

Steps to achieving integrated marketing with digital at its core

Don't treat digital like any other channel; invest in the online creative and its reach and cost-effectiveness will reap dividends for the brand, says **Zaid Al-Zaidy**, Saint

UK ADVERTISERS spent £5.3bn online in 2008, a 406% increase since 2004 (source: IAB/PricewaterhouseCoopers; WARC), so, on the surface, it would appear that the majority of companies are getting digital.

Yet, 90% of this digital spend is being invested into largely promotionally driven online activities (source: IAB), while switched-on companies know they are merely scratching the surface of what online can really do for (and to) their brands.

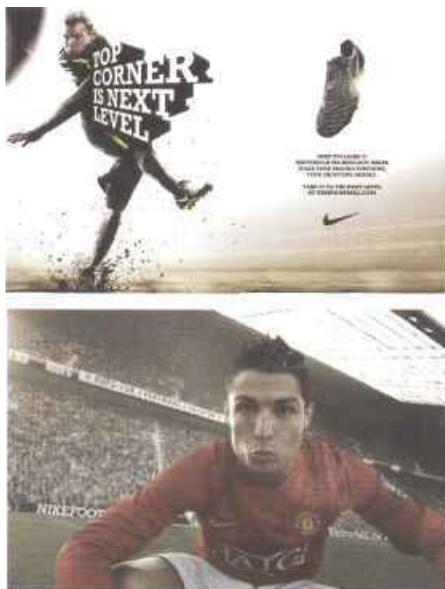
Why? Because the internet was not designed for brands to continue their one-way interruptive advertising model. In fact, it is a place where every TV campaign claim can be blogged to death, torture-tested, discussed, accepted and rejected without your sign-off or knowledge. So treating 'digital' like yet another advertising channel misses the point.

The online world provides unparalleled opportunities for brands to understand their consumers and the technologies they use better than ever, and to invent ways in which brands can enhance their technological experiences.

Nike is consistently ahead of the curve and has mastered the art of self-promotion via the most powerful media channel on the planet - word-of-mouth. Today, Nike spends 90% of its marketing budget supporting not new product launches or price promotions, but a continuous stream of content that entertains, involves and empowers its consumers all year round. And 'digital' plays a central role, both as hub and generator of content.

From a brand planning point of view, this is a classic example of a brand building advocacy online (in a way traditional advertising cannot) via experiences that allow consumers to live out the brand's promise for themselves. But, less obviously, this is an example of a company that knows how to manage agency talent and promote the type of culture where digital thinking and creativity can infect the entire marketing mix.

So, for everyone else, what gets in the way? No company (in its right mind) is questioning the need to exploit the full powers of 'digital', but the successful brands of the future will be those that



Clockwise from left: examples from Nike, LloydsTSB and Nokia show the power of investing in digital creative

not quantity. If we continue to judge 'digital effectiveness' in the same way as we do all media channels - in terms of reach and frequency - digital will continue to be relegated to an advertising-only role because most non-advertising digital activities do not reach huge populations. Instead, they reach smaller, discrete groups or grow in size and influence gradually.

The iconic brands of the future will no longer sit on a pedestal, borne out of years of (at best) consistent one-way advertising. Media fragmentation has arrived and we can no longer control who listens to our messages - on average, Sky+ viewers fast forward through 97% of the ad break.

The iconic brands of the future will build status and credibility by humanising themselves and engaging with consumers in a meaningful and personal way - for instance, via real dialogue. And it will be the quality of these interactions that will define success or failure. Having 10,000 happy customers online (who go on to become powerful advocates of your brand) is better than advertising to 1,000,000, of whom only 40% listen, of which only 10% are interested, of which just 10% actually do something about it.

4) Develop an 'enduring' digital marketing strategy. The digital world is changing fast, but there are some emerging strategic principles that companies would do well to adopt, and which may help them to plan and invest in longer-term initiatives. For example, to accompany the four Ps of classical marketing, marketers would do well to instil the digital four Cs, around conversation, collaboration, culture and compensation.

5) Think outside the normal campaign cycle. Don't always think about 'digital' as another box to be ticked to bring your campaign thought to life. Linking digital to your campaign cycles will prevent you from thinking about powerful ongoing activities that can give you brand presence all year round - for example, developing the right online

know how to harness that power. Successful brands of the future will go beyond advertising online and build a working culture based on these 13 steps:

±) Empower your digital talent to have an impact. Is your digital talent empowered to make the necessary inroads into your communications planning cycle? Getting the right people with the right digital experience into your business is only half the battle. Creating a reporting structure that empowers your digital thinking to influence the heart of your communications mix is essential. So, who is reporting to whom? Is your digital person reporting to a totally non-digital person and, if so, is this diminishing the opportunity to input and affect change?

2) Put your money where your mouth is. Do your online budgets measure up to your ambition? Because the digital world is changing so fast, it is hard to know which new breakthrough technology, trend or community will emerge as a winner and be worthy of your investment. Given that most online builds, be it an application, microsite or blog, will take time and be costly, knowing what to back, and when, is key. This often leaves companies frozen like rabbits caught in headlights and forces the non-advertising based digital activities to be smaller and more experimental.

3) Define success in terms of quality,

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strategic partnerships or the right influencer outreach programme.

6) Reverse the traditional production to media cost ratio. The acclaimed BMW films in 2000 were a great example of a brand deciding that instead of sinking its ad budget into buying media at the expense of production values, it would reverse the equation, spending Hollywood money for Hollywood talent to make big-budget Hollywood commercials, and screen them online, where distribution costs next to nothing. Ten million viewers downloaded these BMW films, spending more time with the brand than media money could ever afford.

7) Bring the best out of your digital agency. Hiring the best specialist agencies in town is irrelevant if you cannot get the best out of them. The classic 'not invented here' syndrome often means agencies will not co-operate or share ideas, let alone execute an idea that is not theirs.

But inter-agency collaboration is essential because, despite the media-neutral rhetoric of the past decade, most creative agencies still cannot execute beyond the channels they are most used to. Clients must create a culture of trust by establishing clear expectations and objectives among a team of agencies that know they are going to be paid fairly, ie a guaranteed fee and production budget. This way, your digital agency has every chance of being able to make its mark.

8) Champion ideas, not executions. Less 'cool' than Nike but equally advanced, LloydsTSB is another example of a brand having integrated marketing with digital at its heart in the shape of the bank's Savvy Saver campaign. lloydstsb-sawysaver.com housed a tool enabling people to prepare their own savings plan based on personal goals, encouraging them to pledge to save money and succeed with the help of ongoing advice and support. The 'Are you savvy?' tool enabled visitors to calculate how savvy they were compared with the rest of the nation. The destination microsite was promoted through display and rich media advertising online, as well as via traditional channels, such as TV, press and outdoor.

9) Select a lead agency partner that



can think digitally instinctively. Most advertising agencies have a creative director and a few producers to make sure they can execute digitally, if need be. This tends to cultivate the attitude that the digital team is a bit like the TV production department - another media channel. This is a very different model to one that builds digital expertise that can feed the entire strategic and creative development process. Make sure your lead communications partner has true native digital capability. It is easier said than done - most digital talent will not work for a 'traditional agency' because they don't believe their 'skills' will be respected or championed.

10) Insist the digital agency demystifies new technologies. Digital agencies need to demystify their worlds. It is their responsibility, as people who live it, to explain it. If they want to be taken more seriously by you, they should be less concerned with gimmicky, technological firsts and more interested in forging closer emotional ties between your brand and your consumer.

11) Encourage the digital agency to get emotional. It is easier to imagine the impact of a big, expensive TV campaign than a big digital one because we have been schooled for decades in the alchemy and emotional value of TV (with the bonus of guaranteed reach and frequency). If digital agencies described the emo-



tional ambitions of their ideas (as well as the commercial value), they might be able to earn a larger slice of your pie. Brand owners can help, too, by granting agencies greater artistic licence and being willing to take the same creative leap of faith they allow their above-the-line partners.

12) Build tools to help 'influence' consumers. Digital agencies constantly remind their clients that they can no longer control what is being communicated about their brands. Rather than challenge this, companies would do well to accept that in today's world, where serious 'lack of consumer trust' exists, the right digital infrastructure can allow companies to respond to every single tweet or blog post by engaging in real-life, powerful, one-to-one conversation. MyStarbucksIdea.com is a good example of a large company humanising itself by creating a forum for its customers to air their gripes and affections and, at the same time, contribute to new product and service ideas, which are ranked in terms of popularity and then put into action.

13) See failure as an opportunity for constant improvement. When you combine the cost of creative development, research, production and media, an unsuccessful broadcast campaign can become an incredibly risky investment. Testing and collaborating are ingrained in online culture, so companies have the advantage of being able to monitor accurately and optimise their activities. What you do online need not be perfect, but by showing you are listening and acting, you can turn the very people who criticise you into your biggest advocates.