

# Ten surefire ways to fail in new media

If you rush into marketing online just to follow the herd, there are many reasons why you'll come unstuck. **Brian Gilbert**, Hacker Group, outlines 10 key mistakes

**L**AUNCHING A NEW CAMPAIGN always stirs a mix of emotions in marketers, ranging from a rush of adrenaline, a burst of pride and even the nail-biting fear of the unknown. You invest large amounts of time and money, and hope it pays off in profitable returns. If a campaign failed to deliver a noticeable boost in sales or response activity, you used to be able to hide behind the 'it's about building awareness' shield. But, no longer. This is the age of measurability.

Experimenting with new media campaigns - banner ads, social networks, mobile marketing - is even more frightening. Your mistakes may be unforgettably public - like the agency guy who tweeted his disgust for the client's hometown, not realising the client was following him on Twitter. Of course, you'd never do something that dumb.

The opportunities in new media are too great to pass up. New media allow you to connect with customers and prospects in a much more relevant and measurable way than most traditional media. And the media cost is usually low, so you can potentially get more ROI bang for your buck. Most importantly, it's likely your target audience is immersed in these media. You won't reach them if you don't go looking for them there.

Other challenges - besides public humiliation - make new media campaigns complicated. Here are some of the most common ways you can fail when climbing on the new media bandwagon.

## **Mistake 1: Be a victim of the 'shiny new toy' syndrome**

People are built to chase after the next big thing. But 'new' isn't necessarily 'helpful'. If you're reading about a new idea in trade publications and you start to feel anxious because you haven't yet started doing whatever it is, stop to ask:

- Will I find the audience I'm targeting in this new space?
- Will my customers expect to find my company there?
- If I jump in, what commitment do I need to make to maintain it?
- If it doesn't work, what is my exit strategy?

If you create a new initiative only because you (or your boss) think it would be cool, you're likely to fail.

## **Mistake 2: Don't do your due diligence**

If you don't understand it, you won't be able to use a new medium effectively. And deep understanding of a new medium only happens when you work in it for a while. Creating a Twitter account takes no effort. Checking it out over the course of a couple of hours will not make you an expert. Look at what your competitors may be doing. Engage with brands already active in the space. Observe how consumers interact with those brands.

You probably won't gain full expertise on your own. Read expert blogs on the space. Talk to vendors and agencies about what they do. Don't be afraid to ask dumb questions. Do you understand the risks and costs associated with any compliance issues, such as privacy and permission?

## **Mistake 3: Enlist too many colleagues to help**

When everyone is in charge, no-one is in charge. While the group is enthusiastic at the beginning of a programme, you'll have too many opinions to deal with and will soon get bogged down. If you're able to launch, eventually the team will get bored and abandon the project, because no-one truly owns it. Start with a small, hand-selected team and keep your eye on the goal. Get resource commitments from stakeholders. Clarify roles and expectations - and hold those people accountable.

## **Mistake 4: Don't have a goal**

'We need to get on My Linked Twitter Space-Book!' When your boss says this, keep asking why until you get a reasonable, measurable answer. The goal could be:

- Immediate sales
- Lead generation
- PR/community building
- Customer support
- Brand awareness and positioning

You'll also fail if your answer is 'all of the above'. Focus. One or two goals will be more than enough. Make sure it's measurable. Then measure. And publish the results to your stakeholders.

## **Mistake 5: Ignore the numbers**

'Hey, this stuff is all free, right?' Your boss may think that new media is cheap or even free. That's old-school thinking, where the media costs were the driver of every part of the marketing budget; you'll have agency, technology and internal resource costs to consider. There will be opportunity costs as well. What won't you do to make time for this campaign? Create a pro forma to help set expectations:

- $\text{Costs/expected response} = \text{cost per response (CPR)}$
- $\text{CPR/expected conversion rate} = \text{cost per sale (CPS)}$

It gets more complicated. You will want to consider fixed and variable costs, rollout costs, how much scale you can get from this medium, and how to allocate budgets across channels. But you don't need sophisticated data analytics to make a first pass to see whether the idea will pencil.

## **Mistake 6: Don't test**

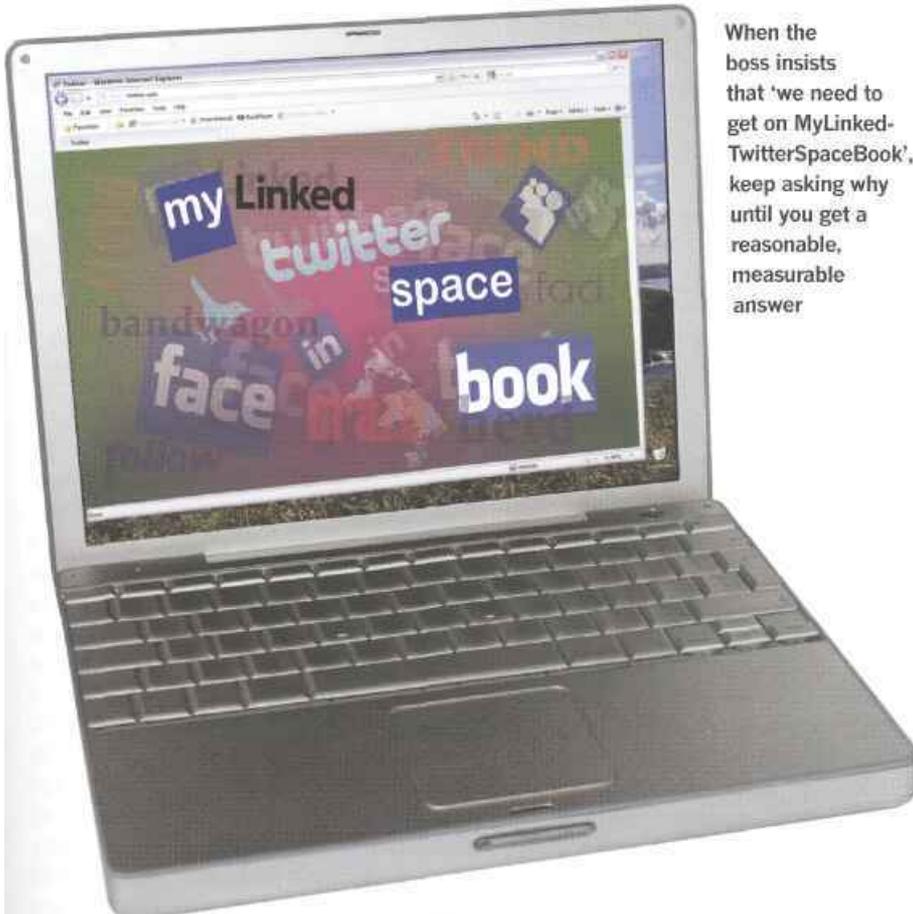
Ignorance is bliss - until you fail. If you try only one idea, you won't know whether the medium failed or your idea did. Say, for example, you send out a coupon on a mobile network and no-one responds. Was the problem the mobile platform? Or was it the offer? Did you miss your target audience? Did the copy just not make sense? Nothing - no matter how brilliant it sounds - is a sure winner when you're starting from scratch. Always add testing to your pilot plan. And keep testing. You never know when your winning strategy will start to go stale.

## **Mistake 7: Don't dig into the measurement process**

Your team assures you that everything can be measured in the digital space, so you don't need to think about this again. When the campaign is over, press a button and - shazam! - you know whether you have a winner or loser, what worked, what didn't and what to do next time to make it even better.

If only it were that easy. You have a responsibility to tell your agency or internal team exactly what needs to be measured. Start by building a mock-up of the report you want at the end of the

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**Mistake 10: Believe it's all about you**  
The easiest way to fail in new media is to keep talking about yourself- all the time. And don't listen - especially to your critics. What do they know, anyway? The way to succeed is to think transactionally. If you want to hear from customers, you need to respond when they talk to you. If you hope to get someone's email address, you must offer something in return - for example, a helpful buying guide or a discount on their next purchase.

Criticism is the hardest part of jumping into new media. People love to poke fun. When they're angry, they like to vent - or get a little revenge. It can be hard to hear what you're doing wrong without getting defensive. On the other hand, dealing with a critic well will very often earn you a fan for life. What's more, you can always find a grain (or more) of truth in negative comments. What a fast way to learn!

These are just 10 common errors. You will discover more. The landscape shifts quickly. By the time you have figured out one area, the world seems to have moved on to the next idea.

What's more, if not enough people are involved in a particular medium, it's hard to justify getting up to speed. Mass marketing works, based on the scale of the opportunity. If a few million people are on Twitter - and only a small percentage of them are likely prospects - your programme won't be worth the cost. New media can also create organisational challenges. Bringing it in-house can call for extensive, specialised resources. Experienced talent is difficult to find.

Despite all these caveats, you can't avoid the tough work of getting to know and work with new media. One day, one or more of these new ideas could become the main way we communicate with each other and market our products. Perhaps, like having a corporate website, a new media presence will be the cost of admission for every brand. Start now. It won't get any easier.

programme to be sure all data points will be gathered. Don't let the vendor tell you what's possible - let them know what you need. When they say they can give you what you're asking for, you still need to go deeper.

Understand how the metrics are derived and whether they are explicit or inferred. Are there ways for you to verify the activity through your own systems or through a third party? Can you measure performance against a control group?

**Mistake 8: Try to boil the ocean**  
Perhaps you have a dream of taking over the world of social networking. Or maybe you start small, but as you share the plan with your colleagues and boss, it grows out of control. The point is that new media marketing is a lot more work than it looks. Don't bite off more than you can chew or you will never succeed. Avoid scope creep by keeping a 'next phase' idea list. Focus on

the areas with the highest likelihood of paying off. Have an exit strategy, in case it blows up and you can't handle the work involved. Consider hiring help - even outsourcing some of the labour.

**Mistake 9: Don't think past the click**  
Someone clicked on the bait you left out. Yay! You win! What happens to your prospect after the click is more important than what got them to click in the first place. Most clicks go nowhere as far as your marketing efforts are concerned. Think about how many times you click every day, and how rarely you give anything in return - a name, a postcode or an email address.

You need to think through users' experience once they have clicked. 'I'm here. Now what?' And how are you going to engage them so they will take the next step and give you some data about themselves?