions for the evolution of digital consumerism in 2010 and beyond:

1. **Facebook could replace personal email**
   Occasionally a brand name becomes the verb associated with its use. Rather than searching for information about someone, you Google them. Instead of cleaning the carpet, you Hoover it. And perhaps an even more powerful synonym is when a brand becomes a noun, such as Polaroid, which has become the generic term for an instantly developed photograph. For the near future, though, the next brand verb may well be 'to Facebook your friends' - either meaning to look up someone's profile, or to send them a message through Facebook. The latter is most likely because Facebook messaging has the potential to displace personal email - mainly because it is completely permission based, trackable, accountable (abuse can be reported easily), there is no spam (yet), and no address book is required - your friends are already on Facebook.

2. **Open source software makes real money, thanks to 'the cloud'**
   Open source software (in which the programmers make their original source code open to the public to modify and redistribute at will) has become both available to and popular with the masses. While most people and companies can't run their own internet servers, open source providers have begun offering their software in a SaaS (software as a service) configuration - the principle behind the so-called 'cloud', in where users simply pay for whatever they (or their own customers) use, and where they are free from infrastructure problems and day-to-day operational details.

3. **Mobile payments will grow, but mainly within applications**
   Mobile commerce has been a promise of new technologies for many years, but the promise has never really been delivered. While mobile phones have delivered real benefits and are often used to transfer money, very few consumers are actually using them to make retail payments. After all, who really wants to fiddle around with a phone in one hand and a credit card in the other? The exception to the rule will be payments within existing mobile applications. For example, the iPhone / iTunes platform. In-application purchases on the iPhone can tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, and so on, while iTunes holds the user's credit card details. This is all done seamlessly enough to encourage impulse purchases.

4. **One password for all occasions?**
   There is an increasing demand among consumers for any service that reduces the number of log-in names and passwords that must be remembered. Consumers are starting to resent having to register for anything, and there is a growing sentiment that services like *Facebook Connect* and *OpenID* are useful and helpful, and will continue to be adopted rapidly. Perhaps one future development might be the ability to pay for goods using a Facebook login?

5. **Disruption vs. continuity**
   As the significance of social networks continues to grow, businesses are investing more in community building as a marketing technique. According to the recent *Tribalisation of Business* study by Deloitte, 94% of businesses will continue or increase their investment in online communities and social media and, for the majority of these companies, their marketing department will drive that investment. At the same time there is an increasing shift toward online identity and social activity becoming an integrated phenomenon rather than being concentrated in separate platforms such as Facebook. With the increasing emphasis on marketing and advertising through social networks and the increasing pervasiveness of social tools, marketing objectives come into conflict with advertising

techniques. While advertising has often sought to distinguish itself and stop the consumer in their tracks with a disruptive "big idea," the emphasis is shifting toward persuasion through fitting organically into the consumer's social sphere. It will always be the objective of marketing to provide creativity and novelty, but the way in will increasingly be one of persistence and continuity.

6. **Self-sufficiency stems from the web's open source, DIY culture**
   From solving complex problems through crowd sourcing to reconfiguring industries to be leaner and more innovative by harnessing the expertise of a network of independent suppliers, many of the breakthrough solutions of tomorrow appear to lie in pooling the resources and intelligence of the increasingly networked world. But this pooling effect has also empowered individual consumers to take on more and more complex undertakings themselves, such as drawing on the collective intelligence of blogs and universities' open courseware to educate themselves. Expect to see lasting changes coming from empowering individuals to work together to become more ever more self-sufficient.

7. **Crowd sourcing**
   Across many industries and organisations, crowd sourcing will become a growing tool as organisations mobilise passionate special interest groups to not only carry a message but, even more importantly perhaps, to lead and take part in activities on their behalf. From political canvassing to software development, from people journalism to environmental activism, we will see huge growth in crowd sourcing models provoked and led, largely, by digital social media strategies.

8. **More Flash, not less**
   Outside of the obvious web sites, micro-sites and media sites (e.g. those offering videos and games), *Flash* has been largely overlooked by technical people and search engine optimisers alike. But the latest developments involving Flash have countered its original problem (i.e. that it was used to serve up single-page, untrackable web sites) and Flash web site developers now offer deep, searchable, and highly indexable web sites that allow detailed traffic reporting, behavioural analytics, and of course true search engine optimisation. A significant advantage of being able to use Flash is that it can provide a plain e-retail web site with rich, brand-extending experiences, even on mobile devices.

More Info: http://www.lastexit.tv

Source: *Last Exit*

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BizReport

Last Exit: Three big trends for 2010

Although technically not even into the full holiday shopping season, most marketers are already looking ahead to 2010 campaigns and revenue projections. To help with this digital strategy and research firm Last Exit is trending 2010 - with some surprising results.

by Kristina Knight

First, the forecast expects Facebook to become the verb that email is now, and to somewhat replace email for consumers. Why? Because of spam and permissions that have plagued email in recent years. Social networkers can 'message' a friend on Facebook, add more friends to their lists and communicate without fear of spam messages - at least at this point.

Although I'm not 100% certain on this one, because Facebook updates are still sent via email, it is an interesting thought and one that could happen over the next few years, as long as Facebook remains relevant with the consumer base. MySpace, anyone? Until the past twelve months MySpace was what Facebook is now - it had private personal messages, status updates, friending opportunities and yet Facebook has now surpassed the grandfather of social networks.

Second, Last Exit expects mobile commerce to final hit its stride thanks to smart and touchscreen devices such as the iPhone and Blackberry. Applications, mobile stores and more are expected to see huge growth in 2010 as more consumers upgrade from mobiles to smart devices which allow them to call, email, text and shop on a single device.

"In-app purchases on the iPhone can tempt users to buy small items, upgrades, updates, etc, while iTunes holds their precious credit card information. All, of course, is done in seamless fashion, enough to promote impulse purchases. Would seem like an easy task for this to be extended to other platforms with PayPal or Google Checkout," was written in the report.

Third, bring on the flash. According to the report flash is see not only a resurgence but an acceptance in the coming year that, thus far, it hasn't received.

"Flash built websites no longer serve up a single, impenetrable page. They offer deep, searchable, indexable sites that will allow acute, detailed traffic and behavioral analytics and search engine optimization," was written in the report. "As websites continue to increase in their importance as a company's storefront, the demand for rich, brand-

extending experiences will also increase. Further proliferation of (lightning speed) broadband will reduce download issues while the adoption of Flash on mobile devices will dramatically increase and fuel reach and the desire/need for highly usable, brand transporting, conversion oriented experiences."

Tags: email, email marketing, Last Exit, online advertising, social marketing, social networks

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Does Social Media engagement always equal emotional engagement?

By Gary Lockton, Partner, Last Exit.

There seems to be a growing tension in the world of social media!

Almost every client brief now asks how we would place brands within the social environment.

And I find myself questioning if there really is a place for every, or even any brand, within our personal pages online?

Aren't the likes of Facebook and Twitter the realm of mates rather than marketing, of chat instead of commerce, of sharing, not shopping?

Perhaps it is for these very reasons that brands are so keen to be part of the social sphere?

Marketing managers doubtless recognise this 'emotional' environment as very different from the "rational" destinations they create for their own brands online.

They no doubt also note their own changed state of mind, when looking at their Facebook pages or writing their latest Tweet?

These are times when we are all off-duty, open-minded, less cynical and potentially more receptive.

As an agency, we do believe there is a place for brands within the social sphere, but only if a certain mindset and approach is applied.

1. Social media is a personal, emotional space - standard advertising and promotion isn't appropriate

2. Context and personalisation are key, relating to users, their likes and dislikes, preferably on an individual basis, are likely to engage and, therefore, succeed

3. Considering and involving friends and groups is a powerful way to achieve relevant and timely interest

4. Overall, this is a pretty intolerant space - 'road-blocking' or 'spamming' is guaranteed to create a negative brand reaction

In summary, our belief is that there is no problem combining brand messages with our personal spaces, as long as sensitivity and care are used.

Playing devil's advocate now, allowing advertiser access to our beloved social media sites may be a necessity anyway!

Facebook, Twitter and other social spaces operate under generally unsustainable revenue models today.

Inviting brands to get more involved may be the only way we can hold on to these sites we have become so attached to.

Indeed, it would appear that Facebook's recent news about imminent profitability is heavily driven by The Gift Shop, Facebook Connect, and other ways brands can engage on a deeper, better informed level with consumers,

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Last Exit LLC. Agency Spotlight

Posted: October 20, 2009

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- Location - New York and London
- Number of employees - 27
- Clients - Vespa USA, Viacom, McCann Erickson & Dentsu America.
- URL - www.lastexit.tv

Based in New York and London, Last Exit offers a wide variety of digital services, showcasing a portfolio that includes strategy and research, campaign development, website design and search engine marketing. Since 2003, the agency has been servicing a broad range of local and international customers with an impressive client list consisting of both consumers and industry leading businesses.

DMB's Contel Bradford recently spoke with Paul Newnes, Last Exit partner and commercial director, to gather some insight on the company's inception, service offerings and outlook on the world of digital media.

How did Last Exit formed and what were the company's initial goals upon being founded?
The company was founded by Nuri Djavit who previously had held senior positions in Deep End, one of the first and most decorated interactive agencies. I joined soon after and a vision was formed to build a marketing agency, grounded in the digital medium, but to be focused upon helping clients' businesses grow in the face of a changing media landscape. There was no intention to do this through simply emulating the structures of other agencies, but to build something that operated more effectively, more transparently and ultimately aligned with the goals of the clients.

Your portfolio of services is quite extensive. Please fill in our readers on what you have to offer.
Our most successful engagements are where we have led the initial strategic insight for a client or brand and followed through with the creative and executional phases of an engagement. That holistic approach fosters ownership from the agency side and true partnership and collaboration with the client.

As a digital agency with aggressive competition and a ecer-progressing medium in which we operate, one has to have a broad capability set. Given the accountability of the digital medium, there also has to be a depth of understanding as well as the breadth of capability. So, there is definitely a challenge for us to stay informed and to hire people who are as keen to push the boundaries of what is possible. So, in terms of services we delineate between strategic, creative and production. This covers everything that might encompass a digital campaign from initial research and analysis, media planning, creative development, design, build and performance tracking.

Please give us some insight on Last Exit's journey with mobile applications and streaming video. How do these features benefit your customers?
Last Exit was involved very early with streaming technologies, such that we were an Apple Computer development partner and developed some custom Quicktime applications. This grounding has allowed us to stay ahead of the curve as the online population's consumption of video has increased and evolved. There are few projects we are involved in that do not have some video application built in. As the technology to capture, encode and deliver online video has become more effective and accessible, so has the expectation of how video is incorporated into the user experience of digital marketing campaigns.

The iPhone has been a total game changer for both user behavior on mobile phones and mobile delivery of video. We knew that we'd have to invest time and resources not only to understand the platform but to be able to create applications relevant to our clients' needs.

We see smartphone development as another way of extending engagement with end customers beyond the decline of the 'big idea' peak. That's a general philosophy for digital as a medium, but people are more attached to their phones than their computers. So if you can encapsulate real utility and brand relevance in an app, you have something really powerful that's beyond the purview of the traditional marketing concept and can drive operational benefits in clients' businesses.

The best till last though — m-commerce has never really gained traction anywhere outside of developing nations, but the latest smartphone software seems to going in the correct direction for delivering that through iTunes for iPhone and potentially Google Checkout for Android.

What are the most pressing challenges faced by professionals in your field today?
An overused term in the context of the zeitgeist, but 'change.' The way people are communicating and consuming information is changing and our industry needs to adapt accordingly. Companies from the same digital heritage as us are used to it, but still so many client-agency relationships are media led as opposed to problem/solution led. That's opportunity in one sense for Last Exit but a huge behavioral change for clients to deal with smaller scale, yet highly capable agencies. The status quo has to change but the speed at which it changes is largely up to the desire of the professionals within our industry to embrace new ways of doing business. We are delighted to see smaller agencies win huge client engagements; it means that there is a

collective opportunity appearing that wasn't there before.

Web technology has evolved to the point where almost nothing is surprising. What does the future have in store for video streaming and rich media applications as they relate to online advertising?
If I knew the precise answers to that I might be out pitching VCs in Silicon Valley. The indicators to watch though are that video streaming is getting better and costing less. Peer-to-peer streams seem to have been largely adopted by pirate soccer channels, but the underlying technology dramatically reduces network load and hence costs for Internet broadcast. Insofar as rich media apps, then there's always going to be a need for the flash-bang on sites, but I would say the big impact vs. ongoing engagement equation is favoring the latter right now. Having said that, anyone who's played Quake online can see that there's still plenty of life in rich media online.

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Gary Lockton on...

No Flash in the pan

Gary Lockton of digital marketing and design agency Last Exit explains why Papervision has restored his faith in Adobe Flash

When I launched Deepend back in 1994, I was a huge fan of Flash. We won several awards for projects built using this technology for brands including Volkswagen, Dyson, the BBC and Cartoon Network. But as the decade went by, I started to ask if the 'whizz-bang' impact of these experiences might be getting in the way of client messages. I even started to suspect our business might be using client projects to showcase designers' wish-lists – as opposed to thinking like end-users.

I'd seen many Flash extensions, such as Swift 3D, make their mark then seemingly lose favour. But recently I saw Papervision3D in action, and I found myself falling in love with Flash all over again!

At Last Exit, we've quickly become huge fans of this open source development in the world of Flash technologies, and feel that Papervision might

> **"Papervision might be finally delivering on the promise made by Flash in the 1990s"**
> Gary Lockton

be finally delivering on the promise made by Flash back in the mid-1990s. The many benefits include:

- Significantly improved levels of end-user interaction within a delivered website.
- Fluid and intuitive styles of animation and motion, whatever the task at hand.
- Realistic 3D visualisation and environments, including elements such as depth-cueing that are normally reserved for 'proper' local 3D apps.
- Open source technology advantages when it comes to development and innovation.
- Technical speed and agility within play-back; for example, handling large numbers of media assets without end-user experience degradation.
- Relatively seamless integration within Adobe Flash, making the development process effective and efficient.
- A significant step forward in terms of perception, providing that 'wow factor'.
- Ability to provide a genuine Web 2.0 level graphical experience, engaging even the most jaded site visitors.
- Fresh levels of inspiration and opportunity for web designers, encouraging new ground to be broken within client tasks.

This last point is particularly important for us. Aside from campaign-oriented work, our agency focuses on the CMS or content management of new client websites, making sure any new project is Disability and Discrimination Act-optimised, as well as built for the best level of

search engine optimisation (SEO). These things are undoubtedly important, but they're harder to argue as motivational elements when it comes to putting the same brief to an internal studio team of designers and developers, and are unlikely to lift the end result above the norm. Papervision is the new buzzword and I'm certain this can only be a good thing for both parties!

Sure, we face some challenges as an agency when developing iPhone apps, given that Apple has still not found a way of supporting Flash, let alone Papervision. And it would be a lie to say every client brief that lands on our desks is ideal for Papervision. There are limitations from an SEO (specifically Google SEO) perspective.

The fact remains, however, that Papervision provides fresh energy to the most exciting and user-engaging technology ever offered by the web. Not only does it give a level of user-engagement and entertainment not seen since the late 1990s, it turbo-charges the inspiration and creativity of both designers and developers working within the digital industry. Given the ups and downs the digital industry has experienced over its short 15-year life, I think it's fair to say that any fresh injection of enthusiasm is welcome indeed. ●

Gary Lockton launched Deepend, one of the UK's first digital agencies in 1994. Last year, he joined with ex-Deepgroup COO Fred Brown and Deepend New York founder Nuri Djavit to help build Last Exit.

Published: September 23 2009

10 mind-blowing microsites

By **Fred Brown**

10 mind-blowing microsites

With so many emerging marketing technologies to play with, it's easy for marketers to overlook the humble microsite. But, in many ways, microsites can be more impactful and memorable than a brand's main website.

Co-author Nuri Djavit is founding partner and creative director at Last Exit.

On the following pages, we'll take a look at 10 sites that demonstrate the power of the microsite as a marketing medium. But first, let's take a look at the characteristics that set microsites apart from brands' main websites. Microsites have six differentiators:

1. Scope
Microsites are subject to the discipline of the 30-second commercial. This may seem an odd frame of reference in the digital world, but the comparison is appropriate. Because you have to focus completely on a single message when spending a gazillion dollars on 30 seconds, boy, do you have to get the consumer right between the eyes. It is the same with a microsite. Because it is little, it has to pack a big punch and, because it only has one message to convey, it can focus completely on doing just that. Many brands' main websites say everything and, therefore, say nothing. For the user, if the subject is of interest, they get the full-strength, high-caffeine, widescreen treatment. (And because they do, users clicking through from PPC advertising are much more likely to stay and play.)

2. Latitude
Marketers feel they have more latitude when it comes to interpreting brand guidelines. Many times, agencies receive microsite briefs with the rider that they don't need to stick religiously to the guidelines. We can have some fun. And when the agency is having fun, the results are usually better -- passion goes a long way online.

3. Risk
Marketers and agencies take more risks with microsites. That is not to say they are cavalier, but microsites are a great test-bed for innovation and for generally pushing the boat out a bit.

4. Clutter
Microsites feel more akin to how the internet actually works -- a connected web of content. There is no reason why a brand's "main" site couldn't actually be a portal into all the content about the brand -- both generated by the brand and, increasingly, by others. Anyone in the market for a camera, for example, is likely to stumble upon KenRockwell.com and find his reviews of value. Why not do the hard work for the customer? Prevent them from having to wade through Google and dodge the annoying aggregator sites, and provide them with a coalescence of relevant content. I know there are arguments against a plethora of different user experiences -- consistency has its place -- but this could be facilitated by a design process that took proper account of the strategic and tactical ways marketers would like to use the web to connect with their customers.

5. Speed and agility
It takes months -- often longer -- for marketers to get changes made to the main site; microsites can be launched in a fortnight. And if it doesn't work, you can change it or take it down just as quick.

6. Budget
Not only are budgets for microsites smaller than for a main site, but they can be set against an individual product or service marketing budget much more effectively. Good for ROI, in other words.

Now here are my picks of the bunch.

Let's kick off with two microsites from Volkswagen, just to show how different they can be -- even within one brand.

VW Polo
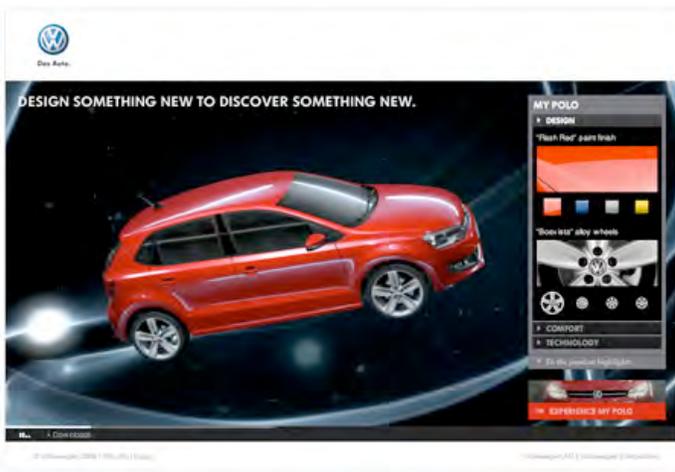
My first car was a VW Polo, purchased in a color I am embarrassed to reveal. But then, if you haven't got an embarrassing car story in your garage, you haven't lived.

What I love about this microsite is the balance between creativity and utility. From the aspirational and inspirational videos to the customize function, VW basically gives you a "build your own" tool kit wrapped into a video-based microsite. Fantastic. This feels as close to a digital translation of a long-form TV commercial as you're going to get.

VW Golf GTi
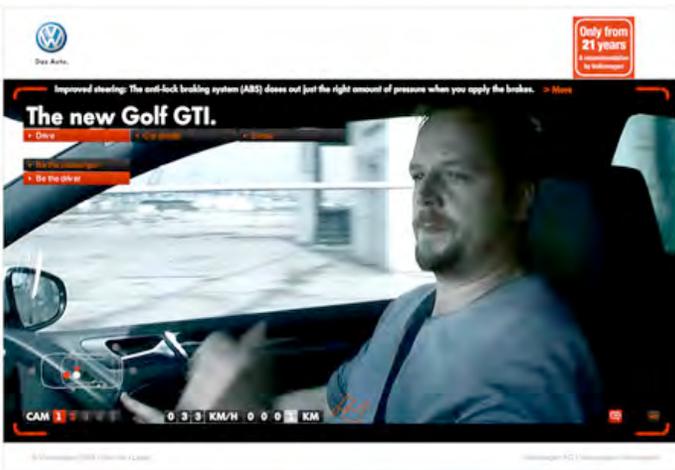
A Mark 3 GTi was my second car -- quite an upgrade from the radioactive green Polo. I saw this microsite in German and, despite understanding not a word, I was mesmerized. An exciting site for an exciting drive -- just the way it should be. Full-frame video gives a rich experience, and a range of downloads gives users what they want.

Sprint Now

Fascinating. If you only click on one of the links in this article, click on this one. I had been there for what seemed like 20 seconds when I noticed the timer -- five minutes and 14 seconds and counting. That's an impressive statistic for a brand's main website. And it's absolutely off the charts for what amounts to a single page -- very clever.

Taser

Who knew that a weapon of serious personal injury (or should that be restraint?) could be so desirable? This microsite has one of the only intro videos that I have sat through -- and I did it twice! I can now tell you a lot about the new Taser X3. The microsite makes awesome use of video and, again, great use of Papervison3D.

My only problem with the site is not really the site's problem, but more of an endemic one related to the de-sensitivity regarding weapons; the site does not explain that carrying this thing requires great responsibility. A toy it is not.

The Economist
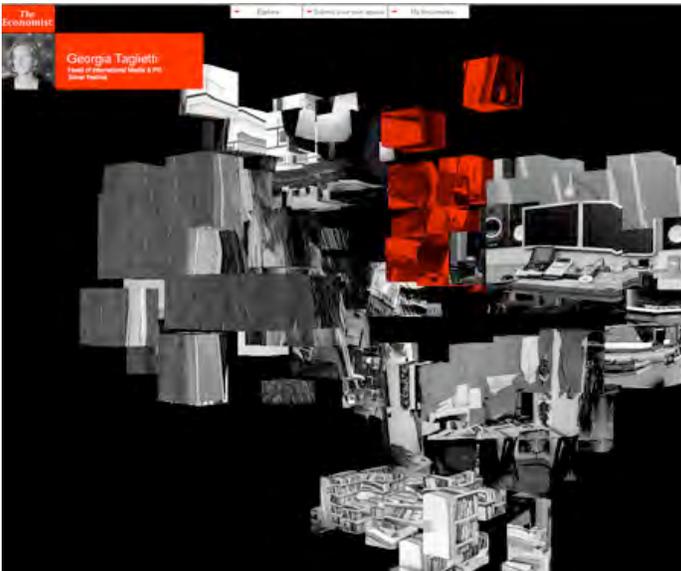
This is a lovely site -- almost unexpected for the brand -- that demonstrates the diversity of its readership and tries to appeal to a broad audience in a (decent) attempt to expand its subscriber list.

I found this site inspirational, and it reinforced my decision to maintain my subscription to the newspaper. The only letdown is the poor audio quality of the voice recordings. The blogs offer a good opportunity to discuss and even offer links to other blogs that have taken the time to discuss the site -- including Piers Fawkes' PSFK site and the main Papervision3D blog site.

Red Bull Flight Lab

Red Bull is the answer to anyone who questions the online relevance of what is really only a fast-moving consumer goods product. You just have to use your imagination, identify who your audience is, and provide them with things they like. Red Bull does it better than anyone. I love this site even though I can't stand the taste of the product (too medicinal for my palette). But I am clearly in the minority.

Nokia Unloader

The impetus behind this microsite was nicely judged. We've all had enough of emails, so Nokia provides the means to dispatch a few into the afterlife. If the ultimate Nokia "unloader" -- the iPhone -- hadn't come along and caught them napping, we'd all still have one.

Waterlife

Of all the environmental awareness sites out there, this one has to be one of the best. It's not just a promo for a documentary film, but rather a fantastic digital companion.

The agency's consideration and attention to detail is present throughout, from the water-inspired loading bar, where you can start to interact with it even before the site has fully loaded, through to the rash notes of content and the excellent 3D Papervision execution. The stillness inspired by the site gives you space to properly consider what the hell we're doing.

Philips

Next up, a blast from the past. This microsite is witty, inviting, and reaches customers in places they weren't expecting. I bought one -- the claims are all true.

MINI Cooper

And finally, your correspondent is from Britain, so allow him one indulgence from his homeland -- from those talented chaps at Glue London for the iconic MINI. The brand has the license to do almost anything cool, and this is sub-zero. What works so well is that it creates desire -- both for using the site and, thereby, for the car itself. It's achingly on-brand. When the ordinary customer is deciding among all sorts of models, the MINI customer knows the only choice is the option to personalize; for them, no other motor will do. The site was launched a while ago now, but it's still fresh. Try it out and treat your friends.

Finally, a couple of thoughts to conclude: I remembered all these microsites. They linger in the mind long after all else is forgotten. And Google is arguably the greatest microsite of them all. At a time when other search engines were trying to give us everything we didn't ask for, Google focused on providing exactly what we needed. May all your microsites be so successful.

Fred Brown is a partner at Last Exit, where Nuri Djavit is founding partner and creative director.

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Insight

Microsite Or Macrosite?

by **Fred Brown**, Yesterday, 9:12 AM

In 1993, BMW produced three basic car platforms and a sports car. The 3- series coupe, convertible, saloon and touring, 5-series saloon and touring, 7-series saloon and 8-series made up the range; eight cars in total.

At the last count, BMW offered 16 model variants and will launch a further seven very shortly. At the end of this model explosion, there will be as many model variants of the entry-level 1-series as there were cars in the entire catalogue only two decades ago.

Interestingly, while car, and other, manufacturers have become expert at creating products for niche markets, there has been a corporate shift away from the plethora of microsites deployed by, for example, British Telecom in the late 1990s. At first glance, this might seem strange. Does the customer interested in a BMW 1-series expect the same web experience as the customer about to drop $95K on a range-topping M5?

From the company's perspective, the trend is easy enough to recognize as the need for centralized brand control. After all, car showrooms are the same the world over, and in that environment the 1-series and M5 rub along together quite nicely. But, ultimately, does this control result in a lowest common denominator online, with any life squeezed out by the consistency of approach? I argue that it does and will provide some examples of risk taking that have bucked the trend and piqued consumer interest.

Watching Cricket More Exciting than BMW's Website

Readers of my opinions will know that I am a BMW aficionado, so it is not without pain that I describe the firm's website as less exciting than watching cricket. As the firm's automotive design language became more progressive under Chris Bangle, its online design language has been neutered. And yet BMW-owned Mini has a centralized website strategy that allows each market to tailor its content -- and even launch microsites like this excellent offering from Glue London.

Der neue Golf, which is not really that new, also has an excellent microsite for the GTi variant, which, even if you don't speak the language, is pretty exciting.

And, to show how bad things have got, it is worth remembering that there is still considerable demand for Fallon's innovative online BMW film series, which launched in 2001. All of them, including my favorite, "The Star" with Madonna in the lead role, are on YouTube.

In the charity sector, microsites are used because they are effective, allowing specific communication with an audience. (Here is our recent work for Cancer Research UK as an example). They do not replace the main website presence but act in concert with it.

In fact, the musical analogy is a good one. An online presence should be like an orchestra. Sure, you need some big instruments, but it is the smaller notes, rising and fading, that bring the interest, variation and harmony.

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FRED BROWN

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PAPERVISION 3D

Put some 'flash' into Flash

By Gary Lockton

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What was becoming clear though was the danger of over-indulgence, and I started to ask myself if the 'whizz-bang' impact delivered by some of these Flash experiences might be getting in the way of the client messages as opposed to amplifying them? I began to suspect many of these sites were becoming a bit of a task or challenge to use as opposed to guiding the visitor from query to answer as they were initially intended. Most worryingly I started to suspect that our business might be using client projects to showcase individual designers' wish-lists as opposed to thinking like end-users as we had always done before to build our success as a client's digital partner.

I had seen many extensions to Flash like Swift 3D make their mark and then seemingly lose favor since the days when Flash alone was news-worthy. When I saw Paper Vision 3D in action (or Pay Per Vision 3D as I first understood it!) I found myself falling in love with Flash all over again!

At Last Exit, we have quickly become huge fans of this open source development in the world of Flash technologies, and feel that PaperVision might be finally delivering on the promise made by Flash back in the mid 1990s! So, why is a seasoned cynic like myself thinking like this about what is seemingly an incremental addition to the Flash plug-in armoury?

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Given the ups and downs the digital industry has experienced over it's short 15 year life I think it is fair to say that any fresh injection of enthusiasm is very very welcome indeed. I think a seemingly insignificant, open-source, non-commercial, well-meaning, incremental Flash plug-in like PaperVision3D could well be one thing to make a big difference in the digital near-future.

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Retail Trends

FROM CYBER-SNORE TO COMPELLING STORE

BY NURI DJAVIT

O nline retail today is uninspired, technically driven, over-analyzed, and sterile. It has become so grounded in technology marketing parameters to satisfy search engine optimization (SEO) that all brand and character has been stripped out. The experience has been commoditized to the point that purchase decisions largely are based on price comparisons and peer reviews of retailers alone.

Shopping sites have become amazingly search engine optimized and offer the "searcher"—who knows precisely what he or she is looking for—easy and rapid access, but there are two issues here:

1. An overemphasis on predictive analytics. Previously you bought x, therefore, you might like y.

2. Other people who bought y also bought z, etc. These tactics result in some small additional sales, but they also result in a large "annoyance" factor.

For the casual browser, there does not seem to be much on offer, and the experience is obfuscated by a system that thinks it knows what you need or want and continually wants to ram it down your throat.

DOES IT MATTER?

Recent studies support the argument that dissatisfaction with an online retail experience detrimentally affects sales. A single point increase in satisfaction nets a 9 percent increase in revenues. Now, that is truly startling.

Of course, there are times when you want to buy on price. A new LCD TV is a good example. Once you have determined which one you want, so long as the manufacturer guarantee will be honored, does it really matter where it comes from? Bricks and mortar long has offered this approach, and most countries have chains of discounters that pile it high and sell it cheap.

But online, it seems everyone has standardized on this approach, with the industry moving through a hype cycle. High demand for online shopping resulted in the building of many thousands of stores all hoping to meet consumers' every need. Most obeyed the old rules of Website design (you remember the ones that were established by our old IT guys back in the mid-'90s), and all strove to be ever-more search engine optimized to maximize search engine marketing (SEM) spend, with a predictive analytics strategy to capitalize on additional purchase opportunities. Unfortunately, that peak has passed.

SEARCH ME

Clearly, SEO and SEM are a key part of any online campaign. It gets people to your site, it gets them buying what you want to sell. If you have somewhat niche products and optimize for those, all the better. But it is what happens once people arrive on your site that's troubling.

First, most sites are variations on the same template, many sharing the same off-the-shelf tools. A tempting brand experience it is not. (From the retailer's point of view, these sites require constant, if not increased investment, to ensure incremental advances in revenue. ROI is beginning to flatten, if not decrease).

Second, having eyeballed the templated site, users—previously known as customers and before that as people—are "greeted" by a machine that makes suggestions based on algorithms that have no clue as to their mood, available time, or much else. A large behavioral point is missed. What may inspire a person to purchase is the sum total of not only their distant past experiences but what happened to them yesterday, today, or five minutes ago. Moreover, the most important of the day's experiences are probably human interactions. How could a predictive analytics system know this and factor this into the suggested products it pushes? Simple, it can't, and the day any

electronic system can will be a sad day for humanity. The best an electronic system can do is attempt to juice the zeitgeist from current trends and compound that with the little it knows about the user. It is the offline equivalent of a sales assistant rushing up to you at checkout and saying "Sir, I see you have a pizza in your basket. Would you like some sugar because I can see the customer at checkout four has pizza and sugar in her basket?" That would get annoying quickly.

Third, nestling alongside the software-generated suggestions are endless lists. Think of any supermarket Website (it doesn't matter which—they are all the same). But what about someone who doesn't want to buy on price, or wade through lists, and just wants to browse? Offline we browse a lot—typically in a bookstore, a video store, or perhaps a supermarket, as these are shops we use frequently.

WHAT ABOUT BRICKS AND MORTAR?

So if in the man-machine interface there is too much emphasis on the machine, perhaps bricks and mortar has the answer? "Eye line is buy line" is the tip of a large iceberg when it comes to bricks-and-mortar retail sophistry. Flow management, promotional zones, product grouping, good signage, and customer service all conspire to persuade you to purchase, wrapped up in a brand experience. But very little of that has translated to the online world.

If you create a better environment for your goods, you build loyalty, sell more, and can command a higher price. You also can attract customers who just want to browse. Window shoppers online have surprisingly few destinations to go to, and the mantra that only one company can be the cheapest doesn't seem to have crossed the digital divide.

A NEW DAWN

Many digital production services are commoditized. There are so many off-the-shelf, or hosted solutions for inventory and shopping that offer retailers low-cost access to a presence online and, hopefully, revenue. So cheap or even free tools

equal "Bingo"? No. Templated sites are boring, bad for your brand, and where they might have made you sales before, they will not continue to do so in the future.

New data on online retailing being derived by folks such as Foresee Results is forcing a new approach. American business author and former management professor at the University of New Orleans Michael Leboeuf said, "A satisfied customer is the best business strategy of all," but this should not sit only in prompt delivery and strong after-sales support.

Retailers need to go back to the beginning of the process and rethink the entire digital retail experience. Three principal factors will guide their renewed efforts:

- Inspiration
- Intuition
- Impulse

Underpinned by thorough research, powerful creativity and innovative design will forge new avenues and even new technologies for providing a better experience. The iTunes store comes closest—where impulse to buy is created by an inspired interface that draws users instead of pushing them out. Risks will need to be taken, but the opportunity to surge ahead and create a compelling retail experience is knocking on your door.

Nuri Djavit is a partner at Last Exit in New York and London, which offers digital services including digital strategy and research; online campaign development; Website design and build; banner design; and search engine marketing, support, and maintenance for companies such as Vespa, Toyota, Express Jet, Viacom, Time, Inc., Farragamo, Boston Beer, Kswiss, Panasonic, Paramount, Sprint/Nextmail, Staples, and TiVo. For more information, visit **www.LastExit.tv**.

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Commentary
The Apple Car
Fred Brown, Jun 25, 2009 05:11 PM

Customers will talk about your company, its products and services, whether you want them to or not. And online there are a multitude of places to do so. The question is, do you as a brand facilitate or participate? I will argue that you should do both, and I'll tell you why.

It is not unheard of for customers to eulogize -- one only has to browse Trip Advisor to see that. It is most definitely not unheard of for customers to complain, or to seek answers to questions or solutions to problems. Consider Apple and BMW. They collaborated on the first proper integration of the iPod and the automobile, and are the only two brands I would consider getting tattooed, were that my thing.

Apple provided a forum for their customers back in 2000. Duane, who has posted 62,100 times so far, is a "Level 5" and the No. 1 poster. A blogger said of Duane, "I'm guessing that if you play 'Apple Related Trivial Pursuit' with Duane, Duane first kicks your ass and then takes your name."

Apple describes the service as a user-to-user support forum, whereby experts and other Apple product users get together to discuss Apple products. You'll find a wealth of information about your favorite Apple hardware and software products that will help you get the most out of your purchase. You can participate in discussions about various products and topics, find solutions to help you resolve issues, ask questions, get tips and advice, and more.

BMW, on the other hand, does not provide a forum for its customers. As a result, a plethora of home-grown forums have arisen, from bimmerfest.com to model-specific e46fanatics.com, meaning a time-consuming and sometimes fruitless Google search for information. It is still not too late for BMW to enter the fray and provide value to its customers. Disenfranchising the people who have filled the void is not something I would do -- rather BMW could provide:

- a central directory of the forums

- access to specialist technical advice for problems that forum users are unable to provide an answer to (there are plenty)

- access to information that owners of pre-owned BMWs should have, like a copy of their vehicle's original specification or service history

- hosting for the forums, relieving a cost burden that users currently meet

There are five key reasons why I think BMW and other brands should do this:

1. It creates a perception that they care about their customers beyond the initial sale.

2. It builds loyalty. Not everything that is said on the Apple forum is complimentary, but I admire Apple for facilitating. It shows they are here to stay, and can take criticism.

3. It provides an opportunity for the manufacturer to keep close to its customers, and learn about the issues (and often ideas) that can inform their R+D program. There is plenty of

feedback out there if they care to ask.

4. It provides an opportunity to touch customers. Today's 10 year-old BMW owner looking for an answer is tomorrow's customer for a new model.

5. You could not laser target the people who influence others in their circle to buy your product more precisely.

Editor's note: If you'd like to contribute to this newsletter, see our [editorial guidelines](#) first and then contact [Nina Lentini](#).

Published: June 24 2009

Social media: How to separate hype from utility

By **Paul Newnes**

Social media: How to separate hype from utility

Considering the sophistication of humans as mammals, it is still interesting how we are doomed to repeat the same behavioral patterns.

Gartner, the IT research consultancy, has developed a considerable business around describing this phenomenon, specific to technology. Their model is known as the hype cycle and shows the key change points, to no particular scale, of people's attitudes on new technologies. Where a technology lies on the hype cycle has implications as to the level of investment a company might want to make in it.

The points, as shown in the chart below, are fairly self explanatory, but essentially illustrate that a mad dash towards a technology causes an inflated notion of what it can deliver; an opposite reaction is then caused by the realization that the technology isn't a panacea and a lot of time/money/effort has been invested for little return; and finally, there's a growing sensibility towards a technology's value-based application.
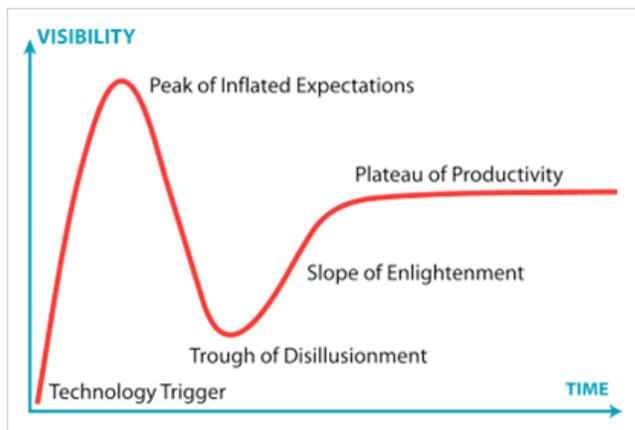
The key words above are, of course, "to no particular scale." As with property prices and the stock market, we all have a sense that we are in a bubble or a trough; but calling the moments of inflexion is an art, not a science. The Economist, not usually known for its alarmist journalism, warned of the housing bubble as long ago as 2002, and in 2003 its economics editor Pam Woodall reported that "In many countries, the stock market bubble has been replaced by a property-price bubble. Sooner or later it will burst."

As we are all brutally aware, Woodall was right; some five years later it did, and spectacularly so.

The inflation of social media
There is a fairly easy translation of the above model to social media. The recent Skittles/Twitter example demonstrates it well -- a rush towards a technological medium with little thought as to the utility or value delivered to the end consumer. In fact, one might consider that given the campaign was so open to abuse, the value delivered was firmly in the negative territory, and thus it fell into the "trough of disillusionment."

But how flawed is this approach? If a technology is at "the peak of inflated expectations," then is it fair to assume that the end-consumer has comparably inflated expectations? If so, then is the net sum zero?

This would seem a tremendously dangerous position to take. It is a fair assumption to make that the consumer's attitude towards social media has a quotient of hype, perhaps even equivalent to that of the brand or agency. But the disenchantment that will be felt afterwards by the consumer has a direct impact upon the brand's equity. This may well track with the overall disenchantment trend of the new medium, but will be more or less guaranteed not to outperform.

The irony is that mediocrity may involve having greater visibility than a sensible, utility- or value-driven social media campaign. Indeed, when one considers demography, this irony falls into even sharper focus.

For example, a number of organizations have analyzed Twitter's users including Compete, Hitwise, Quantcast, Nielsen, and Twitterholic. Two statistics stand out:

First, as of August 2008, California residents accounted for more than 57 percent of Twitter's visitors (according to Bill Tancer from Hitwise, in Time Magazine). If that doesn't raise the eyebrow of the marketing executive busy planning a Twitter campaign in Europe, then nothing will.

Second, none of the analysts can agree on which age group the lion's share of Twitter users belong to. Neilsen and Hitwise believe 35-49-year-olds dominate (41.7 percent of users at February 2009, as per Hitwise); Quantcast says 47 percent of users are between 18 and 34. And when it comes to gender, Quantcast states that 53 percent of users are female (March 2009) which is quite a shift (if true) from Hitwise's analysis in August 2008 that its user base is 63 percent male.

Buzz is rarely an undesirable commodity, but given the increasing need (and increasingly possible ability) to target marketing activity where it will be most effective, this vagueness is unlikely to guarantee a successful campaign. And whichever way you slice the numbers, there are large chunks of people missing. Those that are present may have zero chance of becoming customers, and although people engaging with your brand can have value -- because they can tell others who could be customers -- in lean times they don't add up to a hill of beans.

So, compare and contrast the release of new Ford car models in the U.S. and Europe -- a relatively simple, but well structured, exercise in user generated content, compared with Skittles'. In the short run, Skittles had far greater visibility; but over the medium- to long-run, it will be recognized as utilizing a less than mediocre campaign strategy.

In this instance, it would seem the brains behind Skittles went purely for visibility, rode the peak, and then fell squarely into the trough. Ford, however, "has learnt about using different ways of connecting with consumers, playing the long game" with its "This is Now" art-focused UGC initiative -- at least, according to a blogger on bizzia.com.

But how long is the long game? A lot shorter than it was five years ago, that's for sure. In the five years it took for the Economist's predicted house price bubble to burst, Facebook launched, attracted 200 million users, and earned valuations in excess of $5 billion. In those same five years IBM, inventor of the PC, stopped making personal computers. And recently, Silicon Graphics filed for bankruptcy.

So, although on one hand you can understand the desire to jump on any bandwagon that rolls along (and many will salute the bravery of Skittles' social media endeavor), it is worth remembering that not all will succeed, and even those that seem to be enjoying a meteoric and unstoppable rise may not be all they are cracked up to be. The tortoise won the race, remember.

The moral of the hype cycle? If you even suspect a technological medium is at the peak of inflated expectations, go for a pure visibility campaign at your peril. And if you know of a sure-fire way to predict the peak, let me know.

Paul Newnes is principal at *Last Exit*.

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How to Guide

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How to build consumer trust post-sales

By Fred Brown, Partner of Last Exit, London and New York

Customers will talk about your company, its products and services, whether you want them to or not. And online there are a multitude of places to do so. The question is, do you as a brand facilitate or participate? I will argue that you should do both, and I'll tell you why.

It is not unheard of for customers to eulogize - one only has to browse Trip Advisor to see that. It is most definitely not unheard of for customers to complain, or to seek answers to questions or solutions to problems. Consider Apple and BMW.

They collaborated on the first proper integration of the iPod and the automobile, and are the only two brands I would consider getting tattooed, were that my thing.

Apple provided a forum for their customers back in 2000. Duane, who has posted 62,100 posts so far, is a 'Level 5' and the number one poster. A blogger said of Duane, "I'm guessing that if you play "Apple Related Trivial Pursuit" with Duane, Duane first kicks your ass and then takes your name."

Apple describes the service as a user-to-user support forum where experts and other Apple product users get together to discuss Apple products.

You'll find a wealth of information about your favourite Apple hardware and software products that will help you get the most out of your purchase. You can participate in discussions about various products and topics, find solutions to help you resolve issues, ask questions, get tips and advice, and more.

BMW, on the other hand, does not provide a forum for its customers. As a result, a plethora of home-grown forums have arisen from bimmerfest.com to model specific e46fanatics.com, meaning a time-consuming and sometimes fruitless Google search for information. It is still not too late for BMW to enter the fray, and provide value to its customers.

Disenfranchising the people who have filled the void is not something I would do - rather BMW could provide:
- a central directory of the forums
- access to specialist technical advice for problems that forum users are unable to provide an answer to (there are plenty)
- access to information that owners of pre-owned BMWs should have, like a copy of their vehicle's original specification or service history
- hosting for the forums, relieving a cost burden that users currently meet

There are five key reasons why I think BMW and other brands should do this:

1. It creates a perception that they care about their customers beyond the initial sale.

2. It builds loyalty. Not everything that is said on the Apple forum is complimentary, but I admire Apple for facilitating. It shows they are here to stay, and can take criticism.

2. It provides an opportunity for the manufacturer to keep close to its customers, and learn about the issues (and often ideas) that can inform their

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Branding Strategy Insider

June 25, 2009

Building Brands Online in the Post-Sales Market

Customers will talk about your company, its products and services, whether you want them to or not. And online there are a multitude of places to do so. The question is, do you as a brand facilitate or participate? I will argue that you should do both, and tell you why.

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Apple provided a <u>forum</u> for their customers back in 2000. Duane, who has posted 113,365 posts so far, is a 'Level 5' and the number one poster. A blogger said of Duane, "I'm guessing that if you play "Apple Related Trivial Pursuit" with Duane, Duane first kicks your ass and then takes your name." Apple describes the service as a user-to-user support forum where experts and other Apple product users get together to discuss Apple products. You'll find a wealth of information about your favorite Apple hardware and software products that will help you get the most out of your purchase. You can participate in discussions about various products and topics, find solutions to help you resolve issues, ask questions, get tips and advice, and more.

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2. It provides an opportunity for the manufacturer to keep close to its customers, and learn about the issues (and often ideas) that can inform their R+D program. There is plenty of feedback out there if they care to ask.

4. It provides an opportunity to touch customers. Today's 10 year-old BMW owner looking for an answer is tomorrow's customer for a new model.

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Contributed by: Fred Brown, <u>Last Exit</u>

The following article can be viewed here:
http://www.retailcustomerexperience.com/article.php?id=1174

Commentary: Online retail over-analyzed, 'stripped of all brand soul'

by Nuri Djavit * • 29 May 2009

Online retail today has become uninspired, technically driven, and over-analyzed. It is so grounded in technology parameters to satisfy search engine optimization that it has been stripped of all brand soul. The entire experience is so commoditized that purchase decisions are largely based on price comparisons and peer reviews.

Shopping sites are amazingly search engine optimized and offer the searcher who knows precisely what s/he is looking for, easy and rapid access. But there are other issues to consider. An over-emphasis on predictive analytics (previously you bought x, therefore you might like y, or: other people who bought y also bought z) results in some additional sales, but also produce major annoyance. Meanwhile the casual browser finds little on offer and the experience is dominated by a system that thinks it knows what you want and tries to ram it down your throat.

High demand for online shopping resulted in building of thousands of stores to meet your every need. Most obeyed the old rules of Web site design (established by IT guys in the mid nineties), and strove to be ever more search engine optimized to capitalize on additional purchase opportunities. Unfortunately, that peak has passed.

Certainly SEO and SEM are key to any online campaign. They get people to your site to buy what you want to sell. If you have niche products and optimize for those, all the better. It is what happens when people arrive on your site that troubles me.

Putting the browse back in your browser

First, most sites are variations on the same template, often sharing off-the-shelf tools. A tempting brand experience it is not. From the retailer's point of view, these sites require constant investment to ensure incremental revenue growth.

Second, having eyeballed the templated site, users, previously called customers, are "greeted" by a machine that makes suggestions based on algorithms that have no clue

as to mood, available time, etc. A key behavioral point is missed. What may inspire a person to purchase is the sum total of not only their past experiences but what happened to them yesterday, today or five minutes ago.

Moreover, the most important of the day's experiences are human interactions. How could an analytics system factor this into the product suggestions? The best an electronic system can do is try to juice the zeitgeist from trends compounded with the little it knows about the user. It is the equivalent of a sales assistant rushing you at checkout to say, "Sir, I see you have a pizza in your basket, would you like some sugar because I see the customer at checkout 4 has pizza and sugar in her basket?"

Third, nestling alongside the software-generated suggestions are endless lists; think of any supermarket Web site. But what about someone who doesn't want to buy on price, or wade through lists, but wants to browse? Offline we browse a lot. These are the shops we use most frequently.

What about bricks and mortar?

Perhaps bricks and mortar has the answer? "Eye line is buy line" is the tip of a very large iceberg when it comes to bricks and mortar retail sophistry. Flow management, promotional zones, product grouping, signage and customer service conspire to persuade you to purchase, wrapped up in a brand experience. Very little of that has translated online.

But retailers can create a better environment for the goods you buy loyally, sell more and command a higher price, while attracting customers who just want to browse. Window-shoppers online have surprisingly few destinations, and the mantra that only one company can be the cheapest doesn't seem to have crossed the digital divide.

Retailers need to rethink the entire digital retail experience. Three principal factors will guide renewed efforts: inspiration, intuition and impulse. Thorough research, fresh creativity and innovative design will forge new avenues for providing a better experience. The iTunes store comes closest — where impulse to buy is created by an inspired interface that draws in the user instead of pushing them out. Risks need to be taken but the opportunity to surge ahead and create a compelling retail experience is there to be taken.

Nuri Djavit is partner with Last Exit, a digital strategy and marketing firm with offices in New York and London.

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SEARCH

Rant

Online Retail Bo-ring? Try Uninspired

by Nuri Djavit, 3 hours ago

According to a *Marketing Daily* article by Sarah Mahoney [May 11], online retail is "bo-ring." Well, I might go a little further; it's uninspired, technically driven, over-analyzed and sterile.

It has become so SEO-driven that almost everything has been reduced to a commodity where price is king and peer review the jester -- is it real? For many, the experience relies on price comparisons from multiple sites and cross-checking reviews to ensure their authenticity and validity.

Mahoney's article details how dissatisfaction with an online retail experience detrimentally affects sales and notes a mere single-point increase in satisfaction nets out a 9% increase in revenues!

There is a polar opposite to regular hype-cycles in this segment of the digital world; shopping sites have become amazingly search engine- optimized, and offer the searcher easy and rapid access to whatever s/he is looking for, buffeted by an overemphasis on predictative analytics. Previously, you bought x -- therefore, you might like y, or: other people who bought y also bought z, etc. etc.

The question is, how effective are these tactics versus the "annoyance" factor? For many -- and especially the casual browser -- there doesn't seem to be much on offer, and the experience is obfuscated by a system that thinks it knows what you need or want and continually wants to ram it down your throat.

In many ways, it reminds me of the Web 15 years or more past, where the entire experience was developed by the IT folks. No strategy, no design, no ergonomic appreciation and no sense of "human" problem solving -- just sites that conform to a technology strategy that, apparently, we must abide to if our stores and products are to be found, not to mention to make our media companies' lives easier.

The heuristic approach that analysis of user behavior data has taken us has left us uninspired, uninterested and unwilling to buy -- at least at your store if you have failed to innovate.

Where we started with the almost completely useless, we surged forward to the comprehensively utilitarian. We have developed shopping sites that are powered by some amazing technology and driven by incredible science. What is surprising is the divide between brand-based sites that focus almost entirely on experience and the current state of play with transactional sites that focus completely on conversion.

The problem is exacerbated in part by a combination of two factors. The first is the economic downturn that, it seems, will maintain an effect on spending in the months to come. The other is the commoditization of many digital production services, namely web design.

There are so many off-the-shelf or hosted solutions for inventory and shopping that offer retailers low-cost access to a presence online and, hopefully, revenue. So less inclination and cheap or even free tools equal "bingo," no? No. Template sites are boring, bad for your brand, and where they might have made you sales before, they will decline to do so in the future.

With the data that is being presented now by folks such as Foresee Results, we are going to see a shift in the digital retail approach. Design for experience will begin to dominate as it does in many industries, and it will and must lead innovation.

As online retail continues to grow, there is an immediate opportunity for brands to stake a bigger claim by building trusted, enjoyable and inspirational experiences driving impulse and, of course, conversion.

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NURI DJAVIT

Nuri Djavit is founding partner and creative director of Last Exit, a New York- and London-based digital strategy, marketing and design agency whose services include digital research & strategy, creative campaign formulation and management, SEO and analytics, motion graphics for digital delivery, interactive design and technical delivery. Nuri began his career in product design and established a reputation as an ergonomics and interface design specialist, racking up several patents on behalf of clients such as Bristol-Myers along the way.

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[SEARCH]
ADVANCED SEARCH

Point-of-View

If Only It Was 1999 Again!

by Gary Lockton, 2 hours ago

Those were the days of digital innovation and creativity.

Back in the early days of digital media you could describe the times something like this:

- It was a frontier time for digital.

- Client and agency focus was on creating innovation and firsts.

- Clients were growing in confidence, but more importantly felt brave.

- All efforts were focused on creating user experience and impact.

- There were high levels of creativity and opportunity within the medium.

- There was a wide variety seen across websites, making brand activity distinctive and memorable.

- Agency teams were very young, wide-eyed and full of unbridled enthusiasm.

- Dot-com finance was in full flow, helping to build digital exposure and adoption.

Given all of this, things must really be fantastic 10 years on then right? Well maybe they are and maybe they aren't.

Taking each of the points above and comparing them with things as we zoom through 2009 you might describe things like this:

- Digital media is an established and key part of the marketing mix.

- The focus is now on effectiveness and workman-like delivery within projects.

- Client belief and confidence is high, but many fear 'breaking any molds',

- Most efforts are now focused on DDA compliance, Search Engine Optimization and Content Management.

- Subsequently, there are limited levels of creativity and innovation.

- There is now quite limited variation across sites, making branding more about the logo than about functional innovation or distinctiveness,

- Agency teams are now older and far less wide-eyed, particularly at management level.

- Dot-com is now a dirty word as opposed to an investment opportunity.

Perhaps these things are not just true within the digital arena? Perhaps the same could be said for TV advertising and other media? The proliferation of digital channels and global or pan-

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GARY LOCKTON

In 1994 Lockton launched Deepend, one of the U.K.'s first dedicated digital media agencies, which grew into a £12M business employing 300 in eight cities. In 2008, he joined forces with ex-Deepgroup COO Fred Brown, and with Deepend New York founder Nuri Djavit, to build Last Exit, a strategically led digital and marketing services agency working with, among others Unilever, Fortis, Paramount, Panasonic, McCann Erickson, Dentsu, Piaggio to Toyota.

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European advertising campaigns seems to have had an effect on the creativity and sensitivity used when making TV spots.

All this sounds very negative, but the reality is that there is as much opportunity, creativity and enthusiasm as there ever was, if not more, as long as you know where to look for it!

B2B, Bright Spot for Creativity

There may be some limitations to the creativity on offer in the business-to-consumer area, but in the business-to-business arena, creative opportunities have never been better. In addition, while advertising on TV may be being dumbed-down online advertising still offers great opportunities to experiment, innovate and differentiate.

Google Analytics, and other web statistics packages, have greatly increased client interest, understanding and enthusiasm for the details of digital activity -- the "black art" has finally seen some light and the "new" has eventually been taken away from new media.

Even the huge focus now directed towards Search Engine Optimization has its benefits. Online content used to be largely inappropriate having often been "stolen" from elsewhere in the marketing department, as opposed to being created from scratch, but the importance of SEO now means far more attention is paid to the creation of online content, particularly the written word.

Although the huge sums of money have been invested, even "thrown at," any dot-com idea ten years back, it certainly helped to grow consumer awareness of digital media. The checks and balances in place today mean that the days of www.buy-pet-food-online.com are thankfully gone.

Projects in new online-only industries today, such as social networking, are with serious, diligent, experienced and committed clients as opposed to the "three mates from college" teams so often "in charge" of things back in the late '90s!

Even within the core area of website design itself, there is exciting news. Developments in technology, like PaperVision3D, are again encouraging clients and agencies alike to create online experiences, as opposed to just online services. In addition, the open-source roots of PaperVision, and other browser extensions, is creating as vibrant and innovative a space "behind the scenes" as it is on the "main stage."

There is no doubt that times have changed over the last 10 years or so, but surely the reality is that they have changed for the better, when one considers the details. Sure the late 1990s were an exciting, gold-rush, frontier-land times, but the mine is now built and it is time to start getting some of that gold out onto the open market!

I have been "lucky" enough to experience both of these "digital decades," and on balance I prefer the one we live in now!

Am I right, or am I just getting old?

This commentary is insightful. I recommend it to others.
1 person recommends this article.

One Response to "If Only It Was 1999 Again!"

Paula Dauncey from **Imaginet**
commented on: May 05, 2009 at 8:01 AM

An interesting post to me as I, like you, have experienced both decades, as a client and an agency. Back in the nineties, it was all about teaching clients the basics of content management and it was difficult to innovate beyond this, simply because the clients weren't ready for it in most cases.

Ten years on and content management is a given and as our processes are fine tuned, we can now focus on the more exciting and innovative solutions. I found both eras extremely exciting and rewarding and I am pleased to say that I am learning as much now as I was back then. It's simply a great sector to work in and I believe the best is yet to come!

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Published: May 22 2009

10 hot creative agencies to watch

By **Michael Estrin**

10 hot creative agencies to watch

Above all else, getting serious about digital means getting serious about creative, whether you're talking about a simple banner ad or a cutting-edge viral campaign. After all, big ideas move successful campaigns in any medium, and the web is no exception.

But as larger agencies struggle to redefine themselves in the lean-and-mean digital ecosystem, a grassroots army of smaller, specialty shops is raising eyebrows. Some work on assignment from larger agencies, but others have begun taking ownership of the client relationship for themselves. While this is by no means an exhaustive list, these are some of the independent agencies that made us stand up and take notice with campaigns and ideas that push web creative forward.
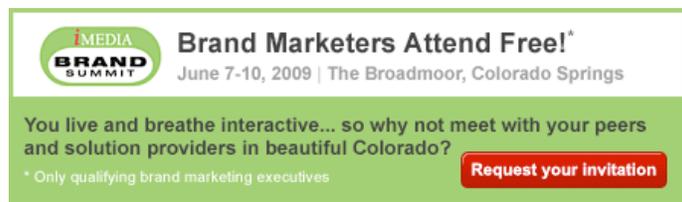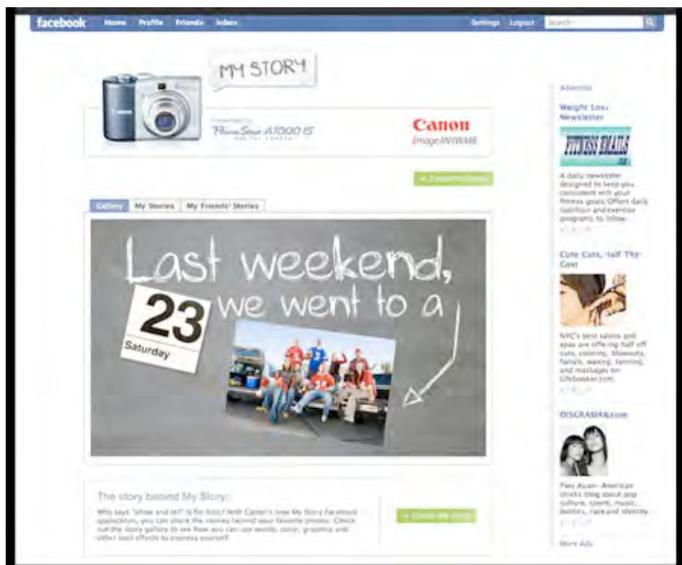
Last Exit

Agency Details:
Based in New York and London, Last Exit splits its clients evenly between agencies like McCann and Dentsu, as well as directly with brands.

Something Cool:
There are a lot of campaigns that run on Facebook. Frankly, most of them miss the big idea of the platform, which is to add value to users, not distract from what people prefer to do on the site.

But Last Exit's work on the Canon "My Story" campaign illustrates what brands can do to enhance, rather than detract from, the user experience on social networks.

Through the power of a simple Facebook app, Last Exit helped Canon inject itself into an activity that is practically a Facebook pastime -- uploading, tagging and

viewing photos.

Biggest Challenge Facing Digital Right Now?
"The most challenging thing about digital now is to keep existing and prospective clients off the track of following hype and pursuing cool for its own sake, and [instead] keeping them on the path of delivering long-term value," says Last Exit partner Nuri Djavit.

The Visionaire Group

Agency Details:
Based in Los Angeles, The Visionaire Group has a heavy emphasis on entertainment brands. But don't let the Hollywood flair fool you, the agency also has done work for companies like Mattel and Jaguar.

Something Cool:
Anyone can build a widget, but will that widget connect with users? While we're not stock market junkies (probably a good thing these days), we do like the idea of a branded product that translates economic mumbo jumbo into clear English, which is exactly what The Visionaire Group did for Scottrade. The easy-to-use widget tracks stocks in your portfolio, but with the click of a button, the user can switch to plain English explanations for key terms.

The Ideal Client?
"We look for clients who are open to innovation, who put their trust in us, and who understand the realities of the digital space," says CEO Dimitry Ioffe. "The online world is a combination of principles used in both print and audio/visual marketing, but you can't manage it exactly like either of those traditional mediums and still take full advantage of its capabilities. The clients who understand that are the ones who allow us to create projects that really stand out and reach their consumers online."

Conversation

Agency Details:
Conversation does about 60 percent of its business with other agencies, bridging the gap between idea and execution for clients that include HGTV, Bad Boy Entertainment, and several Omnicom agencies.

Something Cool:
It might be odd to highlight one agency's work for another, but in Conversation's case, we'll make an exception. The agency built a fast-loading, slick, and most of all, attention-getting website for Big Fuel (also on the list).

You'll have to see it for yourself here, but one of the great features about the site is that it delivers the punch of a 30-second television spot with the latitude of web video, which lets the user easily explore for more information.

What's Challenging About Digital Right Now?
"[A big] problem now is that 'big agencies' are making a play to be 'digital agencies' without being truly in the space," says Conversation's Frank O'Brien. "We get at least a call a week from an agency (big or small) saying, 'Hey, we pitched this project and don't know where to start to get it done.' A line we frequently use is, 'If we don't do it, there's a good chance we know, and have worked with, someone that does, or we can point you in the right direction.' Most agencies say 'We do it all.'"

Phenomblue

Agency Details:
Phenomblue, with offices in Omaha, Neb., and Montreal, isn't a big agency. But its team of creatives and programmers has worked for some household names like Budweiser, Quaker Oats, Gatorade, and Samsung.

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Point-of-View

Social Media: Hype Versus Utility

by Paul Newnes, 4 hours ago

Considering the sophistication of humans as mammals, it is still interesting how we are doomed to repeat the same behavioral patterns as our primate ancestors, even when is comes to social media.

IT research consultancy Gartner has made a considerable business around describing this, specific to technology. Its model is known as the Hype Cycle, and it shows the key change points, to no particular scale, of people's attitudes to new technologies. Where a technology lies on the hype cycle has implications as to the level of investment a company might appropriately make in it.

The points as shown in the chart are fairly self explanatory, but essentially illustrate that a mad dash towards a technology causes an inflated notion of what it can deliver; an opposite reaction caused by the realization that the technology isn't a panacea and a lot of time / money / effort has been invested for little return; and, finally, a growing sensibility towards a technology's value based application.

There is a fairly easy translation of this model to social media. The recent Skittles /Twitter debacle shows a rush towards a technological medium with little thought as to the utility or value delivered to the end consumer. In fact, one might consider that, given the campaign was so open to abuse, the value delivered was firmly in the negative territory and thus in the "Trough of Disillusionment."

But how flawed is this approach? If a technology is at "the peak of inflated expectations," then is it fair to assume that the end-consumer has comparably inflated expectations? If so, then is the net sum zero?

This would seem a tremendously dangerous position to take. It is a fair assumption to make that the consumer's attitude towards social media has a quotient of hype, perhaps even equivalent to that of the brand or agency. But the disenchantment that will be felt afterwards by the consumer has a direct impact upon the brand's equity. This may well track with the overall disenchantment trend of the new medium, but will be more or less guaranteed not to outperform.

The irony is that mediocrity may involve having greater visibility than a sensible, utility /value driven social media campaign.

So, compare and contrast the release of new Ford car models in the U.S., a relatively simple but well-structured exercise in user-generated content, versus Skittles. In the short run, Skittles had far greater visibility but, over the medium to long run, will be recognized as a less than mediocre campaign.

In this instance it would seem the brains behind Skittles went purely for visibility, rode the peak and then fell squarely into the trough.

And, the moral of the Hype Cycle? If you even suspect a technological medium is at the peak of inflated expectations, go for a pure visibility campaign at your peril.

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Paul Newnes is an owner of Last Exit LLC, a digital strategy, marketing and design agency whose services include digital research & strategy, creative campaign formulation, motion graphics for digital delivery, interactive design, campaign management and technical delivery. Paul started his career in sales and marketing within the deregulating European telecommunications industry, moving quickly into management with a track record of building successful businesses.

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My Turn

Twittering Away

by Paul Newnes, 5 hours ago

Is Twitter hastening the evolution of English. You bet. Is that a hazard for marketers who get lost in translation? Definitely. Should we all worry? Read on.

I have a first cousin who recently turned 18. As modern times dictate, I not only sent him a birthday card and present but a message through Facebook, asking how he was and how his birthday was going. His reply was: "im great thx m8 thx agen 4 the ipod."

My cousin is fully literate and typed this on his computer with access to a full Qwerty keyboard. Obviously, the shorthand he used has come from the text messaging medium. I'm sure it's crossed all our minds at some juncture that this "lol-speak" is somehow debasing the literacy of future generations.

However, there doesn't seem to be much evidence for this and we are not the first witnesses to people using different language forms for work, friends and family. Humans after all are pretty adaptable mammals.

Thus, it seems odd that such (similar) hyperbole is raised about Twitter: now not just the diction, spelling or grammar, but for heaven's sake the bite-size nature of the information feed. After all, won't this subvert our concentration spans entirely? Will we stop reading books in favor of receiving bullet points of introduction-plot-conclusion via our iPhones? In fact, aren't smartphones just making us all a lot more stupid?

Clearly, those who still need to (i.e. the workforce) won't be abandoning Webster's in favor of Newspeak, nor are we showing signs of reading fewer books. In fact, our more entrepreneurial companies are creating value around new devices for discovering and reading them.

And we are definitely not becoming more stupid, we have just chosen to be bombarded with more information than at times we can reasonably cope with. Thus, the social norm has moved beyond a required social etiquette.

Twitter falls into the last point and the cycle as I see it is like this:

_. You sign up _. You add friends _. You play around with it _. You read all the tweets coming in _. You get your cellphone bill and seriously regret having the tweets forwarded to your phone _. You get bored and cheesed-off reading all the tweets _. You stop reading the tweets _. You discover Stephen Fry's feed _. You find other feeds that are interesting over time

The key perception problem of Twitter and other social media is that it's not a raison d'être in itself. Rather it is a transport for snippets of information that I have given permission to receive. Tied to location awareness and maturation of personal preferences, Twitter could become an incredibly powerful medium for information exchange.

But seriously, does anyone really think it's going to change our language?

3 Responses to "Twittering Away "

Tim Braseth from **myShape, Inc.**
commented on: April 06, 2009 at 7:29 AM

Telegrams lasted 150 years stop. They didn't perm alter the language stop. Did they? stop.

Frank Schulte-Ladbeck from **Frank Schulte-Ladbeck**
commented on: April 06, 2009 at 7:15 AM

Will it change our language? Yes. Will it cause a lack of literacy? No. Microblogging and other formats which limit the users to the size of the message will cause changes in writing styles. We like to embellish our writings with

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Social Media & The Hype Cycle

Posted by Paul Newnes on March 09, 2009 at 08:00 PM PDT

Gartner have a model called the 'hype cycle' that visualizes the adoption of a new technology or technological application, human attitudes over time and ultimately its utility.

Social media fits this model perfectly. The plethora of social media types and the sheer scale of user participation has led to many brands adopting a spaghetti test attitude to the medium with little thought as to how it might deliver value without actually vexing customers. So as far as social media's position on the Hype Cycle, it is at the 'Peak of Inflated Expectations'.

The recently launched and even more recently un-launched Skittles homepage concept is an example of this—social media, in this case Twitter is viewed as the *raison d'être of the campaign*. It's hard to imagine the value delivered to customers through this, but it's very easy to imagine in an agency / client meeting where someone sparks up:

"I know, let's use Twitter!"

So in Hype Cycle parlance that particular execution is now in the 'Trough of Disillusionment'.

The key is that social media is becoming the mass transit of the internet. It's a way to potentially reach millions with a great campaign or message, but it isn't a campaign in of itself.

My company: Last Exit

My company's blog: Last Exit Blog

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"I think you're absolutely right Greg. The popularity of all those online services has waned considerably, but each played an important role in shaping and inspiring all the web tools we use today."