DIGITAL RESOURCE GUIDE
INDUSTRY TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES FROM DIGITAL EXECUTIVES OF TOP BRANDS AND AGENCIES

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THE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Interview: Mark Himmelsbach of BBDO** ................................................................. 4
*Digital, Client/Agency Expectations and the Rise of the Connected Screen*

**Trends in Digital Advertising: Valuable Disruptions** .................................................. 6

**Interview: Vaibhav Gardé, Shobha Iyer, Ned Kumar of FedEx** ................................ 7
*Education, Analytics and Emerging Trends*

**Perfecting the Social Marketing Mix** ........................................................................ 9

**Consumer Reviews—What’s A Marketer to Do?** .......................................................... 10

**Interview: Colleen Soriano of Universal McCann** ....................................................... 11
*Finding a Career in Digital and a Quick Look at the Industry Today*

**Interview: Sheila Marmon of Mirror Digital** ............................................................... 13
*The Latest Trends in Multicultural Digital Marketing*

**5 Steps to Launching Your Next Digital Marketing Campaign** .................................. 15

**Native Advertising Isn’t New, But It’s The Future** ..................................................... 16

**2013 Salary and Hiring Trends for Digital Advertising and Marketing Professionals** ........................................................................................................... 17

**Interview: Georgina Flores of Allstate Insurance Company** .................................... 18
*Allstate’s Mission to Deliver Relevant Content to Highly Diverse Audiences*

**The Evolution of Online Behavioral Advertising** ....................................................... 20

**Consumers’ New Path to Purchase** .......................................................................... 21

**Special Section**

**Google’s The Engagement Project: Connecting with Your Consumer in the Participation Age** ................................................................. 22
DIGITAL, CLIENT/AGENCY EXPECTATIONS AND THE RISE OF THE CONNECTED SCREEN

An interview with
Mark Himmelsbach, EVP, Director of Digital Strategy North America, BBDO

AAF: Which areas of digital do your clients tend to fear the most, and how do you encourage them to overcome these fears?

MH: It is very encouraging. I cannot think of one instance when a client has been fearful of any particular area of digital. We do not encourage the “shiny new object” syndrome and make sure that all ideas resonate with overarching brand strategies and business goals, regardless of how old the medium is.

For us, we try to turn any amount of trepidation into excitement. We believe that mobile, social media and gaming give us so many great ways to provide consumers with something highly entertaining or useful. We focus on making sure that we don’t overdo it with complexity. Our mantra is to develop straightforward and light-weight ideas that make both us and our brands sit up and say: “Wow, I would want to tell my friends about that.”

AAF: Is it the client’s responsibility to understand certain fundamental concepts in order to communicate efficiently with their digital agency? What steps should a company take in order to educate themselves before enlisting the help of an agency?

MH: Communicating with a digital agency should be the same as communicating with any agency representing the brand. The key question is not about familiarity with the platform or technology, it is if the strategies and ideas resonate with consumers and drive the business forward. Clients that evaluate ideas as marketers give us the best feedback. We then work with the specialists on the client side—customer service, information technology, etc.—to make sure that we are collaborating around specific areas of expertise.

I’ve found that clients with a healthy amount of curiosity are the most educated and forward thinking. Asking questions, challenge-
ing us, and trying to poke holes in emerging trends are at the start of the best conversations. When both the agency and the client have hunger for new and interesting ways of connecting with people, we are primed for innovation and breakthrough ideas.

**AAF:** Once a relationship has formed, how do you keep your clients informed on various digital trends and technologies?

**MH:** We have found that getting in front of clients and talking about what we are both seeing, reading, and using is the best way to keep them informed. Even just asking about everyone’s favorite new app or their favorite types of Facebook posts gets a conversation started around human behaviors and business opportunities instead of around daily email updates and downloadable trend presentations. Even more, we feel that events such as CES, SXSW and ComicCon are fantastic types of immersions for the right audience. We try to curate the sessions and show floors to make it a valuable experience around topics of interest versus a giant trade show or series of keynote.

**AAF:** Is there one area of digital that you feel marketers should be allocating more of their resources to?

**MH:** Just like many people, I think that marketers should be allocating more resources to mobile, but not necessarily through specific mobile budgets. We believe that mobile has the potential but not necessarily through specific mobile budgets. We believe that mobile has the potential to make everything we do better. Mobile plus television creates a better connected content. Mobile plus in-store drives to a higher rate of purchase. And so on. It is crucial to devote more time and money to thinking about how all ideas can be made better by connecting them with a smartphone or tablet. If the brand creates mobile ideas that are additive to the consumer’s experience, then the investment will pay for itself.

**AAF:** When incorporating social media into a campaign (e.g., Beer Chase), how do you go about selecting which platforms to include? Is there research involved every time, or have Twitter and YouTube become standard operating procedure?

**MH:** We make certain that all of our ideas give people the motivation to share it with their friends. Whether we use a traditional content partner like NBC or Time Inc., or an emerged partner like BuzzFeed or Tumblr, we make sure that we find the best context to make sure our content is imminently shareable.

For creating and distributing our ideas, we often think about social media platforms as 3-2-1. The “3” are the established players: Facebook, Twitter, and Google/YouTube. The “2” are a selection of content-based social channels like Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, or BuzzFeed. The “1” is an emerging channel that may be appropriate to include for the campaign. Today, that could include Vine, Cinemagram, or MavenSay. Tomorrow it may be something new. The 3-2-1 structure gives us the balance of reach, engagement, and buzz.

**AAF:** With advances in digital cable, on-demand viewing and mobile technology, where do you see the 30-second commercial 10 years from now?

**MH:** I think the most important innovation that will impact advertising in the next 10 years (actually the next 3 years) will be the rise of the connected screen. This means all screens—televisions, computers, smart phones, tablets, and gaming consoles—and the length of the message won’t matter.

**AAF:** As a company rooted in traditional advertising, how has BBDO managed to evolve with the culture of advertising without losing sight of its core values and principles?

**MH:** At BBDO we don’t have an identity crisis. We have always been, and will always be, about The Work, The Work, The Work. Only the communications that move consumers to action will resonate in the market. It is our job to employ the best creative executions in the best environments to make certain that we are consistently driving business results. The right combination of traditional channels and emerging channels to move the business means that we are always evolving with the consumer and making certain that the brand has the highest place in their minds regardless of buzzword or new technology.

**KEEP UP WITH DIGITAL INNOVATION AT BBDO & PROXIMITY WORLDWIDE’S DIGITAL LAB**
TRENDS IN DIGITAL ADVERTISING: VALUABLE DISRUPTIONS

by Zach Glass, Account Director, RED Interactive Agency

Mobile: Advertising as Utility

96% of marketers say that mobile is currently part of their marketing mix, or it will be in the near future. The fact that mobile has graduated from buzzword to reality over the past few years is not news, but neither is the fact that most mobile advertising is terribly uninspired: Tiny static ads stuck to the bottom of the screen that get tuned out as quickly as you can move your own thumb.

I’m happy to say that the big, shiny promise of mobile ads is finally coming to fruition. Location-specific, useful information updating in real-time, interactivity, and silky-smooth animation are now achievable in the mobile ad space. If you’ve ever read an article about mobile, you’ve heard the term HTML5. The problem up until now is that HTML5 (which is really just HTML) has been costly to serve at any reasonable scale, and just as hard to develop within stringent publisher specs originally written for static images.

That is why we at RED work with animated ads using real-time information in HTML, served through standard ad tags. That last part is important because it means that they’ll work with every major mobile publisher and ad network directly—making it cheaper and better for publishers because the ads won’t require any special technical integration.

So what do we do with this space now that it’s there? Take advantage of the fact that our ads go everywhere the customer goes. The New York Times recently started offering Starbucks customers 15 free articles a day. Disney came up with an app that helps families navigate their parks. These companies are adding value to their existing products in a way that complements a customer’s existing routine and aspirations. Mobile devices are tools. Ads and marketing apps should make those tools more useful.

Video Pre-Roll: Every Second Counts

Pre-roll video suffers from an identity crisis. Is it a TV ad or an interactive canvas? Users who are watching video content on their tablet might be able to quickly interact with a pre-roll ad, but the only time that could possibly happen is if they felt that the experience offered in the ad was more compelling than the video they wanted to watch in the first place. That’s a tall order—and 99.9% of the pre-roll advertising we’ve seen doesn’t meet that standard. So what then?

The good news is that pre-roll doesn’t have the same tune-out issues that plague most advertising. Viewers will hold their tablet with rapt attention as each agonizing second ticks away before they can finally see that video of cats playing patty-cake. The marketer, therefore, has a captive audience—a golden opportunity—a rare five seconds of undivided attention.

The challenge is to make the most of the time you have. Get your message out quickly, and make it memorable. There’s no secret formula for that—just really good creative. And, in the world of “skip after 5 seconds” the audience will have some appreciation for the fact that you made your point quickly and strongly.

Online Digital Display, or: The Return to Relevancy

Online display advertising is seen as something of a dinosaur these days—the only difference is, it would be much harder to ignore a dinosaur. The average American sees an absurd number of display ads every day, and the vast majority click on exactly none of them. In order to return to relevancy, display advertising needs to disrupt an experience to be seen, and add value if it doesn’t want to leave a bad taste in a consumer’s mouth.

A valuable disruption can be anything that grabs the user’s attention and then delivers a powerful, informative, awe-inspiring, share-worthy, or just plain funny message. It’s even better if it entices the user with a reason to interact. The tools are there: Flash isn’t dead yet, and it can do some really impressive stuff when it comes to video, animation, and interactivity. Use it to deliver high-concept and truly valuable, disruptive creative.

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$41B
THE AMOUNT OF BUSINESS GENERATED BY THE DIGITAL ADVERTISING INDUSTRY IN 2012
— ADOBE SUMMIT

EDUCATION, ANALYTICS AND EMERGING TRENDS

An interview with
Vaibhav Gardé, Interactive Marketing Principal, FedEx Web/Digital Analytics
Shobha Iyer, Marketing Manager, FedEx Digital Marketing Capabilities
Ned Kumar, Interactive Marketing Principal, FedEx Web/Digital Analytics

AAF: How do you translate larger strategic goals into smaller digital projects for agencies?

SI: For each of our strategic goals, as a part of the roadmap for each digital capability, we break down our strategic goals into specific objectives and then these objectives are further broken down into tactics. When working with agencies, we provide information on the strategic goals and objectives and then engage them to work on the specific tactics that help us achieve the objectives and strategic goals.

VG AND NK: This is a tiered, phased, and cascading approach. Various organizations look at the larger strategic goals and determine how they can contribute to that goal. Then the decision comes down to what can be done, when, and how depending on the resources and budget and how critical the timeline is. And finally, the path chosen translates to how an agency is engaged and what their deliverables will be.

AAF: How has the growth of analytics changed the way you report campaign ROI—and how do you pass these requirements on to your agency?

SI: Analytics is the cornerstone for all things digital. If you cannot measure it, there is no point in investing in it. Any tactic that we work on with our agencies on any of the digital capabilities starts not just with the conversation on who we are going to target, and with what message, but also with how we are going to measure the impact of the program. Hence, agencies that work with us have to contend with the fact that we are highly analytical and have to staff accordingly on our projects to bring that expertise to all projects.
VG AND NK: With the increasing stress on fact based decision making and the explosion in tools and technologies available, analytics has become a critical foundation for any campaign or marketing initiative. New data points can be now translated to new insights. But to get to these data points, it is critical that the campaign owners set the campaign up properly and ensure it has the relevant tracking codes, ensure that any landing pages are tagged appropriately, and if it is an integrated campaign then the creative and messages have synergy between them. To this end, during our project initiation and pre-launch meetings with agencies, we are very clear about how a campaign needs to be set up to ensure that appropriate measurement is possible after the launch. This includes (as applicable) discussions around control vs. target group selection, data sources and metrics, testing/validation of data collection, etc.

VG AND NK: We would like our agencies to be at the forefront of trends and emerging technologies and bring to us best practices or successes they have seen at other clients for us to test out and evaluate effectiveness for our brand/business. We do not rely solely on agencies and often bring ideas we have seen at conferences or user group meetings, read in industry blogs/whitepapers, found via other sources to agencies to get their take and evaluate feasibility. In addition to best practices, we would also love to hear about things that were wildly successful and tactics that failed with other clients (of course, no names need to be disclosed) as our goal is not to repeat failures if we already know there is a high probability of that happening for a certain reason and leverage successful strategies/tactics as appropriate. This applies even to measurement—if an agency has seen an innovative way of measuring a specific type of campaign we would like to hear about it.

VG AND NK: In the digital space, agencies begin to specialize in specific areas and hence have a high amount of expertise. With this expertise, they are able to understand the implications of the emerging technologies much better by providing detailed POVs to the client that allow the client to make an informed judgment on whether it is worth investing in the space.

Let's look at the forefront of trends and emerging technologies and how they can be translated to new insights.

AAF: In which area of digital would you say your brand has been most successful? Which areas do you plan on growing more in the future?

SI: Paid Search and Email are the two areas in digital that I think our brand is most successful at because we have been playing in these two spaces for a long time now, and have built reasonable expertise. From a last click revenue perspective, we have solidified our positions in branded paid search on desktop and are looking to get better in all other areas of paid search. From an email perspective, we are extremely adept at customer targeting and have to now invest in creative testing to stretch this capability further.

Growth areas for us are Targeting, SEO and Mobile and Targeted Display.

VG AND NK: We have been quite successful in email and search campaigns and we plan to expand significantly in the areas of social and mobile. From a measurement perspective, we have been successful in the area of interactive digital analytics to measure campaigns and online effectiveness of marketing programs by looking at back-end CRM data as well as online visitor behavior metrics. Areas for future growth are in the realms of digital attribution, search re-targeting and mobile content deployment and measurement.

AAF: Are there any digital trends you have chosen not to embrace? If so, which trends, and why?

SI: As a company of our size with such a strong focus on Marketing, I do not think there are any digital trends that we have chosen not to embrace. It is more a question of timing on when the organization is primed to embrace the trends. The Digital maturity model is a reality. Companies have to move step by step on this model to reach a state where they are in a position to embrace any digital trend from an IT, Customer data and customer experience perspective. Without all of these three pieces moving in tandem, even if the organization did embrace any new trend, it would be very sub-optimal.

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Perfecting the Social Marketing Mix—Which Channels to Use and When?

by Robert Glasser, Associate Director, Integrated Investment, Universal McCann

The world of digital and social media is constantly evolving, from the platforms consumers use to the manner in which they use them. That in turn has a direct effect on the way marketers must approach reaching and connecting with consumers with the ultimate goal of encouraging engagement and participation with their brand.

**Facebook**

Facebook is typically the most top of mind social platform for marketers today. How hard can it be to slap up a brand page, acquire some fans, and get them to engage? The answer: harder than you think. Sure, paid advertising around fan acquisition will help build a base, but the critical piece to solve is what’s going to keep them coming back. Social activity should start from the inside out, with your publishing strategy—you have to give the consumer what they want based on what you know about them; something they can’t pass up on reading or viewing as they are skimming through the hundreds, thousands of updates they see each day in their newsfeed. It starts with content—rich, engaging content. As Facebook has just recently acknowledged in their Newsfeed update, beautiful imagery is the key and what will give brands the biggest opportunity to own more real-estate in the future. The next piece of the puzzle is referral and recommendation. A brand is only as good as its ability to grow organically. Smart marketers do this by 1) giving their fans something to talk about; creating a two-way dialogue that keeps them participating, which then leads to a brand showing up in the Newsfeeds of friends of fans, and 2) offering their fans something of tangible value, something that they can’t pass up sharing with the people they care about. The last piece of the pie is paid advertising. Content and organic growth is the foundation, and amplifying the impact of that foundation by extending reach through impactful units, messaging, and targeting rounds out an effective Facebook strategy.

Several brands at UM utilize this three-pronged approach with a balanced mix of content and paid media, coupled by strong value propositions to maintain some of the more active fan bases within the Facebook platform. They’ve understood how to efficiently leverage all facets that FB’s advertising suite has to offer—maintaining continuity throughout the year with Marketplace ads and utilizing page posts and sponsored stories to magnify tent pole events for their brands.

**Twitter**

Twitter, while relatively new and evolving from an ad product perspective, offers a simple and effective toolset for brands to work with. Its obvious benefit and differentiator from other channels is the widely known real-time nature of the platform, which, from a consumer’s point of view lends itself great to things like groundbreaking news and big events. Twitter’s one true distinction has been its ability to dominate the “second screen”, providing ease to consumers to share and consume what’s trending across the globe as it’s happening on television.

Like Facebook, brands on Twitter still need to give their followers a reason to participate and talk to/about the brand, but advertisers who strategically utilize paid media to activate around their tent pole events are the ones that are really building their brand perception in the eyes of the consumer. Brands at UM have taken full advantage of the true benefit and virality of Twitter, as shown through its work over the course of 2012.

**Pinterest and Instagram**

Looking at platforms such as Pinterest and Instagram, these are part of the new wave of social media giving consumers exactly what they want—the ability to group and sift through hundreds of pictures easier than you can get food delivery in New York City. I admit, I fall into this category—I’m an avid Instagramer. I mean, all people really want to see are pictures, right? But talk about focusing on beautiful imagery and products; that's what these channels solely exist for (check out @awesomelocations and @awesomeinventions on Instagram).

As it pertains to Pinterest specifically, although there are currently no ad placements for marketers, the platform has quickly grown to become one of the strongest traffic drivers and revenue generators for brands and retailers. The next step—ability to purchase the brand/products you see and love with just a click or tap without having to navigate off the platform. At the end of the day, here is no true “right way” to leverage any one particular outlet—it’s all in the eyes of the beholder. As a marketer, you just hope you can keep the consumer engaged, and as a consumer, you just hope the brands you love find ways to keep you coming back for more.

**See how Universal McCann Utilizes Twitter @UMWWtweets**
CONSUMER REVIEWS—
WHAT’S A MARKETER TO DO?

by Jason Philip Yoong, Manager, Portfolio Management, Universal McCann

Over the years our fellow consumers have become more influential over our everyday choices thanks to the digital platform. Yelp continues to empower foodies and according to a study from Harvard Business School, a 1-star improvement in Yelp ratings is associated with a 5% to 9% revenue boost for independent restaurants. It is now commonplace to see fashion bloggers like Bryanboy sitting in the front row of runway shows, in close proximity to the likes of Anna Wintour. These examples have all been in the news and are not new. However, one recent study by eMarketer ("For Driving Purchases, Customer Reviews Trump Pro Critics", emarketer.com, January 24, 2013) did catch some steam in the Consumer Electronics space. This study found that shoppers were more likely to pay attention to consumer reviews than professional reviews across every product category. Unlike the other industries, the Consumer Electronics space is traditionally thought of as less subjective (think tech and specs) and as the time to either seek the advice of your “tech-savvy uncle” or the expert at the nearest big box retailer, most notably Best Buy. However, consumer behavior is rapidly changing and marketers from every industry need to stay one step ahead.

So what can we do?

We need to collaborate closer with our media partners who have the trust and access of their consumers, to create custom messages that are more organic to the environment. An excellent example is Amazon’s ability to integrate consumer reviews and the average consumer review star rating into ads. This brings the consumer review directly to the shopper and makes the ad an informational source, rather than just an ad. The message is organic to the Amazon environment and provides a benefit. It is important to note that marketers need to be choosy in what products they feature in that the overall consumer review should be better than average.

Yes, we as marketers need to drive this collaboration by being transparent with our media partners on what works and what doesn’t. By sharing the results so we could keep providing consumers with better, more relevant experiences. To have consumers see our ads as beneficial rather than annoying. It’s about working with media partners like Amazon and Yelp to help understand the things their consumers love about them, and the best way to integrate them into our message.

Because in the end, the consumer always comes first.
FINDING A CAREER IN DIGITAL AND A QUICK LOOK AT THE INDUSTRY TODAY

An interview with
Colleen Soriano, SVP Managing Partner, US Integrated Investment & Digital Innovation, Universal McCann

AAF: Can you tell us what it is like to work in a digital environment for an agency like Universal McCann? At what point did agencies really begin bridging the gap between their interactive team and the rest of the staff—creative, account services, etc.?

CS: Leading digital investment and innovation at Universal McCann is an incredibly dynamic and satisfying job. My main priorities are to bring clarity to the digital product and discipline at UM and foster innovation from different corners of the agency. There is a sense of curiosity and entrepreneurialism inherent in digital folks, since the industry is relatively young and has been fueled by perpetual change, which has spread across disciplines as all media evolves to be more participatory. As always, once devices have reached mass scale, there is great enthusiasm for engaging consumers and cultivating stronger business results across channels. That enthusiasm and the culture of curiosity at UM align the broader agency group to be more consumer centric and technology agnostic.

AAF: What brought you into the digital world? You must have started somewhere—was there a light bulb that went off at some point early in your career, as was the case for many of us?

CS: I actually fell into this career, unexpectedly, while looking to start a career in journalism. I started in the digital world back in 1999, fueled by curiosity and the need for a steady paycheck with the hope of freelance writing on the side. My first job was in performance analysis, which was in its nascent, since there were very few benchmarks to work with, and measurement tools at our disposal then seemed so archaic. After some time in the reporting group, I had a good sense of how the media plans worked and...
made the switch over to digital media buying. This afforded me more time with our marketing and media clients, greater access to online publishers and technology partners, and a taste of the potential digital channels offered for creativity and experimentation. I cultivated not only a working knowledge of the industry but also wonderful friendships with people that I respect, and am thrilled to see them shaping the industry today. It’s crazy to think about how the media business and my place in it have evolved since then.

**AAF:** For those who are just getting into digital, whether they are students or well established professionals, where do they start? There is so much information available that knowing where to start and who to trust can be incredibly overwhelming.

**CS:** It is an incredibly exciting time in the business—full of dynamic new technologies and creative applications for marketers. My advice for those starting out is simple—think like a consumer and keep a common sense approach to navigating the digital world. The other key is to have integrity. We live in a fully transparent and highly inter-connected world because of digital platforms—it’s critical to be mindful of what you say and do to ensure you are building and living your own brand every single day.

**AAF:** What inspires you most about digital advertising today?

**CS:** What I find most inspiring is that increasingly all media is digital media. I am excited about this not as a digital practitioner, but as a media enthusiast. The opportunities for entertainment, information, and essentially a better operating system for our lives have increased exponentially. The interoperability of things (APIs, data points, technology platforms, etc.) offers us great potential as marketers.

**AAF:** Technology is changing every day. Do you ever find it difficult to stay on the same page with your clients, in regards to education, and having a general awareness of what is going on in digital? How about your own staff?

**CS:** There is certainly a lot to absorb! The process for keeping up with technology isn’t too systematic—scouring trusted tech and media news sources for interesting tidbits, engaging with my favorite, clever, and forward thinkers in the industry about what excites them at any given moment, and staying curious as a consumer of media sums up my approach. Evaluating innovation is something different. There is a checklist of sorts—what kind of unique reach or scale a new opportunity might afford, thought around whether the idea or platform truly represents a cultural shift or whether it’s just a fad, how and whether it is most appropriate for a brand to leverage the environment, whether, what and how we can measure to learn from whatever we do. Those are the filters I use when circulating thoughts or POVs to the UM team.

**AAF:** We have been told year after year that “this is the year of mobile!”—Are we there yet? And how do you see mobile advertising progressing over the course of the next five years?

**CS:** Yes! We are finally there! 2013 will be the year that the number of mobile internet devices (smartphone and tablets) exceed fixed-line internet devices (PC and laptops). Most growth in media consumption will come from mobile devices and based on demand, mobile is the fastest growing advertising sector. Mobile ads are also currently quite a bargain (versus video, audio and other ads across channels). Limited targeting and tracking will improve as we agree on a privacy-compliant way to track mobile users and the creative experiences will become more native to the device, allowing for greater utility and relevance for the consumer. I am hopeful that creative groups will figure out how to tell compelling stories across mobile devices and marketers will seize the potential of those devices for transaction and engagement.
THE LATEST TRENDS IN MULTICULTURAL DIGITAL MARKETING

An interview with
Sheila Marmon, Founder & CEO, Mirror Digital

AAF: How would you differentiate a company like yours from a prototypical digital ad agency or PR firm?

SM: Mirror Digital is an interactive media company versus a digital agency or public relations firm. We focus on supporting boutique digital content producers who have deep connections with their individual audiences. By focusing on the consumers’ needs and concerns, our content partners develop deep connections and engage their respective audiences. We then leverage our advertising capabilities to provide our brand and agency partners access to a seat at the table with these communities to participate in a conversation and win long-term, loyal customers.

AAF: In traditional advertising, there has been a push for brands to start including multicultural into everything they do, rather than taking a silo-like approach to it. What is the current state of digital in regards to the inclusion of digital marketing initiatives? Is this something that has already happened?

SM: There is spirited debate on the “correct” approach to reaching multicultural consumers. There is a camp that insists that specialized multicultural agencies have more insight into the audience and therefore serve as the best brand partners. On the other side of the table, some general market agencies espouse a “Total Market” or “Cross-Cultural” approach that looks for unifying concepts across multicultural groups as the best strategy for brands.

I think there are instances in which both a specialty and cross-cultural approach can be...
correct. The key determinants are the product, the brand message and your overall campaign objective. So we must stop and ask ourselves, “what exactly are we looking to accomplish?” For instance, I believe a direct response campaign can be very effectively executed using a cross-cultural approach, while if you are building a brand relationship, I feel that targeted campaigns are more effective.

As more brands dip their toe into multicultural (or in some instances, dive in), the key is to have a specialist who has a deep understanding of the audience. And the great thing about doing this work in digital is that we can test our hypotheses in a rigorous fashion and quantify which approach is really delivering.

AAF: Other than content, are there any noticeable similarities or differences between minority and general market consumption of online media?

SM: I would distinguish between online tools and applications versus online media. There is very little difference in behavior among internet users, regardless of race, when looking at the use of online tools such as Search or Email. Across all internet users, these tools are by far the most popular and widely used.

We do see differences in behavior in social media, [video consumption], and mobile application use. multicultural consumers across all ethnic groups (Black, Hispanic and Asian) dramatically over-index in the use of social media and “emerging” technologies.

AAF: What are some common misconceptions when targeting a digital advertising campaign to a multicultural audience?

SM: The most common misconception is that one size fits all. A message that works for Black moms may not work for Black professionals and vice versa. There are some colleagues who are newer to the multicultural marketing field who may assume that you can partner with the single market leaders for media in each segment, in the Black, Hispanic and Asian spaces and that you have adequately done your job. This is absolutely not the case.

It is critical to consider both the demographic and psychographic aspects of your consumer target when looking to run a digital campaign (or any campaign) targeting a multicultural audience. In addition to working with the big media companies to garner reach, nuanced approaches to specific segments can supercharge a campaign’s effectiveness. We often see results that are 2 times to 10 times industry average using a more narrowcast approach that speaks to ethnicity and more.

AAF: Of the audience segments you typically hone in on, which have you found to be the most elusive, and what sort of problems have you encountered?

SM: I think it is widely agreed upon among multicultural audience specialists that the Asian-American consumer market remains the most elusive. The Asian-American market is highly desirable with strong population growth rates, large buying power and the highest income levels of any ethnic group - including White-Americans.

The challenge lies in the diversity within the Asian-American multicultural segment. There is no single unifying language, culture or religion that unites this group. In fact, Asian-Americans represent over 20 countries of origin.

Speaking authentically, with a unified message, to Asian-Americans who have such a wide variety of cultural cues and histories makes reaching this target effectively a unique and exciting challenge.

AAF: What trends can we expect in 2013 (and beyond) for reaching diverse audiences through digital media?

SM: As the speed with which new digital platforms and technologies launch accelerates, I would expect to continue to see multicultural consumers experimenting and being leaders in the adoption of new technology-driven entertainment, products and services. We see higher multicultural adoption rates in tablet and social media usage as well as higher penetration rates of more innovative mobile device applications including sending photos and watching videos.

A longstanding cultural tenet among multicultural consumers is to stay ahead of the curve and know what is “next”—this remains true in technology which requires that multicultural media and advertising partners stay one step ahead as well. Consequently, remaining nimble and adapting new digital media offerings to help our brand and agency partners capitalize on emerging platforms as they gain momentum is the key to our success.

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5 STEPS TO LAUNCHING YOUR NEXT DIGITAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

No matter which sector of media, marketing or advertising you specialize in, chances are you have experienced the need to know something about digital (or at least needed to fake knowing something about it). Here are five steps that are essential to beginning a successful digital marketing campaign.

—Sheila Marmon, Founder & CEO, Mirror Digital

1. Define metrics for campaign success upfront.

   This sounds basic, because it is. Having a clear understanding of your objectives and how you plan to measure success is critical. Similar to traditional media campaigns, reach still matters, but digital offers several new metrics we can employ to determine whether or not a digital campaign is delivering. For the most part, the industry counts “clicks” as a proxy for consumer engagement. You may have fancy attribution models that take you beyond this, but the main point is to spend some time UPFRONT to define the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so your road to success is clear.

2. Choose the right tool for the job.

   Now, you can identify which tactics will best drive the desired result. Do you want to use standard display ads? Do something cutting edge like social gaming? Or incorporate email, mobile, social media or video? Each of these digital media platforms is ideal for eliciting a particular type of consumer response. Email is great to use as a call to action, while social can get a conversation started. Even your “owned” and “earned” digital assets (such as company websites and social media platforms) have a complimentary role to play to maximize your overall impact. It is important to keep in mind that each piece of the digital campaign should work together with all your other endeavors. So please don’t isolate mobile or digital video from the rest of the team.

3. Don’t be a lemming.

   We’ve all done it, whether with a fancy car, a flashy designer handbag or the latest tech gadget. You see a well showcased new toy and you think “I gotta get me one of those.” This happens faster and more often in the digital marketing space than in any other platform. As the pace of change continues to accelerate, there will always be interactive advertising fads. Please, please, please don’t simply check the box and invest in the latest digital trend because everyone else is doing it. Go back to #2 and make sure the digital tool/s you put into play meet your campaign goals.

4. Find your hook.

   Consumers are bombarded with marketing messages at every turn. What is going to make your campaign stand out from the crowd? The answer lies in good old-fashioned storytelling. Decide what story your brand is trying to convey and to whom. The fabulous thing about digital is that we can experiment to figure this out. With the low cost of specialization, we can create a variety of “hooks” designed to appeal to a number of target consumer segments. Take the time to leverage this capability. When executed properly, you can really hone in on your audience and what is going to move them to act.


   Don’t wait until the end of the campaign to take a look at the reporting! One of the most important advantages of digital is that we can take the temperature along the way and gauge performance. Check the analytics and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you established in #1. Look to see if your campaign is meeting your goals. Monitor your results by medium, website placement, target audience, clicks, etc. and keep a close eye on progress toward your goals. If things aren’t on target, you can still implement new ways to “optimize” and improve outcomes for success.
NATIVE ADVERTISING ISN’T NEW, BUT IT’S THE FUTURE

by Jonathan Perelman, VP, Agency Strategy and Development, BuzzFeed

Media consumption and consumer habits are rapidly changing. Look no further than your own behavior. Do you sleep with your phone by your bed? Sure, it’s your alarm clock, but do you check it before you go to sleep, or when you first wake up? Let’s be honest. The challenge for marketers today is to reach consumers in a way that invites them in, not distracts them from what they are doing.

Native advertising is a hot topic in marketing today and for good reason. Unlike intrusive banner ads, native advertising does not distract consumers from what they are doing, but adds to the overall experience. With all the attention recently given to native, we should remember that native advertising isn’t new in digital. The most well known is search, as the ads are native to the environment of the search results. However, the convergence of content marketing and native advertising provides an organic way for brands to enter the conversation with consumers.

Throughout the history of advertising, we have taken the type of ads that have worked on one platform, and tried to make them work for the new technology. The first radio ads simply were the audio of a print spot. The next evolution were TV ads, which were radio spots with an image. Today, standard banner ads are the most prevalent ads, but that doesn’t make them good. Ask yourself, what’s the last great banner ad you’ve seen?

As the digital advertising ecosystem has evolved from Portal > Search > Social, online ads need to evolve as well. As mentioned earlier, native advertising isn’t new, but can be broken into two categories: 1. Utility, and 2. Content. If you’re in a new city and need to find a coffee shop, you’re likely to search for one. Maybe you launch the maps function to search for directions to your desired location. But, what happens after you find that shop, and you’re the 15th person in line for that latte? Most likely you take out your phone to snack on content until the milk is steamed and your caffeine is ready. Increasingly, the type of content that people are consuming is branding, as it is as equally captivating as editorial.

The challenge for advertisers today is to be seen and stand out in an environment where social is the new starting point online. Creating social, shareable content to be served in a native environment allows the advertiser to tell a story, and to engage the consumer in the natural environment of content.

Native ads are even more important when we talk about mobile. The promise of mobile appears to be unfulfilled from an advertising perspective. Simply repurposing ads from desktop onto a smaller screen doesn’t work. A recent study* found that 40% of clicks on mobile banner ads are a result of fat-finger clicks, or mistakes. At BuzzFeed, we see more sharing of content (including ads) from the mobile device than we do on desktop. We don’t consider mobile as a separate platform, we think mobile web first.

Native advertising isn’t new, but the convergence of factors leads to native being the perfect type of advertising for this stage of the web. Combining the elements of social, brands as publishers and the importance of the mobile web are all factors that lead to the prominence and opportunity of native advertising.

CLICK HERE TO SEE AN EXAMPLE OF NATIVE ADVERTISING ON BUZZFEED

A recent study* found that 40% of clicks on mobile banner ads are a result of fat-finger clicks, or mistakes. At BuzzFeed, we see more sharing of content (including ads) from the mobile device than we do on desktop.

*Source: GIGAOM.com, “Report: 40 percent of mobile ad clicks are fraud or accidents,” August 31, 2012.
DIGITAL SKILLS ARE IN STRONG DEMAND

According to a survey by The Creative Group, nearly four in 10 (39 percent) advertising and marketing executives said it’s challenging to find skilled creative professionals. These recruiting difficulties are even more pronounced in the interactive space.

The continuous growth of online, mobile and social media content is fueling demand for digital professionals, like SEO/SEM specialists and digital marketing strategists. Companies of all sizes in virtually every industry are adding new interactive roles, and that means there are plenty of opportunities for those with these skills.

INTERACTIVE SALARIES ARE ON THE RISE

On average, annual starting salaries for creative professionals are forecast to increase 3.5 percent in 2013. But some digital marketing jobs are expected to see greater salary gains. Here are a few:

• SEO/SEM specialists with three or more years of experience can anticipate the biggest bump in base compensation (5 percent), with average starting salaries ranging from $67,750 to $91,000. Those with between one and three years of experience are projected to see starting salary gains of 4.7 percent, to a range of $48,250 to $64,000.
• Digital marketing strategists should see a gain of 4.8 percent, to between $84,000 and $123,000.
• User experience (UX) analysts and email marketing managers are forecast to receive a 4 percent salary increase, with average starting salaries ranging from $70,750 to $93,000 and $64,500 to $86,000, respectively.

DIVERSE SKILLS CAN GIVE YOU AN EDGE

Job applicants who possess a combination of strong technical, problem-solving and communication skills continue to be among the most desirable to employers, regardless of job title or experience level. In fact, it’s not uncommon for many of these candidates—including those just beginning their careers—to receive multiple job offers.

EMPLOYERS ARE PULLING OUT THE STOPS TO LAND THE BEST TALENT

To secure top talent, savvy employers are expediting the hiring process and providing popular perks, when possible. Beyond offering competitive starting salaries and benefits packages, they’re also awarding bonuses, free or subsidized training, and flexible or remote work arrangements.

FREELANCERS ARE FRONT AND CENTER

It’s a great time to be a freelancer. To better control their human resources budgets, in-house marketing departments and agencies are more often tapping project professionals to support core staff during busy periods and access specialized expertise that doesn’t exist internally. It’s also becoming more common for companies to use temporary assignments as a low-risk way to evaluate whether a candidate is a good fit for permanent employment.

VISIT THE CREATIVE GROUP SALARY CENTER AT CREATIVEGROUP.COM/SALARYCENTER
ALLSTATE’S MISSION TO DELIVER RELEVANT CONTENT TO HIGHLY DIVERSE AUDIENCES

An interview with Georgina Flores, Director of Marketing, Allstate Insurance Company

AAF: First of all, what type of response has the “Mala Suerte” campaign received from your Spanish speaking audience? Has it been the pop-culture phenomenon that “Mayhem” turned into?

GF: Allstate’s Mala Suerte campaign has been the most breakthrough Hispanic campaign in our history. The Mayhem advertising campaign could have easily been translated to Spanish to target Hispanic consumers; however, we knew it was not directly translatable or relevant to the Hispanic audience. Therefore, Allstate took the concept and created a similar—yet culturally relevant—campaign that honed in on bad luck and superstition while also communicating our brand value of protecting what matters most to consumers.

AAF: Recently we’ve heard marketers talk about including multicultural in everything they do and ditching the old silo-like approach, but how can brands accomplish this without diluting the message and lessening the impact?

GF: Allstate has been a leader in multicultural marketing for more than twenty years. It started with our agents, who represent, live and work in diverse communities across the country. Today, we have dedicated marketing programs to Hispanic, African-American, Asian-American and LGBT consumers, as well as an inherent effort to infuse diversity into all marketing initiatives.

For example, each of our marketing areas at Allstate has a responsibility for multicultural programs, whether you are talking about our...
sponsorships, promotions and PR team or our local marketing planning team. Also, within our E-business organization, we have dedicated resources to our Hispanic customers. In fact, we were one of the first insurers to develop a culturally-relevant Spanish-language website (not simply a translation); we have been a pioneer in marketing to the LGBT community; and we have developed award-winning advertising campaigns across all of our core target consumer groups. In addition, we help our Allstate agents, who collectively speak 112 languages, with in-language and in-culture materials to help them better serve their customers in communities across America.

For Allstate, multicultural marketing is about more than advertising and sponsorships, it’s about everything we do to ensure all our customers are in “Good Hands.”

**AAF:** Can you tell us a little about Allstate’s “Equality Is______” campaign? Obviously this is a topic that many people are passionate about, but getting them to buy into the idea, and actually go online and submit personal content must have been tricky. What marketing tactics did you employ to spread the message to the right people?

**GF:** We wanted to create a program that provided a place for people to come together in support of an important cause while still meeting our business objective, and that’s exactly what “Equality Is” did for Allstate.

Launched in June 2012, the Equality Is campaign was a fully integrated regional marketing program that invited consumers to share what equality means to them. Adding to this participation component, every time a consumer received an insurance quote from one of the 60 participating California agents, a $10 donation was made to either the San Francisco LGBT Center or the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center.

The program was successful due to the strategic tactics implemented and the communication vehicles used to encourage participation, such as Pride event sponsorships, mobile advertising, LGBT print advertising, and Allstate agent point of sale materials, among other executions.

**AAF:** Are you fearful when launching a digital campaign like “Equality Is______” or any campaign driven by audience participation, where the success or failure of that campaign is completely transparent to the public?

**GF:** With every campaign, there are always risks involved. However, if you approach a campaign with a solid strategy and execution plan, the results will speak for themselves. That’s what we did with Equality Is. We honed in on an important cause and made sure to engage with our consumer when and how they wanted.

**AAF:** Other than content, are there any noticeable similarities or differences between minority and general market consumption of digital media?

**GF:** No matter your background, ethnicity or language, research has shown that marketing to targeted consumer groups with messaging and information that is appropriate and relatable to them is more effective than merely translating content. Allstate’s Mala Suerte campaign is a great example. Wherever and whenever possible, Allstate will continue to develop targeted messages and campaigns to reach specific audiences.

**AAF:** Allstate must do a ton of market research to learn and understand digital media consumption among diverse audiences. Are there any remarkable trends that you have found, and would be willing to share?

**GF:** Allstate’s research into our target consumer is proprietary information. However, I can tell you that we make sure to reach our current and potential customers with information important to them and invite them to have a conversation. This is reflected in the various media and messages we use to communicate. While some brands may see this as a challenge, we see this as an opportunity and as the right thing to do for the consumer.
Remember when online ads used to be arbitrary animated gifs? You didn’t know why you received them or how they related to any of the content on the page, but you clicked on them if you thought they were cool and you didn’t if you thought they weren’t. Today, online advertising has become so complex that you might not even recognize an ad as an ad because they align so well with the page content that you are interested in. The evolution of online behavioral advertising (OBA) has completely changed the way advertisers reach consumers and the way consumers interact with ads online.

According to Todd Ruback, Chief Privacy Officer at Evidon, Inc., “Advertising has gone from a very simplistic business model to crowded and complex.” The IAB’s Internet Advertising Revenue Report indicates that display-related advertising revenues in 2012 totaled 33 percent of 2012 revenues. “Evolution has gotten to a point where advertisers are able to serve up very specific, relevant, advertisements based on users’ internet behavior,” says Ruback.

In the early 90s, the internet landscape was very static. Companies were leasing ad space on websites and ads weren’t relevant or specific to users. It wasn’t until the mid-90s that cookies were developed. These cookies were first used to track consumers’ activity through browsers. Today cookies can track much more such as login information, demographic information, and shopping cart information. As a result, advertisers have begun to use this data to deliver relevant ads to consumers and enhance the consumer browsing experience.

Unfortunately, delivering relevant, behaviorally targeted ads also impacts the privacy of consumers. Peter B. Kosmola, former Managing Director of the Digital Advertising Alliance (DAA) and current SVP, Government Affairs at the 4A’s says, “Any company that is doing this kind of [online behavioral] advertising should do it appropriately.”

In order to let consumers choose whether to be behaviorally targeted, the DAA was formed. The DAA developed seven Self-Regulatory Principles for Online Behavioral Advertising to address concerns about the use of personal data in interest-based advertising. These tenets are designed to not only provide a choice to consumers, but to also preserve the innovative and robust internet advertising landscape.

Companies like Evidon were formed to build a compliance tool on web pages (Site Notice) and in-banner (Ad Notice) that allow consumers to opt-out of behaviorally targeted ads. The compliance notices were originally built to allow companies to comply with the ePrivacy Directive and currently serve on the web, mobile, and in-banner environments. According to Ruback, Evidon supports the approach of transparency and control, giving consumers as much information as possible so they can make informed decisions. Legislators, such as Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-West Virginia), have responded to online consumer privacy issues as well. In a recent Senate Commerce Hearing on the status of Do Not Track (DNT) development, Rockefeller stated “The efficacy of the Ad Choices program remains questionable.” He believes that consumers should have the right to choose and is the creator of the Do Not Track Online Privacy Act, an act that protects users’ right to choose whether or not to be tracked by third party websites.

Whether you are delighted to receive interest-based ads or you are a staunch advocate for consumer privacy, it is important to understand your choices. YourAdChoices.com is a great resource to learn more about the AdChoices program and how to identify the AdChoices icon. There are many ways to opt-out of behaviorally targeted ads online. The most common way is by clicking on the AdChoices icon and opting out on the landing page. However, most consumers should know that they can also avoid behavioral targeting by visiting the NAI Consumer Opt-Out website, speaking with their consumer protection agencies, visiting FTC.gov, or contacting the DAA directly.

Keep in mind that clearing your browser cookies can make you susceptible to behavioral targeting even after opting out. For those who routinely clear out their cookies, this may be of concern. Fortunately, “[The] DAA has developed a ‘hardened cookie’ or a ‘persistent cookie’ for the purposes of opting out of the program,” says Kosmola. This cookie was developed in 2012 and designed to keep consumers opted out even after deleting their cookies.

In the words of Kosmola, “You can either opt-out or stay in, it’s your choice and we respect that.”

READ MORE ABOUT OBA AND ADCHOICES:
WWW.ABOUTADS.INFO
WWW.YOURADCHOICES.COM
“CONSUMER OPT-OUT”
“CONSUMER DATA PRIVACY”
“SEN. JAY ROCKEFELLER BLASTS AD INDUSTRY IN SENATE HEARING OVER DO NOT TRACK”
The emergence of new media, coupled with traditional media, has created multiple consumer touch points that are redefining the path to purchase. For marketers, is this a challenge or an opportunity?

In the past, the purchase path was a linear journey where marketers were in control. Today, consumers have real-time access to products, prices, promotions and places to purchase—the 4Ps. New phenomenons like “wall-less” retailing have increased the options of where to buy, giving multi-channel shopping a whole new meaning. Technology provides consumers the ability to get information up to the very last moment, influencing their decisions and truly allowing them to be in control and the architects of their personal media consumption mix.

All of this is impacting the shopping experience, and for marketers, challenging them to think differently about media planning and message delivery to engage and activate consumers. Since media habits are changing at a remarkable rate, advertisers need to use a mix of media to deliver targeted traditional and digital solutions to engage and influence consumers at every point along the path to purchase. It is the new consumer path to purchase which has demanded the new media mix.

Many marketers, researchers and solution providers are focusing on many of the same issues, specifically, how to market in the digital world as new media continues to evolve quickly. It is not merely digital marketing but rather about marketing in the digital world—finding the balance between traditional and emerging solutions to drive the best results. Marketers must be visible and relevant to engage the always-connected consumer. Continuously engaging consumers wherever they live, work and play—geographically, behaviorally and socially—to influence and drive awareness to action on any device and through multiple channels.

It is no surprise that 46% of marketers say multi-channel coordination is one of their biggest marketing challenges of the last 12-18 months (Experian 2012 Digital Marketer). To better understand your consumer, first take a step back and understand the path they are on. Most important, recognize that the decision process is staged—this is fundamental to understanding how people buy. And understanding consumer buying behavior is fundamental to generating sales and driving great ROI. Here’s what we know about the path to purchase:

- It is a multi-step process
- It is a non-linear path
- It involves two active components—purchase behavior and media behavior
- It has two active players—the consumer and the advertiser
- It is category dependent. The path is dramatically different for grocery purchases than big-ticket item purchases. That said, regardless of the category or purchase, marketers need to be where their consumers are making decisions.

This is where the opportunity comes in—tap into the vast amount of data and insights available to gain a deeper understanding of purchase behaviors like never before. Marketers must identify, locate and connect with their best consumers. How? There is a wealth of information to pinpoint the right consumer and then build a plan using multiple touch points that best meet your target audience. The ability to be successful lies in how well you know your shopper, leverage smart data and insights, and marry those with relevant media delivery. Use big and actionable data to your benefit. Then you are on the path to influence how your consumers plan, shop, buy and share.

Today’s world of fragmented media, consumer control, multi-channel shopping and value centricty has impacted how we as marketers and media planners have to think and act to be successful in an evolving marketplace. It’s a whole new world where marketing in the digital world using the right media mix will be the game changer. Is it a challenge? Yes. But the opportunity is so much greater.

**READ HOW VALASSIS CREATED A SUCCESS STORY BY USING MULTIPLE PATHS TO REACH CONSUMERS**
Engagement. For many, the word has become a cliche. It's time to take it back. Whether you're trying to win the White House or the shelf wars, engagement is critical. Action doesn't happen without it. Our digital lives have changed how we interact with each other and how brands engage consumers. At Google, we're interested in the “how” of engagement. We've interviewed industry visionaries, the world's biggest brands, cutting edge content creators, and researchers who are codifying our experiences. We're aggregating all our beliefs and learnings, here, into The Engagement Project.

Engagement. For many, the word has slipped into cliche territory. It's time to take it back. Whether winning the White House or winning the shelf wars – engagement is critical. Action doesn't happen without it. And at the end of the day, that's what we as marketers are all trying to do: move people to act, now or in the future. That's how we are defining engagement.
Today, as everything from political funding to packaged goods relies on consumers who live in an increasingly digital world, the opportunities for us, as marketers, to drive engagement have exploded. Technology has given us new ways to reach out and connect with people – and to receive signals in response that enable fluid, and ongoing conversations, 24/7. This is both amazing and overwhelming.

In the accelerating swirl of chaos, excitement, and yes, sometimes fear, the brands that win will prioritize engagement over exposure. They will flip the traditional approach of using mass reach to connect with the subset of people who matter on its head. They will super-serve the most important people for their brand first and use the resulting insights and advocacy to then broaden their reach and make the entire media and marketing plan work harder.

**TODAY'S CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

The consumers shaping what matters in content and culture today look very different from the ones many of us grew up as or thinking about. This generation has grown up living digital lives. This has fundamentally changed their relationship with media and technology – and with brands. They don’t want to be talked at, but they do want to be invited in to the discussion. They thrive on creation, curation, connection and community. As a result, we call them Gen C. The behaviors of Gen C have less to do with the year they were born and more to do with their attitude and mindset. For example, while 80% of people under 35 are Gen C, only 65% of Gen C is under 35¹.

Gen C cares more about expressing themselves than any generation before. They’re using social networks and content platforms to define their sense of self. They are what they discover, read, watch, share, “like”, +1, comment on and retweet. More than half of Gen C use the internet as their main source of entertainment, and 66% spend the same or more time watching online video as watching television².

Conversation drives Gen C, especially when it’s aligned with their interests. They are hungry for content that they can share and spread, no matter where it comes from: other people, content providers, brands. They expect their friends to do the same. They use online interactions to learn about news, entertainment, products and services. We find that that applies even to YouTube specifically. 50% of Gen C reports talking to friends about it after watching a YouTube video. 51% say that watching a YouTube video about a product or service has impacted their purchase decision. Overall, this is a more networked psychographic than we’ve ever seen. The majority – 85% – of Gen C relies on peer approval for their buying decisions.²
The under 35 set will be 40% of the population by 2020. But more importantly, by then, we’ll all likely be Gen C. So figuring out how to connect with this generation today is critical.

For a deeper look at Gen C click here.

**THE MEANING BEHIND THIS NEW NORMAL**

At Google and YouTube, we see Gen C behaviors happening every day. But while understanding what they are doing is important – understanding why they are doing it is even more valuable.

To get at this why, we partnered with cultural anthropologists, psychologists & digital creators to explore the meaning behind these Gen C behaviors. Here’s a taste of what we uncovered:

**THEY’RE ALL ARTISTS**

In the days of film, photos and videos were reserved for special occasions. Today, Gen C has a camera in their pockets, so the stuff they capture and curate looks more common, ordinary, even pointless at times. But the ordinary-ness of it all is what is extraordinary. Pictures of the everyday-ness around them allow them to find new meaning, as if they are seeing things for the first time.

Giving them a reason to see the newness in the everyday gives them a reason to capture it.

**THEY LIVE-CURATE THEIR EXPERIENCE**

As Gen C creates an increasingly detailed visual record of their lives, they simultaneously curate and share it with their communities and the world. They record every detail and then curate that content to reflect their personal values and how they see the world. In fact, 1 in 4 upload a video every week and nearly half upload a photo every week². It’s their way of controlling how they want to be perceived by others, and in sharing and getting feedback from their communities, it reinforces their sense of self.

Giving them a way to add their own uniqueness to an experience gives them a reason to add it to the collage of their lives.

**THEY’RE ENERGIZED BY SHARING**

Sharing is about more than just clicking a button. When they share a video or an image, they’re not just sharing the object, they’re sharing the emotional response it creates. Posting, commenting, liking, repinning or +1ing, across the increasingly visual web is how Gen C feels alive.
Create content that reminds Gen C of their own capacity for excitement, happiness and vivacity – gives them a reason to be a personal advocate.

**THEY CRAVE AUTHENTICITY**
Gen C is savvier than any generation before them when it comes to advertising. They know when they're being marketed to and, according to Shane Smith, co-founder of VICE, have “the best bullshit detectors in the world.” *(A full Q&A with Shane will come later in our series.)* They want real, thoughtful, authentic. They want to create their own art, instead of being invited to experience someone else’s masterpiece. They want to discover and disseminate, instead of following something or someone else's version of what they should care about.

Giving them content that matches their definition of quality has become their expectation, not a nice to have.

**MARKETING HAS MORE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MEANING**
We all crave the ability to make meaning with our work and with our brands. The needs and behaviors of Gen C demand it. Well-thought-out, useful and interesting branded content has more opportunity than ever to contribute meaning to people’s everyday lives. But there is also greater risk than ever from messaging that doesn't feel authentic, relevant, personalized, and participatory. This means that we need to think about media and marketing in a different way.

**ENGAGEMENT > EXPOSURE**
Historically, our media plans have focused more on exposure and broadcasting than engagement and response. Yes, of course, we did the best we could to try to find the most engaging shows, we fought over the most engaging pod position, etc. But media was primarily a game of exposure.

We focused on reaching as large an audience as we could and hoped or planned that of that 100%, we would eventually whittle down to the, call it 5%, of people who actually cared and mattered for our brand. We focused on reach because our ability to measure engagement – how well our marketing was driving the desired audience to action – was lousy.

Most traditional media still have pretty low signal strength. There's little way of directly measuring consumer response. In the absence of those signals, we prioritized things like reach and frequency as the best proxies we had for engagement.

But today, there is a better way. Nearly every new media platform that has emerged in the last 15 years – search, mobile, social, display and online video – has strong signal strength. These new media give us the opportunity to connect directly with people – and to be able to
tell whether they are actually engaged with our messages, through user choice, interaction, sharing, or actual conversion.

And Gen C wants to give us signals of their interest. They are looking to connect directly with brands that create experiences that offer something relevant and valuable, and they expect that we'll be ready and willing to act on those signals and continuously improve the quality of our interactions with them.

**FLIPPING YOUR FUNNEL**

So, why don't we flip that 100% winnowed to 30% winnowed to 5% funnel? Rather than starting by thinking about how to reach or broadcast to as many people as possible to get to those who matter, what if we began with engaging those who matter the most. We could prioritize surfacing the 5% – and make our entire plan better by learning from their interactions and leaning on their advocacy to expand our reach in a smarter way. We wouldn't be abandoning “reach”; we'd be reorienting our thinking towards greater “engaged reach”?

By turning the reach-driven funnel upside down, we're in effect creating an ‘engagement pyramid’. The engagement pyramid isn't just about retention and growth of our existing customer base. It's about starting with the 5% who will be most interested in what we have to say and most willing to speak for us. This group not only includes current customers, but also those most likely to influence others toward your brand. This is the group whose insights and advocacy can better inform and enhance our broader media plan, maximizing our overall engaged reach.

Some of the hottest brands that have emerged over the last 10 to 15 years – companies like GoPro, Starbucks, Amazon, Warby Parker - naturally use an Engagement Pyramid approach. For the most part, they've only existed in an era of high signal media so they gravitate towards it naturally. They start by making something that people love, invest in higher engagement media to connect with the people who matter most, and then use their insights and advocacy to build further scale. This is in contrast to the traditional approach of finding 100 people who fit a general audience profile, advertising to all of them and hoping somebody drops to the bottom of the funnel.

Though I write this from my desk at Google, this isn't really about advocating one media type or another. Different media channels – and different platforms by channel – will drive engaged reach in very different ways depending on the brand and the objective. It's also not an attack on TV. I grew up in the TV industry. I believe that TV still has a huge role to play in many brands' marketing mixes, and that again, different properties will deliver different value at different times for any particular initiative.
What I am advocating though is rethinking the planning and sequencing of our media strategy – and the amount of attention focused on engagement vs. exposure. I want us to cut to the chase; to figure out how to reach the people and moments that matter most faster – and to use signals, insights, and endorsements – to make our whole plan more efficient and effective in whatever media can best help meet our goals.

**CONNECTING THE DOTS**

I know that all of this may feel conceptual and perhaps a bit overwhelming. Below are a few thoughts we’ve found to resonate with brands and teams that are shifting their thinking along these lines and looking for concrete ways to implement an engagement-centric approach. These are only intended to be thought starters – we will dive into greater depth on these and related topics in future Engagement Project installments.

**LET YOUR AUDIENCE FIND YOU**

In this new normal, everything is on demand. Ensure that when your audience is asking for something from you – either passively by reading or watching related content or actively by searching or subscribing – that you are present, and that what you have to say adds real utility or magic to their experience. This requires thinking about campaigns less like peaks and valleys and more like rolling hills. In other words, you need to be “always on” because Gen C is “always on”.

**PRIORITIZE CONTENT, BEYOND COMMERCIALS**

The increasingly visual and social web means that the nature of your advertising needs to change. While posting the glossy photos from your photo shoot or your :30 TV commercial online may be part of your approach, it shouldn't be your entire approach. Today's audiences want to hear the depth of your story, learn about your products and understand why you exist. Authenticity rules the day. Consider how you can expand upon the :30 commercial with deeper content, like making-of videos, expert interviews or live announcements. And, you don't have to create your story by yourself. Some of today's most successful brands realize the power of their fans to help generate content that they in turn surface to a broader group.

**DRIVE PARTICIPATION TO STEER THE CONVERSATION**

Gen C thrives on participation. People are talking about everything they encounter and sharing their experiences with friends. Just because you’re not there to steer the conversation, doesn't mean it's not happening. In the new normal, your brand is not what you tell people it is; it's what they say to each other about you when you're not around. That's always been true, but now, for the first time, you can find out what your audience is talking about and make your brand an authentic part of it. You can jump into the middle of the conversation and try to guide it in one direction or another. Digital isn't just about
asking someone to visit your social platforms, or giving them a coupon, it's about creating experiences that add value to the community your brand is a part of.

**INCORPORATE BETTER SIGNALS**

There are many high-signal platforms that provide deep insights into what works best for your brand as you try to engage your most important customers and prospects. For example, know your share of voice in search that same way you do in TV. Identify how much time people are willing to spend with your brand. Look at the endorsement rate of the content you create or support. Let's work together to find correlations between metrics like these and the economic outcomes for your businesses. The immediacy of digital signals allow you to optimize not just your digital strategy, but your whole marketing and business plan.

**ENGAGE WITH US**

What do you think? Does this ring true to you? Where have we missed the boat?

In the coming weeks we will continue with detailed looks into things like the creative process, new thoughts on measurement, and media planning. If there's something specific you'd like to see, give us a shout. We've also worked to gather lots of examples from across industries of this thinking, but we're always keen to find more. If you have an example to share, please get in touch.

You can reach us at theengagementproject@google.com, share your thoughts in our survey, or follow us at ThinkwithGoogle and @ThinkwithGoogle for updates.

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**Sources**

1: YouTube Quant Survey with Ipsos, April 2013, ComScore Videometrix, March 2013, e-Marketer

2: Gen C YouTube Audience Study, March 2013, Google / IPSOS / NowWhat
AAF’s Thought Leadership series is designed to allow its corporate members and other industry leaders to share their expertise with their peers in a thought provoking and insightful environment. It helps generate effective ideas that lead to enhanced business practices and innovation in the industry. Visit the Thought Leadership website at AAFTL.COM to view webinars and forums on topics ranging from multicultural brand messaging to digital technology.