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Mass Exodus Episode I

May 2008

Speed Is The New King

Once upon a time, it was said that Content Is King. I'm here to tell you, the King is dead. In today's world of online marketing, speed is the new king and content is the queen. Corporate marketing departments need speed to succeed these days as we consumers flit about, adopting new digital media as fast as my kids mess up their rooms.

The reason I'm declaring that the old king is dead is that for most marketing organizations, by the time content has gone through its corporate gauntlet of approvals and crosschecks, it's more often out of date or lacks a personality and is therefore no longer effective in communicating with people in ways web content should. The wheels of commerce move at a pace that rivals those gigantic gunners in the Empire Strikes Back, leaving them vulnerable to attack from far smaller yet potent killers. Bloggers, consumer review sites, and the aggregation of nimble 2.0 entities far exceed the effectiveness of monolithic, controlled marketing campaigns.

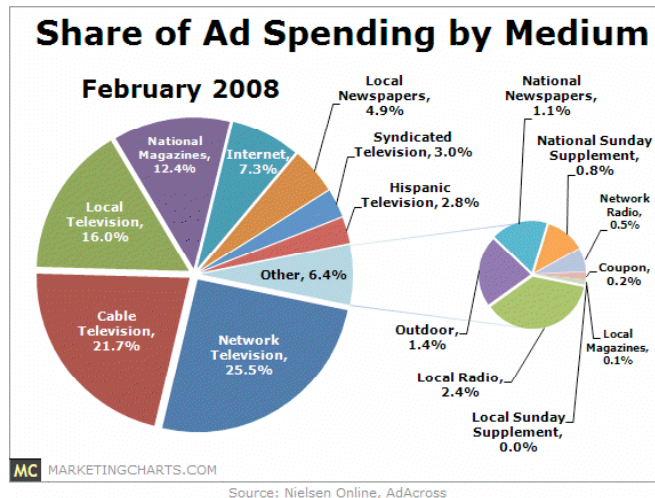
Another catch-all word for speed is experimentation. Experimentation is in fact a core component of successful marketing these days. Providing both budget and time to try new media options is essential to remaining relevant to your consumers. Think of the gigantic, game-changing digital options that have been presented over the past several years – YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Flickr, and now, Twitter. Each of these options were introduced out of no where and all had “hockey stick” adoption curves. Those marketers that can remain nimble and put marginal investment behind new media options are those that remain within the consideration sets of wired consumers.

So speed is more important than content. Speed enables marketing organizations to adopt new media channels as they

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emerge -- and frankly, do away with them as they fall out of favor. To me, it's OK to have had a MySpace page three years ago, only to fall more in love with Facebook last year and today. Why? Because that's what consumers have done. You simply can't wait for the dust to settle on any one platform because the dust never does.



If you look at the chart to the left, you'll notice that the vast majority of media investments are in types that run according to an annual plan. These are predictable, stable, and, to an extent, run themselves once the creative work is complete. With the exception of the Internet, these media types are traditionally not very nimble. As a result, most marketing departments organize themselves around the pace and schedule of traditional media.

There are two significant problems in play right now. First and foremost, there is a mass exodus away from most forms

of traditional media towards the user-controlled environments of the Web and other digital platforms including mobile. The second problem is that, as the chart shows, the interactive or digital channel is underfunded when compared to the numbers of people who inhabit it. The adoption rates towards new media are unparalleled when compared to any media type in history.

These three dynamics – a huge migration by consumers away from traditional media, the underfunding of new media channels coupled with an engrained slower pace of organizational change – has created a vacuum in marketing that is currently being filled by consumers themselves. Consumers are reviewing products faster than manufacturers can issue press releases. Consumers are sharing intimate and authentic brand experiences faster than agencies can create the aura of authenticity through centrally-planned brand advertising.

At the core of the "need for speed" is trust. Speed requires trust, and that may be the greatest limitation that afflicts most marketing organizations. Companies often don't trust internal constituents, and, while it may seem outrageous, I think it's fair to say that many companies don't trust their own customers.

It's time to take a good long look in the mirror before you talk about incorporating new media channels into your marketing

plan. Are you fast enough? Do you trust each other? Do you trust yourself to succeed?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, then you have a fantastic challenge: evolve. Marketing has moved, and you need speed to succeed.

Until Next Month,

Andrew Eklund
Founder & CEO

Ciceron is a digital marketing consultancy and agency based in Minneapolis. Since 1995, the firm has assisted hundreds of companies and organizations in making the necessary cultural, creative, and technology transitions to succeed in a 21st Century marketplace.