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## The World Has Changed

*Time to Change with It*

**A** year ago, if you went around espousing the value of social media you probably found few listeners. Twitter had barely two million users. There weren't enough customers for any but the most forward-thinking clients. While plenty of bloggers championed conversation marketing, the majority of advertisers were not asking you to engineer their social media presence and build them a community.

Man, the world changed quickly. If your clients resemble mine, they're now requesting full-blown social media programs. They want you to launch their brand on Twitter, create apps and introduce them to crowdsourcing.

What happened? Three things created the perfect storm. The recession: Advertising and marketing budgets plummeted, and as a potential alternative, social media started to look quite appealing. Obama: Our president actually used social media and crowdsourcing, in the form of Twitter and a YouTube channel, to get elected. A media circus: Everyone from Ellen to Oprah to Ashton to Lance has embraced Twitter. Millions of new users joined. And CMOS and CEOs started to pay attention.

What does this mean for creatives? Will there be less traditional advertising? Is TV going away? Will budgets get chopped even more?

The answer to all of those is a resounding "yes." But who cares? Our clients will still need creativity, perhaps more than ever.

Think about it. Right now being on Twitter or Facebook is still relatively new for advertisers. Marketing through a conversation remains novel. So simply engaging and listening is enough to grab a customer's attention. But that won't last. In another year, every company will post on Twitter, collect fans on Facebook, and broadcast on its YouTube channel. The cacophony of conversation will grow deafening and the proliferation of communities will be overwhelming.

Once that happens we'll need new creative ideas—fresh, original, attention-getting techniques and experiences—to grab attention, get remembered and generate results.

There is one catch. Creativity—the idea, the team that creates it, how it's brought to life—will be different. It won't be print or a 30-second TV spot. We will need the big idea ("The

Axe Effect," "Got Milk"), but it will be achieved with the next version of a viral avatar, a new way to spread a meme or a technique to aggregate comedy from the crowd into a Twitter stream.

As I look at all the new stuff, I feel like a kid in a candy store. Never have so many creative opportunities presented themselves. Yet many people continue to cling to the familiar forms of print and TV. Dinosaurs didn't know that extinction was coming; but we've been forewarned.

If you're determined not to be among them, here's what you might consider doing. Learn to create in the new media: You can be creative on Twitter, really. Look at the *Mad Men* avatars or the fake Don Draper character. Why not a new kind of campaign using useconds.TV? I haven't seen that yet.

Make friends with a developer: The relationship between technology and creativity deserves more than a sentence or two. What can be done with a smartphone, Twitter's API or a platform like Posterous should excite you. Become familiar with technological possibilities. They may inspire ideas.

Embrace crowdsourcing: I'm not talking about design competitions. Think co-creation instead. You can stick a lyric or a guitar lick on a Web site and end up with a crowdsourced music track. You can create a viral meme that spreads further if the crowd plays a role in creating it.

Expand your tribe: In *The Element*, Sir Ken Robinson suggests that we become more encouraged and stimulated when we find our tribe. If that's true, then shouldn't we constantly look for ways to expand the one we have? With all the new technology and social media platforms available, we can find inspiration from other creatives anywhere in the world. Beats staring at YouTube videos in search of ideas.

Build your personal brand: Take your career and your reputation into your own hands. Put your opinions and perspective out there. Share what you know. You'll be pleasantly surprised how much you'll gain personally and professionally. Just look at what it did for Erik Proulx in the realization of his film *Lemonade*.

Much about marketing and advertising has changed. What hasn't is the need for creative people. We just have to reinvent advertising's forms and, in the process, ourselves.