

Ubiquity Never Looked So Sweet

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Stephen Johnson, Draftfcb Regional Head of Digital Innovation, and his team in Australia & New Zealand recently launched ORION, a proprietary social media insights and analysis practice consisting of powerful RSS feed aggregation technologies and tools, paired with best-in-class analysis methodology and expertise. ORION empowers clients through real-time access to the largest social media databases in the world, combined with a range of tailored programs designed to foster advocacy and community within social networks.

This transformational era in advertising is challenging our industry to find new perspectives, new frameworks, and new standards for reaching consumers. Long accepted marketing strategies for reaching consumers have been retired, replaced by the highly measurable and participatory contexts now shaping our digital economy.

Consumers now expect and enjoy the more personal, one-to-one experience that has emerged. Their relationship with a brand is now far richer and more intimate, made possible by a plethora of ubiquitous two-way communications channels.

A 2008 Forrester report entitled “The Connected Agency: Marketers partner with agencies who listen instead of shout” predicted the survival of agencies would be determined by their ability to evolve from “pushing advertising campaigns” to “nurturing communities of consumers and matchmaking them with brands.” The report hypothesized that the agency of the future will have “learned to connect itself” with defined communities of consumers and cultivate insights into their behavior.

Mary Beth Kemp, a principle analyst with Forrester Research, infers that as social technology continues to advance “industry relationships may change to such an extent that instead of pitching for a brand’s business, agencies might “sell” access to groups of consumers in whose interests they learn to act.”

This idea doesn’t seem so farfetched in the context of influential peer networks and the explosive growth of online communities. To stay relevant, traditional advertising and media models will give way to agencies with greater data analytics and channel planning capability.

Facebook’s recent partnership with the World Economic Forum in Switzerland signaled that the future is already upon us. The conference moved online thought and content once relegated to a small physical setting, giving delegates the ability to poll random segments of Facebook’s 150 million user base to gain a real-time pulse on what millions of people around the world were thinking and feeling at the time.

This act extols the strength and influence of weak ties, which can become a crucial bridge between clusters of the strong ties of close friends. It highlights how people react when healthy social reinforcement is in place – a paradigm shift toward a community where everyone participates. Everyone contributes. Importantly, it reinforces the relevance and power of social networks to connect people, resources and ideas to drive creativity and innovation forward.

For example, in our region one of our clients is leading innovation, having commissioned Draftfcb in Australia to design a world-first ambassador program to launch a new food product. The project involved more than 100 registered influencers who regularly accessed a secure program Web site

designed solely for providing Influencers a contextual platform to share resources and collaborate with client personnel and each other. The result was a campaign which spoke to consumers in a meaningful and engaging way, reaching 70,000 Australians during an eight-week period.

Expect agencies like ours to create new applications that cultivate social media's knowledge base to deliver valuable contextual insight into areas such as new product development, customer engagement, issues management, competitive intelligence, customer service recovery, along with many other applications.

As powerful global forces impact all industry sectors, on a daily basis we are faced with super-charged content delivery, fickle viewers, and wayward consumers, not to mention maverick media moguls and open-source business models. We need to capitalize on this constant redefinition of advertising and entertainment, creator and consumer, and platforms and services. It's imperative we draw on the lessons of the past and embrace this vibrant new era of media, offering marketers innovative strategies to bullet-proof their businesses through tough times and ensure ongoing success.

References:

- 'Marketing in the In-Between – A post modern turn on Madison Avenue' (Ellis, 2006)
- 'The Connected Agency: Marketers partner with agencies who listen instead of shout' (Kemp, 2008)
- 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A network theory revisited' (Granovetter, M. (1983)