

The Value of “Significance”

Featuring:

Gaby Bell
Planning Director
Draftfcb London

Hello, I’m Gaby Bell, and I’m the planning director at Draftfcb London. I want to talk today about how agencies and brands should be approaching consumers in today’s tough times. It’s borne out of extensive research we’ve done and will turn on its head the way the industry has for too long developed communications.

Over the next few minutes I’ll tell you just what a bag of crisps has in common with Barack Obama and how both have not only superficially realized that the world has changed, but actioned it to achieve cut-through messaging that truly, genuinely matters to consumers.

And how we, at Draftfcb EMEA, are helping clients achieve the same. We believe that the world is entering an Age of Insignificance, where consumers are feeling more isolated and unimportant than ever before.

Individuals are increasingly searching for meaning in their lives; as well as reappraising the meaning of value and values and their place in the world.

Brands can capitalize on this void, but only by embracing and truly acknowledging those consumers at a community level. Think about valuing, recognizing and acknowledging customers – because consumers are missing this recognition in their lives.

Consider the rising levels of divorce and single person households, stress and unhappiness and a breakdown of trust in institutions such as government and banks are only increasing feelings of insignificance and unimportance in the population.

For example, the number of suicidal children ringing the UK telephone helpline ChildLine has tripled in the last five years. And the UK children's charity, the NSPCC, says that the number of boys with suicidal feelings is now four times higher than in 2004.

It all paints a depressing picture: despite being digitally more connected than ever before, with far more choice than in the past, our consumers have never felt so underappreciated or misunderstood.

Brands have been keeping pace with technical innovations and investing in each 'next big thing' yet the message has barely changed.

In the last 20 years the communications landscape has transformed and consumers' expectations have dramatically shifted. The world has changed, yet communications models remain essentially the same.

The mechanics of the message remain rooted in the pre-digital age. Existing advertising models do not go far enough.

It is not enough to ask consumers to believe in a brand, to like a brand or believe it is different. Loyalty is not a given. Consumers are bombarded and bewildered by a wealth of choices and marketing messages.

Only a handful brands – and one politician – are recognising that in this new Age of Insignificance the new communications model is one about making people feel truly significant.

We've identified 'Significance' as a new model for developing communications. And those who recognize this new consumer need will win.

We've begun trialing Significance with clients, and already it's paying dividends.

Take the work we've done with Beiersdorf and its NIVEA for Men range. Through Significance we developed the Addicted to Shaving Web Ring – an immersive, user-generated, online experience.

In order to engage with the harder to reach sub-set of the NIVEA For Men target audience – males aged 18 to 35 – we created an online brand entertainment program built around data and insights, which aimed to help address 'drop offs' and drive active consideration of the brand.

Three videos were seeded online to drive users to three linked websites and the opportunity to order a product sample. Because of the light-hearted content and question over whether the videos were "genuine", the campaign encouraged consumers to opt-in and ultimately share the experience and build brand awareness.

But don't just take my word for why marketers must adapt in order to thrive. Look as well to the meteoric rise of "Brand Obama." Barack Obama's election campaign to become U.S.

president offers a master class in Significance as a communications model. Obama's new approach was to be among his audience, offer them his trust and give them a role to play; to make them feel valued and acknowledged.

The results were extraordinary. Barack Obama is appealing, profitable, recognizable and embraces digital and social media. Even those who don't agree with his politics or policies believe that Obama wants the best for them --- and wants to hear from them.

Or take Walkers, the PepsiCo-owned potato snack brand. Last year it launched its "Do Us A Flavor" initiative, which invited individuals to invent a new flavour of crisps, win a lump sum and future share of profits from the sale of bags. Six user-created flavours were developed, trialled, advertised extensively and crisp eaters motivated to vote for their favourite.

Walkers has now sold the winning flavor.

Another example is confectioner Cadbury, which reintroduced the Wispa Chocolate Bar after a fan campaign to resurrect the brand, orchestrated on social media sites such as Facebook. It later involved consumers in the resulting fanfare of publicity and promotion.

These brands recognise that the world has changed and that they need to change with it.

They know that inspiring and allowing the most committed fans to evangelise their brand will lead to a greater return on investment and creativity than shouting to the unconverted.

Brands can scream for attention but increasingly the volume or frequency of your message cannot, will not, guarantee that people are listening – or of them believing what you say.

Just look at the legion of published studies that show “word of mouth” is worth more than paid-for communications. In a connected, digital world the importance of such recommendations can only grow.

In a digital world, the floors, walls and ceiling have been taken away allowing the search for value to truly play out.

Digital allows consumers to discover the truth. Digital allows consumers to be heard, through webpages, blogs and services such as Twitter. And digital allows consumers to collaborate.

But Significance as a communications model requires a step-change in thought. It is not enough to merely pay lip service to concepts such as interactivity.

Brands must look to how they can change the way they talk to consumers – and crucially how they might need to change the way they elicit a response. We must not only be asking customers what they want but demonstrate how we respect them, support them, help them “belong,” and “transform;” to at least matter in a little part of their lives.

We must go beyond interactivity and embrace consumer co-creation – provided, of course, that it is based on a clear and relevant proposition. Consumers want to exert influence, so brands must look again at the effectiveness of traditional advertising.

It is about giving modern, ad-savvy, brand literate, digitally powerful consumers the value and acknowledgment they want. Consumers are looking to be recognised, listened to and to

be important. They want to be acknowledged as a potential co-creator, a co-conspirator rather than just a customer.

Such immersive activity aims to penetrate in this new Age of Insignificance. The world has changed and expectations have changed. Yet consumers are not sure whether they, as individuals, matter any more.

The opportunity for brands is to make them feel significant. If the humble British crisp can do it, imagine the opportunity for other brands.