

BLINK



ISSUE 13

2019

THE THOUGHT
LEADERS IN MEDIA

PUBLISHED BY
MEDIACOM

THE GROWTH ISSUE

GLOBAL WINS
STEPHEN ALLAN ON
WHEN AND WHERE
TO INVEST

GROUP GAINS
HELEN BROWN
ON BUILDING HIGH
PERFORMING TEAMS

**ANYTHING'S
POSSIBLE**
ADIDAS ON
ACHIEVING GROWTH

Finding growth



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Growth is what all brands want but today it seems like it's harder than ever to find. The global economy is stalling, and many advanced nations are experiencing some of their lowest growth in decades. Even China is slowing down. The World Bank predicts that growth in this market will only hit 6.2% in 2019 – China's worst performance in 28 years.

Many consumers have responded to the gloomy outlook by cutting spending, and that's bad news for brands at a time when many are already struggling with media fragmentation and the challenges of digital disruption. And yet, there are still ways to ensure brand growth... you just have to know where to find them.

In this issue of BLINK, we do exactly that, celebrating companies such as Tesco, Snickers and Shell and the new approaches we have executed on their behalves to help create growth.

We look at how brands grow (p6), examine when and where they should invest (p4), and highlight why everyone needs to work harder to understand the barriers facing their brands before they press go on any campaign (p15).

Today's challenges also encourage us to dare to be different. In these

pages, Liam Brennan considers how structured innovation can help bring new ideas and technology into the company (p39), while Misha Sher explores the growing appeal of eSports – a new opportunity that brands are starting to invest in (p44) – and Ana Thorsdottir explains how social influencers are transforming product recommendations in India (p47).

It's certainly true that growth can lie in the new and familiar but this issue also highlights the opportunities that arise from taking a smarter approach to the work we already do, whether that's making sure content for social media is designed for the platform on which it appears (p56), or targeting TV spend smarter using new forms of data (p26).

Times may be challenging but that doesn't mean that growth can't be found. This issue of BLINK is filled with advice that can be applied to every business, well beyond the traditional limits of marketing and media. That's because a key part of the growth story in 2019 will involve smashing down siloes and refusing to regard tradition as a reason for inaction.

I hope you find our thoughts interesting and useful.

Regards,

Steve

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CONTENTS



04 Invest in your brand if you want to survive the next recession

Why pulling marketing budgets is counterproductive

06 How brands grow

Three MediaComms join the art v science debate

10 Case study Tesco

Partnering data with media

11 What media agencies bring to the table

Cross-category expertise is the agency's secret weapon

13 Shape up for growth

Why businesses need new models and approaches to encourage consistent growth

15 The barriers to growth might be in your briefs

To get the best results it pays to dig deep and challenge

17 Brand Stories Opel

Why desirability is a KPI

19 How to build teams to deliver growth

Personality is just as important as technical skill

21 Case study Snickers Air

The first hunger-free flight

22 Growth secrets from Latin America

Converting reluctant consumers to e-commerce

24 Brand Stories Shell

Shifting from fuel to retail

26 Targeted Byron Sharp

Bridging TV's reach gap with intelligent application of data

29 Turning agility into growth

A structured approach uncovers new opportunities

31 Brand Stories Tesco

Accelerating growth

32 6 ways to grow your brand using voice

Harness the power of the most intuitive medium

35 Case study Lo Chingón Está Aquí

Celebrating Mexico's diversity

36 Seize technology

It's time to embrace the mayhem of innovation

39 How structured innovation drives growth

Collaborating with start-ups can solve business challenges

42 Want brand growth?

Combine imagination, speculation and data

44 Esports goes mainstream

How can brands win with these growing audiences?

47 Indian influencers

Social media content creators are changing the rules

50 Brand Stories adidas

Taking the long view

52 5 ways for brands to succeed in social commerce

Key trends driving sales and engagement in China

56 Brains in gear

Strong brands let consumers make subconscious choices



Invest in your brand if you want to survive the next recession

Stephen Allan, Worldwide Chairman & CEO, MediaCom

Will there be another financial crisis like 2008? Yes. It's hard to say when but this is a certainty". While Bill Gates might not have expected his words uttered during a Reddit AMA last March to make headline news, fast forward almost 12 months and they are looking eerily prophetic.

We don't need to cast our gaze too wide to see the global instabilities that are causing enormous unease among business leaders. Brexit, USA trade sanctions, unpredictable markets across South America and China's economic slowdown are the warning signs of only more volatility to come. When faced with economic uncertainty – or worse yet, a financial disaster

– business leaders tend to react in the same way. They fix their eyes on the bottom line and they slash it; they find the areas in the business where they can cut costs, and they brutally trim the fat. It's a survival tactic and for good reason. A company that is operating on a shoestring is better than having no company at all. Yet this is almost always a defensive strategy that aims to keep the business here tomorrow, as though looking further into the future is futile.

This 'batten down the hatches' approach is counter-productive, especially when certain areas of the business are concerned. Time and time again, I've watched as CMOs, CEOs and CFOs of multinational companies pull budget

and resources from the marketing function. As a division that is dedicated to creating growth and building new pipelines of profits, many assume it is one that can afford to be cut back. The opposite couldn't be more true.

It was Warren Buffett who said that it is "only when the tide goes out do we see who's been swimming naked". In my opinion and speaking from over 35 years' experience in the media industry, it is the brands that have failed to maintain their presence in the market, engaging consumers and solidifying connections with their audiences, that will be the ones left exposed. For the organisations that are successful post-recession, most of them will have focused on three

key areas: operational efficiency gains (aka how to do the work smarter); market development (aka knowing who to connect with and how to connect to them); and asset development (aka understanding consumer behaviours before and during the recession). Marketing is involved in all of them.

When facing a recession, there will inevitably be choices to make about where to direct expenditure, and those choices can have vastly different outcomes. The strategy we adopt in times of economic turmoil can spell business success or financial disaster. It's interesting to note exactly what strategies will lead to the right outcome. In 2010, the Harvard Business School and the Kellogg School of Management

came to the end of a two-year-long piece of research examining the performance of almost 5,000 companies before, during and after the 2008 recession. Of the thousands of companies, 17% went bankrupt, were acquired or went private. Of those that survived the economic downturn, 80% did not regain growth to pre-recession levels, while only 9% delivered growth. The most interesting conclusion from the study, however, is that the organisations that thrived post-recession weren't the ones that turned to dramatic and deep cost-cutting.

Take Lego for example. Buying toys is almost certainly a luxury during times of economic struggle, and you'd expect consumers to pull back on spending. Yet, the company saw profit growth of more than 63% following the global financial crisis; a record high of profitability. While Lego did place focus on reducing the bottom line, the reason behind their success was its expansion into the global market. As part of a marketing push, the toy giant looked to Asia and Europe to fuel growth, as the American market stagnated, and capitalised on these untapped regions to fuel sales.

The importance of bolstering, or at least maintaining, marketing expenditure during a recession is a glaring omission from many business strategies, even in the face of compelling evidence. Just ask Peter Field – an industry expert who has been researching marketing effectiveness for over a decade. His 2008 study found that cutting budget in a downturn may help to protect

The strategy we adopt in times of economic turmoil can spell business success or financial disaster

Photo: Getty Images



profits in the short term but, as a result, the brand would inevitably be weaker and much less profitable post-recession. In contrast, the brands that invested in marketing to gain a larger share of voice compared to their competitors were the ones that saw longer-term improvement in profitability.

The case for investing in advertising and marketing in the lead up to, during and after a recession has been made even more convincing in recent years, thanks to the drastic shifts we've experienced in the media sector. In the early days of the Global Financial Crisis in 2007, for a company that wanted to invest in advertising to solidify its consumer base and stabilise profits in reaction to a shaky

market, the options were far less mature. While digital advertising was certainly on the rise in the mid-2000s, it was nowhere near the level of sophistication that we are benefitting from today.

Compared with 10 years ago, brands can now understand on a far more granular level exactly who they are looking to advertise to, and what content is likely to inspire them to purchase. Rather than just buying double-page spreads in national newspapers or ad spots in primetime programming to capture attention, businesses can now add programmatic, targeted and addressable media to the mix and talk directly to individual consumers. While brands should never ignore the power of

traditional media to gain share of voice, such precision targeting can drive conversions and, therefore, increase their share of market. The trick is finding the right balance between reach and precision.

It's important to understand that recessions are not forced upon us; they are created by the millions of decisions being made by business and political leaders the world over. So, when the next crisis knocks on our doors, we should be ready to make the decisions that will help our companies to weather the storm and come out stronger on the other side. This means not simply relying on cost-cutting but striding into disruption to find ways to solidify and build market presence. ✕



How brands grow: It's complicated!

Is growing brands an art or a science? And how do you actually do it? Three MediaCommers – **Matt Mee**, Global CSO; **Jane Christian**, UK Head of Business Science, and **Chris Binns**, Global CSO, New Business Development – discussed these issues with Sunday Times journalist **Mark Edwards**. This (with slight edits) is what they said



Illustrations Martin Azambuja

MARK In the olden days the orthodoxy was that growing brands was an art – that you can't fully define the rules of how you did it. The current orthodoxy is that it's a science – that there's a small number of very simple rules you have to follow. Our starting point for this discussion is that it's a bit more complicated – that it's a mixture of art and science. If there's one thing that you know is true about growing brands, what is it?

MATT Marketing is a risk. It's a risk investment. And to say that you can "science out" the risk of it – or scientifically predict the scale of its benefit – is rubbish. But there are things you can do and things that you can learn which can reduce the risk.

So not screwing up is something which is possible – you can understand the things that reduce the risk in each category. So, one thing we can be sure of is that marketing is a risky process, but if you do it right – if you don't treat it as a simple set of rules, if you really work to understand it – you can improve your chances of success.

JANE There are a hundred little things that drive growth. But if there's one thing I've learned it's that it doesn't happen instantly and that you have to stick at it for the long term if you want to generate growth.

CHRIS What Jane said!

It's really, really difficult. There's an assumption that there are all these brands that are just popping into existence and growing exponentially almost immediately. But if you actually look at the likes of BrewDog, Popchips or Fever Tree, it's taken them years to get to the point where they've entered the public consciousness. They've existed for a decade, and it's taken them a long time to grow.

The thing that sticks out for me is that if you are going to continually grow brands, you need to be both a student and a teacher of the craft of it all. You need to be sure that you know what you know – that you can explain it and share it – but you also need to assume that there will be new things to learn along the way, and you must be ready to learn them.

Anyone who thinks they know everything about growing brands is living in a dream world.

MATT Equally, there's this idea that you look at a success story like BrewDog, you see what has made them successful and then you apply it from their beer brand to your baby food brand. And you go, everything should be D2C and there should be a subscription model for every product. Well... that really depends. Yes, there are probably categories of brands we work with where we could transfer lessons and models and get a sensible result. But equally, there are loads of instances where that won't work.

There was a phase the industry went through when we would all sit in meetings and go "oh if we could only be a bit more like Apple..." But if you're selling dog food, perhaps that's not that helpful.

CHRIS You're not going to launch a new dog food on a stage in Silicon Valley.

MATT To Jane's point growth is not instant. In the past, there was almost a sense of wish fulfilment about it, a sense that advertising was a kind of magic thing.

Possibly this is all rear-view mirror thinking – the industry believing that one day the PG Tips chimps arrived and bang! Huge success! Probably building that tea brand was a 50-year slog-fest of distribution-building through the North West Midlands before the chimps arrived.

MARK So many business books follow the formula: *Apple did X and was successful. Therefore, if you do X you will be successful. It's a very flawed logic. But we have to learn from somewhere. Chris, you mentioned the importance of continuing to learn. Where do you get these learnings from?*

CHRIS Everywhere. Okay, one of the places I learn from – and this is going to sound slightly odd – is fiction. I like to try to understand people, and I like to try to understand where various people much cleverer than me think the world is going. So I'm very interested in sci-fi, and extrapolations made there. If you combine that world with the world of business books, that can be interesting. I've also – about 17 years too late – started listening to podcasts, which is good as I appear to be on one right now. So all that together creates an interesting Venn Diagram.

There's a quote that's attributed to William Gibson – although I've never found it in anything he has written – "The future is already here it's just not evenly distributed". I've found in his work – and the other authors in that cyber-punk generation – some interesting thoughts on where the technology layers we're seeing evolving now may possibly be going, and what that might mean for brands.

MARK They say that sci-fi isn't really about the future. It's more about particularly perceptive authors looking at the present, and seeing what's already here – what's already started – but perhaps we haven't all noticed yet.

CHRIS If you look at something like selfies – people have been creating self-portraits for a very long time, it's just the access to the tools and the means of distribution that has changed. The basic human behaviour doesn't really change; you just get a new layer on top which accelerates or accentuates certain things. That's what people like Gibson tell you, and that's where I find value.

MARK Value because we're constantly hearing about how consumers are changing but it's helpful to remember that the basic human drives stay the same. Including the *drive for convenience. There's a Daniel Kahneman quote that goes – roughly – "Humans beings are to thinking, what cats are to swimming – they can do it if they really have to, but they would much prefer not to."*

MATT I actually saw Jane in the audience while watching a movie of [Les] Binet and [Peter] Field talking about effectiveness at an IPA conference. The camera panned along, and there was Jane looking very engaged.

There are a hundred little things that drive growth. But I've learned that it doesn't happen instantly

The speaker before – who was from a content research and evaluation company – talked about something very interesting. We're in a business where we are elbow deep in bullshit sometimes, and sometimes things that are almost guaranteed to help you deliver growth are ignored.

He was talking about persistent creative or branding devices – that could be an image like Churchill the dog, a running gag like "should have gone to Specsavers", or a jingle. These are things that work over time. The speaker was saying that the most successful content uses a persistent device, and the very successful ones were the ones that used the device well beyond the initial ad. But often those devices that were so successful hardly even progressed out of the TV spot. Even in online video, the persistent device was dropped quite quickly – let alone when it got to CRM or email marketing.



It's really fundamental. As an industry, we talk about building memory structures, but really applying it is the thing that seems to elude us.

The industry is obsessed with new things, we're neophiles. Whereas human beings are not neophiles. We like MAYA - Most Accessible Yet Advanced. We want something that feels fresh, yet is familiar to us at the same time. We want to see Churchill the Dog, but in a new scenario. We don't want to see the same Specsavers gag. We'd like to see it re-interpreted.

JANE It was Orlando Wood from System 1. It's on the IPA website. That was my favourite section of the conference. He called them "Fluent Devices", which allow you to link up the brand from one occasion of seeing it to another. It's very compelling.

He talked about colour, characters and jingles. We used to use them a lot, and even though they work really well, we're using them less and less. And these days brands might stick with an idea for a year and then change it. Orlando's research says the exact opposite of that: keep it, and evolve it. He picked Churchill out as a great example of that.

MATT We like things to be new, so good stuff gets lost; and there's also perhaps a phenomenon that the company lives the campaign day in and day out, so after about a year they'll say "that's quite tired now, let's refresh it" meaning that essentially they're bored with it, but consumers have only seen it three times.

MARK So how could we stop the mad dash to do the latest fashionable thing, and therefore throwing away the stuff that's actually working? ➤

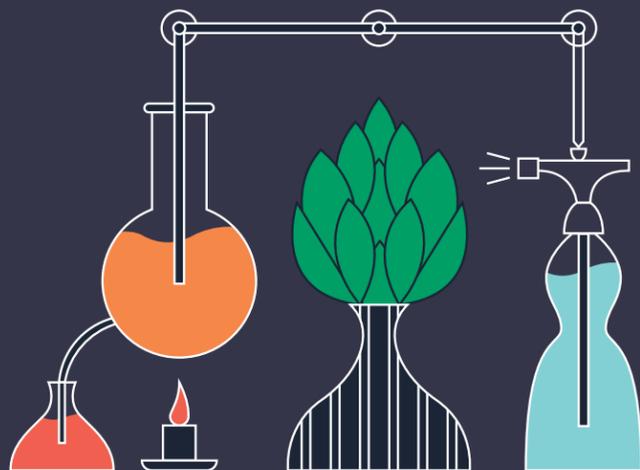
MATT It's about building a really comprehensive understanding of what works and what doesn't work for you in a category and building, with your partners, an engine that optimises and measures according to those things. You need to play your own game, build your own engine, understand your own metrics, and then you're captain of your own ship, which gives you enormous advantages; it gives you an advantage against the vendors because they don't know what you're optimising to, and it gives you an advantage against your competitors because they probably don't know what they're doing.

This isn't something that happens all the time. There is more complexity in terms of metrics and more people pointing in different directions these days than ever before. So if you're not the captain of the ship then you'll get pulled all over the place, and it's very easy to swing from one direction to another. We see this a lot. Binary thinking – it's all about precision marketing or it's all about [Byron] Sharpian reach and scale – whereas the art is to understand the balance. And you can only really understand that when you have your own understanding of what works and what doesn't for your brand.

MARK So you need to be open to new stuff, but really clear on the core stuff that works – and always has worked for your brand?

MATT David Bowie said once that he was surprised that people say that he's always changing. He said, stylistically he changed, but the nature of his content – his concerns – had always been the same. It's like that. You can update how you do things, but the thing you're actually doing should be the same.

Matt Mee Global CSO
Jane Christian UK Head of Business Science
Chris Binns Global CSO, New Business Development
Mark Edwards Sunday Times journalist



CHRIS For all the rhetoric around data and personalisation and targeting this is where it actually makes a significant difference to a business: where you find the understanding that allows you to create that engine – and you stick to your guns in it. It's important to have test-and-learn experiments around the borders of that so you can understand where that engine – to badly mix my metaphors – bleeds. I'm not a car person.

MARK And that understanding comes from many places, but certainly, Jane, from your work. But even there, are clients looking for new all the time, or is it okay to say "we're doing what we did before and it's still working". Is that a good start to a meeting?

JANE This is quite a tricky area. Everyone's always looking for something new. If you tell them "what you're doing is spot on – just carry on" it's not considered the best bit of research. But actually sticking with something and waiting for it to work – that long term view of things - is definitely something we don't see enough of.

MATT Our friends at Kantar World Panel did an analysis of CPG brands. And there were lots of differences about the maximum amount of penetration you could get in any markets around the world – but the one thing that was consistent was that you would be in the top quarter of all growth brands if you grew between 1 and

1.5% every year sustainably. So the hyperbolic transformation stories are all very well, but if you want to be one of the top 25% then grind out 1.5% of growth every year – and you will be stellar. And I think again that's a piece of information which probably is not widely distributed.

MARK That's a fact about growth that perhaps isn't widely known. Let's flip it, what ideas about growth that are widely held do you suspect aren't true at all?

CHRIS I'll tell you what you can be sceptical about: anyone who claims double-digit ROIs on anything. Advertising is a relatively small force in terms of business growth. Distribution growth would have a larger effect, pricing would have a bigger effect. And that varies by category. Anyone who claims that advertising can have transformational effects... yes, it can, but you're then into the world of the Black Swan – you're planning for the unlikely.

Sticking with something and waiting for it to work is something we don't see enough of

JANE I'd be sceptical of people who claim they have the entire answer. Anything that you read in a book that's a set model – you need to wonder what brand does that actually work completely for? Probably none. Even our friends Binet and Field – who I love – have said that the idea that you should be spending 60% on long-term brand building and 40% on short-term activation is actually not that simple – it depends what sector you're in. People get it wrong when they stick too closely to a model. You have to think very carefully about what's relevant for your brand in your sector in your life stage. In fact, it can be wildly different in some sectors – 80/20 or 50/50 or 40/60.

MATT The Ehrenberg-Bass Institute would be sceptical of these "it all depends" answers.

JANE But sometimes it does.

MATT If you suddenly go "oh now I've just found the new Bible, and henceforth it shall be 60/40 everywhere" it's not helpful. In a competitive environment knowing whether it's 60/40 or 65/35 could be the thing that gets you the 1.5% of growth.

CHRIS Way back we used to talk about the difference between religion and philosophy – the difference between diktats and things that you should explore. And the reality is that these are all things you should explore and then come to a common understanding in your organisation about what's working for you and how to deploy that over time. Anything that's published in a business book is likely to not be the exact right answer that you need.

MARK What factors shift the split away from 60/40?

JANE Broadly speaking, if something's easily purchased you should spend more on brand because activation's easier; and if something is generally a more researched purchase then again it's more on brand, less on activation. It looks a bit counterintuitive – and it's certainly not that simple.

MATT The simple, directional principle is this: a lot of good things come from getting the balance between long-term and short-term right. However because of the way the tools available to marketing have evolved, we've kind of bailed out of the long-term one, and we've become much more comfortable investing in something where we can see an immediate response – as opposed to something that can feel like... well... a CMO is in their job now for an average of two or two and a half years. When does an equity-led investment start to pay back? Not in the first year.

JANE We know investment in brands does pay off long-term. It feels like a risk while you're doing it on your own brand; but the industry evidence is strong. But you still see companies who won't stick at it. It's scary, right? You don't see the barometer move up immediately.

MARK It's scary, and also – to be a bit cynical – maybe not that easy for a CMO to say "well, what I've done here is I've taken a reasonably successful brand and I've kept it being reasonably successful, can somebody please give me an incredible new role on the back of that?" They're going to want to be able to say "I've done something amazing and transformational – that was me, that was".

JANE Although, from a modelling point of view what we measure that you don't usually see is that just standing still takes a tremendous amount of effort. We don't pat ourselves on the back for that. All of the potential losses that we had to competitors we made up for those and we grew by that 1.5%

MATT We work with a retail business which has millions of customers every day and is extremely interested in doubling the size of its business, but they also know the importance of a brand – that their business success is based on having a brand that is culturally interesting and compelling and fashionable, as well as being really good at putting the right product in front of you at the right time.

I think it's when those two ideas can't be held in your head at the same time that businesses get into difficulty. At the moment there's a lot of pressure, a lot of recommendations from consultants in this area, who are saying that the answer to all of your problems is going to be rushing down the route of precision targeting. No, that's going to be one of the things that helps them. If you haven't done this for a long time you don't know that the growth thing is about patience, is about several things, is about holding several ideas in your head at the same time.

CHRIS In terms of the question "What do people believe that you know isn't true?" then absolutely, invariably disappearing down that black hole of incredible precision, data-driven marketing (from an advertising perspective, not from a CRM perspective) – in our experience if you disappear down that hole, inevitably your brand will start to fall over.

MARK And presumably, as each year goes by that route is going to be more and more tempting for more and more people because they've got more and more data. So why is that a black hole?

CHRIS At a very simple level, brands are cultural artefacts. And they operate in the public consciousness. Actually, people like to be seen as part of a tribe, part of a community. If I see other people who I think are like me buying a certain brand of shoe, a certain brand of car, a certain brand of soft drink, then I am more likely to want to buy them too, and also I like to be seen to be buying them by those people.

The second you become more and more fragmented and precise and acting on the things you know about someone as an individual is the second you take that communal element away from advertising, and the second you stop building a brand and you're just having an activation conversation.

If you take that communal element away from advertising, it may well work in the short term – and there are some very successful short-term ROI businesses. But that's the problem with it. But you are no longer building a brand. The more individually precise you become, the more culturally invisible you are.

This is an edited transcript from the first episode of Growth Hunters, a new series of MediaCom podcasts, available at www.mediacom.com/thinking



CASE STUDY

Tesco – Food Love Stories

Partnering data with media to deliver a campaign personalised to food preferences

Client **Tesco**

Market **UK**



STORY

“Quality of food” is the biggest driver of supermarket choice, but Tesco shoppers thought they were too big to care. We needed to tackle this (mis)perception head on, reminding the nation of their passion for food.

While other supermarkets focused on telling people where their food was grown, caught or raised, Tesco sought to connect with the nation through emotive storytelling and the relationship we have with mealtimes.

“Food Love Stories” was born to celebrate “the food you love to cook, for the people you love”.

At the heart of this was the most complex, data-driven media planning that Tesco had ever attempted, with the campaign being centrally planned across a wide range of paid channels, Tesco’s massive owned media estate, its earned channels and even using its staff as a media channel.

Econometric data helped us pick the most effective channels. Data from Google and Facebook helped us personalise and localise our stories.

RESULTS

How’s this for a story? Quality scores grew by 18% and the campaign generated millions of pounds of additional sales, directly attributable to media.

With scope to increase investment across media channels used, this story isn’t ending any time soon.

AWARDS

- Cannes Media Lions 2018 | Grand Prix
- Festival of Media Global | Bronze: Effectiveness Award

CANNES LIONS
GRAND PRIX
WINNER

18%
QUALITY SCORE
INCREASE





It's time for media agencies to recognise the benefits they bring to the table

We should celebrate the advantages the media agency model continues to provide to advertisers, says **Toby Jenner**, Worldwide COO at MediaCom

Believe what you read: The portion of the media agency business that doesn't go in-house is heading straight to consultancies.

A massive 74% of multinational clients are reviewing their rosters, according to data from the World Federation of Advertisers, while the IAB reports that 18% of advertisers have taken programmatic buying in-house with a further 47% starting down that path. As always, things are never this binary. While such stats make great headlines, agencies need to be more confident and recognise

the huge advantages they deliver for clients using whatever organisational model they choose.

The bottom line is that a media agency will be able to make a beneficial contribution whether advertisers choose to take their programmatic capabilities in-house, either partially or completely, or whether they take full control of their data. Media agencies are also hugely beneficial to the communications process if advertisers decide to add more internal capability within their team for strategic planning, for example, and can dovetail with this team in order to create the most effective strategic direction.

Of course, agencies need to evolve – as do clients. On that journey and beyond, the capabilities an agency provides will continue to create and deliver significant client growth.

Previously, a media agency's biggest advantage was based around the power of aggregated buying, but now that scale ensures more talent around the world, more category and audience knowledge and more data and technology experience. We should be confident and flexible enough to play a key role in any client model, as we still provide a unique set of capabilities in three critical areas. >

The talent

Everyone knows talent is the difference between developing decent plans and brilliant ones, generic insights and transformative ones. When it comes to media talent, the significant majority of an increasingly diverse workforce with a broad perspective is concentrated in agencies.

Our superior ability to truly understand a brand's consumer in every market globally was summed up by brand consultant Avi Dan who recently told the Association of National Advertisers' Masters of Marketing Conference that he "hadn't seen one brand-building campaign that came from an in-house agency."

The knowledge

The agency model is powered by local market understanding. However, the real magic happens when this is married with the unparalleled category knowledge of thousands of global agency experts. A connected network with the ability to share and reapply knowledge across markets to fuel client growth is unbeatable. For now and the foreseeable future, these capabilities will always help a marketer and their team deliver a more effective outcome. Now, more than ever, in today's biddable world where performance based on price is no longer meaningful, this is vital.

The industry's cross-category expertise ensures agencies know what constitutes success everywhere. At the heart of this understanding are thousands of campaigns, ROI benchmarks and MMM models. Clients running a pure in-house operation simply won't have this depth of information. They wouldn't know if they were falling behind their competitors until it was too late.



The data and tech

Agencies have proven time and again that they can adapt to the changing industry landscape and client needs when new technologies become business critical. Remember how many independent search, social and mobile agencies there used to be? Those are now mostly consolidated into the media AOR, driving both increased effectiveness as well as efficiencies. Why will it be any different with

programmatic, AI and AR? Many clients who laud their in-house solutions are actually resourcing them via white-labelled programmatic businesses.

The debate is surely not whether an agency should be responsible for leveraging multiple channels and platforms to drive increased sales, but who's responsible for the data ownership. This is fueling many of the in-house conversations. The truth is clients should have the best of both worlds: they can own the data but have all the talent and skills that an agency provides to bring it to life.

Central to this is an agency's ability to help brands scale their technology usage as well as the intelligence to know whether advertisers should aggregate or choose individual partners based on their needs. Everyday agencies are using this inherent knowledge to ensure clients maximise the value of tech partners rather

than making do with off-the-shelf media owner solutions.

For instance, many clients invest in Google's very good programmatic ad tech, but media agency experience is needed to ensure it reaches its full potential. As an example, removing the off-the-shelf dynamic creative partner and instead using an agency in-house programmatic creative solution has been proven to improve campaign performance by up to 30%.

Many agencies have also invested in their own tech stacks for those clients that need one. And even where they don't, we can enhance performance by plugging any gaps, being additive not replicative.

Recent research by ExchangeWire and ad-tech provider Iponweb reveals that such investment supports superior measurements as well as fostering better relationships with media owners and brands.

In summary, smart media agencies realise they are increasingly part of the solution and that marketing is a team job – but wasn't it always? It will potentially include in-house and external partner expertise to create successful outcomes for a client's business. But the intelligence brought to that team by a media agency's diversity and category expertise is as vital as ever.

Clients must decide how they want to pilot their plane, but ultimately, if they want the most comfortable flight, a media agency should always be part of the flight deck. It's time to celebrate the vital contribution that the agency model can make as we look to the rest of 2019 and beyond. *

This article was first published by Adweek.

The industry's cross-category expertise ensures agencies know what constitutes success everywhere

The old model for growth is dead. It's time to crown the new model. It may be hard to pivot from our traditional reliance on scale and efficiency but growth today and tomorrow will more likely come from agility. Learning to change is the first part of adapting.

Why do businesses need to change, you ask. Because there are fewer and fewer new markets to enter and you can only cut your way to efficiency so many times. At the same time, sectors are also being shaken up by more knowledgeable customers and disruptors who are looking to cash in on lazy incumbents, often bypassing well-established niches and intermediaries.

All this makes business sound hard. And it is. But there is growth to be found, even if it isn't always in the most familiar places. To find it, business leaders need to develop new skills, moving away from command and control into unexpected partnerships, speciality brands and new business models.

The large and growing businesses of the future will seek out rainbows of opportunity, never putting all their eggs in one basket but exploring every possible avenue for growth. They will be flexible, always ready to test new ways of working and selling.

And they will have leaders at every level who make the mantra of growth more than just a corporate slogan. They will self-analyse every aspect of their performance and constantly look for new ways to operate.

Our colleagues at WPP have been analysing today's companies that overperform and asking why they have the edge and the new WPP Institute for Real Growth has

Shape up for growth

Businesses need new models and new approaches if they are to continue to grow in today's competitive world. **Matt Mee**, MediaCom's Global Chief Strategy Officer, highlights today's building blocks for growth



identified key areas that separate out average performance and stellar growth.

Their findings, which echo our experience at MediaCom, demonstrate that the companies that succeed will be those that build their companies around three key core areas: why they do what they do; what they define as their market and offer as solutions; and how they organise for success.

Getting it right in each of these

areas means making big changes to legacy structures:

First, they need to look at why their company exists and articulate their ambition in terms of the impact on people and the world around them.

That means linking business growth to KPIs that demonstrate people growth and ensure this is also part of their incentive structures. This is very different from the traditional approach of prior-

itising profit and involves a total focus on benefiting customers, colleagues, and communities. Because any business model can be copied, what stands out as a brand is the ability to link commercial ambitions to something more meaningful.

Second, they need to look at what they do. That means ensuring they offer ever-evolving experiences instead of just products or services, have the flexibility >

7 BUILDING BLOCKS OF REAL GROWTH

To succeed, the next generation of growth leaders must reimagine... *why* they do what they do; *what* they define as their market and offer as solutions; and *how* they organise for success. Those building blocks look like this:

WHAT

Evolving experiences
Measure and benchmark your "share of experience". Ensure all your solutions include product, service, and experience components.

HOW

Whole-brained
Shift focus from the "what" to the "so what" and "now what". Create whole-brain teams of equals.

WHAT

Multiple models
Ensure the investment approval process allows for multiple business models. Create or participate in start-up platforms.

HOW

Anticipative organisation
Create multi-disciplinary "fit for purpose" teams for all your strategic initiatives. Push accountability down to consumer-facing staff.

WHAT

Abundant markets
Shift investment from explaining the past to predicting the future. Define your market so you have no more than 3% share.

HOW

Open culture
Redefine career paths from a linear trajectory to a "jungle gym". Celebrate and reward intrapreneurship.

Source:
Institute for
Real Growth 2019



The WPP Institute for Real Growth (IRG), provides guidance on how to drive sustained business growth. It is focused on identifying what differentiates growth leaders in terms of strategy, structure, and capability from growth laggards. IRG research was conducted in the second half of 2018 and included over 550 expert vision interviews, an online IRG survey and AI enabled desk research on the drivers of business growth. Please visit instituteforrealgrowth.com for more information.

The Institute for Real Growth is just one of the resources our teams at MediaCom leverage for clients to identify and generate growth. Please get in touch for more information.

to use multiple business models, and constantly view themselves as market challengers rather than incumbents and consider how that changes their behaviour.

It means ignoring the fact that you might have 30% market share and considering life as a 3% company but with ample room to grow. This change of viewpoint drives a constant desire to optimise what works. It encourages them to build in-house innovation labs and explore unexpected acquisition possibilities.

Third, they need to look at how they operate and the culture of their organisation. This can often be the hardest part because it means loosening up internal hierarchies and pushing accountability down to consumer-facing staff. It means offering staff new career paths that enable them to leap around rather than have to follow a set route to the top and it rewards those demonstrating entrepreneurship within the company.

Changing cultures so that innovation and diversity is part of the company ethos pays dividends because it enables colleagues to move seamlessly together towards the common goal, without being tied to the same route. This gives teams the freedom to demonstrate a diversity of thinking that allows them to anticipate opportunities and threats as well as generating new insights that combine creativity, data and technology well before their competitors.

Making these changes is not easy and can't be done instantly but any business that wants to grow needs to change. In today's world of rapid change, few of us can rely on the old routes to growth and we should all be exploring new routes to success.

Only by examining all aspects of the way we behave as business leaders, marketers and individuals can we ensure that we are truly doing everything possible to drive growth for our companies and our people. ✖

The barriers might be in your briefs

To unlock growth through media, you first need to understand what's restricting your brand's performance.

Bhavana Smith, Chief Client

Officer at MediaCom USA, explains that this sometimes means challenging the brief...



Illustration Jack Bedford

When clients provide us with briefs, our inclination is to take them at face value. Drive awareness? Sure! Increase conversion? Absolutely! But, to provide real value, we know we need to be more rigorous, by probing and asking questions that uncover growth opportunities.

Put another way, that means digging deeper to fully understand a client's barriers to growth (and the specific things preventing their consumers from either entering or moving through the funnel) and then putting together a plan, across paid, owned and earned, designed to address those barriers.

A brand might ask us to help it boost awareness or drive visits to its website, for instance, but that might not lead to sales if other things are putting consumers off buying. Instead, to make consumers walk the final yards down the purchase funnel, we might need to rethink the client's content or develop a fresh messaging and distribution platform. But we won't know the right answers unless we challenge the brief first.

The raw truth is that an agency that challenges the instructions coming from its clients is much more likely to develop a solution that leads to growth, ROI and all the important measures that they care about. Sometimes, the solution may not be paid media, which is why it pays to understand how all comms channels work together (which is what we mean when we talk about Systems Thinking). >

Brand successes

We recently worked with a sportswear brand to launch a new running shoe. The brand marketing team recognised that consideration was low among core runners, but when we looked in depth, we realised it wasn't because of a lack of awareness, but rather, because of the lack of appropriate recommendations.

That's because opinions among runners are massively influenced by salespeople at running stores, who are deeply loyal to traditional running brands, like Asics and Saucony. Understanding this detail enabled us to identify the key blockage the brand needed to overcome.

Similarly, a few years ago we worked for a confectionery brand that told us their biggest barrier to purchase was a lack of relevance. But by digging deeper into the research, we found that the problem was more about lack of awareness.

Once we had identified the right barrier, we were able to map out a successful solution, enhancing digital activity, working with creative partners to drive relevant content and adding the right social channels and platforms to the plan.

These examples demonstrate how the objectives set by clients in their initial briefs are sometimes sub-optimal and why agencies need to push back. If clients want to be famous and well known, that's fine, but they need to understand that being famous doesn't necessarily mean being liked, considered or purchased.

The initial brief should be the starting point for a constructive conversation, not the moment to go into action

Earlier in my career, I worked on a campaign for a well-known contraceptive pill. Awareness and consideration were sky high among the relevant audience but the women who needed the product were understandably wary about asking for it by name in a pharmacy.

Our research helped us understand why consumers were not buying, which helped us direct our creative messaging to women reading specific content about contraceptives. They were already aware of our product and engaged, but we needed to help them overcome the barrier to purchase. To do this, we developed specific messages for digital that allowed women to print off a "request card" they could hand to their pharmacist without having to say a word (thus, allowing them to maintain their privacy from nosy customers).

Challenging briefs

To achieve the very best results, it's vital to challenge briefs and ask clients where their goals came from and why they matter to their business. As media professionals, before we even consider a brief, it's our job to assess a client's whole system of communications and tie that closely to the way consumers actually buy or, more importantly, don't buy a particular product or service.

Even the biggest media budgets can be wasted if they attempt to change the wrong consumer behaviours or ignore the real reasons people don't consider a brand.

The initial brief should be the starting point for a constructive conversation, not the moment to go into action. Agencies and brands need to agree on a two-way process for finessing the brief and goal as well as detailed research to confirm that it's really going to deliver growth.

Media can be a tool for growth, but it has to be targeted at the right business challenges. The best way to ensure that happens is to make sure the real barriers are correctly identified at the start of the process. ✕

This article was first published by Campaign.

BRAND STORIES



Tobias Gubitz
Director, Brand Strategy and Marketing,
Opel

MEDIACOM *What does the next level of growth look like for Opel?*

TOBIAS GUBITZ We've defined our three areas of focus as one, Opel becoming profitable again; two, Opel being electrified; and three, Opel going global, so the internationalisation of the Opel brand.

MEDIACOM *What are the challenges you need to meet in order to get there?*

TOBIAS GUBITZ We need to increase our efficiency. We need to achieve more with fewer resources. So, we need to rebalance our costs to be ready for how the industry is transforming. Also, the Vauxhall brand in the UK is currently in the position where it needs to be redefined, repositioned and strengthened so that it can support our growth ambitions moving forward. We need to make sure that with an increase in efficiency and stronger brands, we find the right audiences and make sure we really drive our product into market and drive it profitably. That's one area where we obviously rely on the support of MediaCom.

MEDIACOM *What would success look like for you (and us)?*

TOBIAS GUBITZ Our key KPI is desirability. How desirable is the Opel brand, and the Vauxhall brand? By 2021, we want to be the most desirable German mainstream brand again. That means going up against Volkswagen and Ford in the UK.

MEDIACOM *How can MediaCom and GroupM help you achieve these growth ambitions?*

TOBIAS GUBITZ It's underappreciated in this day and age, but next to data and efficiency, is the aspect of quality and the magic and the creative part that needs to be added to make the whole machinery work. We really hope that by working with you closely to make the best use of data, and the best use of new technologies and efficiencies, we can keep an eye on delivering really exciting, relevant communications to our audiences that fuel our profitable sales offensive and move Opel and Vauxhall to the next level.



Photo: iStock

How to build teams that deliver growth



You need to build the right teams to spot and seize new growth opportunities. But, as **Helen Brown**, Global Chief People Operations and Performance Officer argues, personality type is just as important as technical skills

There's magic in a great team – not just because of the way they work together, it's more than that. A great team creates its own kind of alchemy that pulls people together with a passion that delivers exponential growth.

How to assemble that perfect team is often regarded as more luck than judgement but that's not the case. It's a result of many years' worth of experience by a leader who, as a result of being an expert in their field, can spot the combination of skill and attitude required for their needs. For examples, look to legendary Robert R Gilruth, director of the 1969 NASA lunar landing; Steph Houghton, captain of England women's national football team and Manchester City; and X-Men leader, Professor Charles Xavier – who can argue with his ability to pull together a 'super' team?

Science fiction aside, there's a fair bit of scientific fact that can be used to enhance every team. You may not get into space, or win gold at the Olympics, but you can put together some pretty powerful talent combinations by following some simple principles.

In 2016, Google published a report based on many years of interview data. In it, they stated their best-performing teams were

defined not only by their mix of technical capabilities but on the group's level of emotional intelligence and communication skills.

That analysis was backed up by the Harvard Business Review in 2017, which published a report looking at the scientific evidence that supports the hypothesis that the make-up of personalities in teams has more of an impact on performance than skills alone.

Is it fair to assume, therefore, that businesses that hire talent predominantly through a skills lens may not attain the same performance levels as those businesses that look into the personalities, behaviours and attitudinal competencies of their teams?

Winning personalities

Our own research into the teams that deliver the greatest performance for our clients would support this theory and we have found they generally include a combination of five distinct behaviours:

ALTRUISM

Those who demonstrate an altruistic approach have a concern for the wider ecosystem and create more opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing. This results in a share and reapply mentality, reduces time and associated costs, and shares tested success factors.

ADAPTION

Employees who are able to assimilate and be comfortable with constant change at pace know when to move on if a direction or idea isn't working. This personality type has been key to the 'fail fast and learn faster' attitude adopted by companies such as Tencent and Adobe.

CREATIVE THINKING

Focus on innovation, creating the new and different. Examples of companies that have over-indexed in this dynamic include Uber and Airbnb.

PRAGMATISM

Team members who are comfortable with detail and process, who can clarify the need and can maintain focus during stressful situations.

RESULTS FOCUSED

Those who naturally take charge, are organised and energetically focus the team on group success. These are the specialists who often become the future coach or leader.

Keeping a performing team engaged

Whilst clarity of purpose and management of time can be delivered by any competent manager, fulfilling the emotional needs of the team requires emotional intelligence. That's because it's about more than just assembling a team with the right skills and attitude. Smart selection can quickly come undone without clear goals and constant course correction from a skilled leader. The work the team are undertaking and the way they are being led must also meet their emotional and intellectual needs.

Teams that thrive are bound by the same mutual understanding and respect for the vision and values of the team. This shared connection requires the coach, or leader, to be intentional about a common goal, even when the people they are working with have different personal values.

Famously, Claudio Ranieri led English football team Leicester City to win the 2016 Premier League against huge odds. While skilled in their own right, the team had been playing as a group of individuals. Ranieri needed to find a way to bring them together. His solution was to invite them all to his house for pizza. This simple gesture created a culture of openness and illustrated that they were all equals playing for the same prize, as one team.

In summary, teams that grow and thrive have three core components; individuals with relevant skills and a desire to continually hone them; collective attitudes that complement the team in most situations and consistent leadership that can both set the course and steer them unflinchingly towards it. ✪

Further reading

<https://hbr.org/2017/01/great-teams-are-about-personalities-not-just-skills>

<https://hbr.org/2015/02/how-to-coach-according-to-5-great-sports-coaches>

Leaders Eat Last, Simon Sinek

FIVE CAREER BOOSTING STEPS

By Bianca Best, Managing Director of BLINK and Strategic Partnerships

1/ Know where you add value

Be consistently aware of your highest contribution to hitting the collective goal of the team. Push back and filter out the whirlwind of time stealer meetings, tasks, email requests (and even people). Only do something if you can see how that work will impact the broader business/project/agency outcome. If it does, then it's all systems go. Otherwise, if it can be approached another way, delegated elsewhere, or rejected as a 'to do' then it's time to push back intelligently, intuitively and sensitively.

3/ Have strategic goals – not just a to-do list

Own a growth mindset by focusing on strategic business goals. Step out of the minutiae of daily deliverables and logically plan the week, who you'll most usefully spend time with and where/how. Headline your core objectives for the subsequent week each Friday before you shut the laptop and plot exactly what you intend to have achieved by the following Friday at 6pm ensuring you plan time into your calendar accordingly.

5/ Manage moments of disempowerment

In any career, there will be moments of disempowerment. Someone else gets the project lead role you felt you deserved or a new boss is brought in between you and your current supervisor. How you behave in these moments is critical. Stay factual and do not get emotional. Take a deep breath and analyse the situation objectively as this is a moment of growth. Respond proactively and positively, empathising with the business thinking that created the situation, but if ultimately you can't effect the change you want, then get your power back and explore new chapter options.

2/ Focus on business results

Adopt an outcome-driven mentality. It's not about tasks and presenteeism but about driving business results in the most efficient and effective way possible. If working more productively, rapidly and innovatively happens for you at 7am then organise your schedule to allow that. If it's midday, then

likewise. Learn which habits serve you best at having maximum impact at work. Assess your sleep, nutrition, exercise as well as your actual working style.

4/ Keep a life balance

Maintain a life blend that keeps you effective, healthy and happy. Be conscious of actions you take which may be inhibiting your wellbeing. People-first business cultures today are here to support productivity in whole-being balance. It's well documented that environments offering psychological safety and encourage authenticity, agility, diversity and a focus on outcomes, not inputs, are where the workforce thrives. Ultimately, health and happiness metrics should be valued on par with commercial results. Better gender equality is pivotal to that.



CASE STUDY

Snickers Air

Partnering with one of China's biggest airlines to develop the world's first hunger-free flight

Client **Mars Snickers**

Market **MediaCom Beijing**



5.5BN
IMPRESSIONS

>60%
SALES INCREASE

STORY

Travelling in China is tough. And during Chinese New Year, when half a billion people travel to see friends and family, it can be stressful.

People need food to power their journey because "you're not you when you travel hungry". Unfortunately, overpriced food concessions only add to the stress.

So, we decided to partner with one of China's biggest domestic carriers, China Eastern Airlines, to create a hunger-free flight: Snickers Air.

Taking over a Boeing 737 plane for the 40-day holiday period, we integrated Snickers into every aspect of the journey, from boarding passes to the in-flight entertainment.

We announced the creation of China's most luxurious airline via a press conference, showing off some of the hunger-free aspects of the flights. We then promoted the flight experience and the chance to win a coveted seat.

We shared our message via video across Weibo, express targeted ads, all PR platforms (including China News Weekly), and Ctrip, China's biggest travel booking site.

We also rebranded check-ins and VIP lounges – using data to reach anyone who travelled by air in 2017 or had booked tickets via Tencent to travel in 2018.

Tencent data allowed us to reach railway travellers, we put messages on top travel apps 12306 and Ctrip, and we also targeted people in Beijing, one of China's biggest New Year migration cities, through out of home ads.

Billions of special packs at retail completed the journey across the country.

RESULTS

We hit 5.5bn media impressions, 3.2bn PR impressions, and our video was watched 35m times.

Most importantly, though, we drove net sales up more than 60%, a record New Year performance for the brand.



What does the next level of growth look like for Shell? And what will success look like in the future? In this interview, Shell's Global Head of Connections **Chris Hayek** tells MediaCom's Global Category & Client President **Alastair Bannerman** about his brand's growth plans...



ALASTAIR BANNERMAN *What does the next level of growth look like for Shell?*

CHRIS HAYEK Shell has been around for more than 100 years, so we are looking at growth in terms of "where do we start playing where perhaps we haven't played before?". Emerging markets will be an important part of that response.

We're also looking for new ways to disrupt. Disruption happens when new companies come into a market, take a look at an industry that has been around for a hundred years, and say: "We can do this differently".

So, we're going to have to grow as a disruptor also.

ALASTAIR *What are the top three challenges you need to meet in order to get there?*

CHRIS First and foremost, in order to get growth, we've got to prove growth. That means proving the relationship between what media can provide and, ultimately, our return on investment. More and more, our organisation is asking: "what is the actual return that media is providing?". In the past, we've been able to sort of hide that, but the ability to measure is becoming important – whether it's through digital, attribution or geo-targeting, online to offline.

Secondly, when we look at new markets, we need to understand how media ecosystems are different

from the western world. We're used to Facebook, YouTube and Google, but in China, it's completely different – from a media standpoint, from a partner standpoint, and also from an experience standpoint.

In terms of our brand, we want people to start seeing Shell in a different light. Most people see us as a fuels retailer, but we want them to see us as a retailer that sells fuels. So, we want to be the largest seller of Coca-Cola or Red Bull, for example. If we want to be a retailer that sells fuels, looking at other successful brands, particularly in the retail space, is a critical component for us.

ALASTAIR *What does success look like for Shell in 2019 and beyond?*



CHRIS If I had to pin success on one thing, it's transformation. At Shell, we need to do things differently; we need to coach our local markets, do better briefing, and push ourselves into innovative digital.

On the agency side, that transformation is about improving our understanding of intent to purchase and predictive analytics.

At MediaCom specifically, it's about using Cultural Connections (its consumer research programme, of which we are now becoming a strategic partner), to help us get a better understanding of consumers around the world.

The final thing is about automation. Automation is about looking at where can we do menial tasks more efficiently. So, for Shell, can we look at some of our smaller markets, and allow them to be more self-sufficient? Can we automate some of the non-value admin things that MediaCom has to do (and that we have expected our agencies to do in the past) and reinvest their time into strategy and digital innovation?

ALASTAIR *How can MediaCom help you achieve your growth ambitions?*

CHRIS Data, as we all know, is the new oil. So, working with MediaCom's data scientists and data analysts is important.

We also want to ensure that the sum of our agency partners within GroupM and WPP is more than the sum of their parts. That might mean, for example, Wunderman and MediaCom coming together, looking at our first-party data and our loyalty data, and using it to create lookalikes or help us understand intent to purchase. We're looking forward to seeing those results in 2019.

ALASTAIR *What industry trends are impacting brands like Shell right now?*

CHRIS The first trend is geolocation. We've been able to do things like partner with Waze (the GPS navigation software app) to make Shell locations display when people are looking for directions in their car. We're enjoying being able to do this at scale.

The second trend is e-commerce. Interestingly, MediaCom showed us that more searches for our products are actually done on e-commerce than in Google. That's amazing. In 2017, and partly in 2018, we thought platforms like Amazon and Alibaba were just places to advertise our products; they were sales channels. But, now, we're starting to realise they're media channels. I see amazing growth from our potential spends there, although we know we'll have to overcome new challenges in these spaces.

ALASTAIR *What are your industry predictions for 2019 and beyond?*

CHRIS Recent current events have shown that in digital and social, brand safety and data security continue to be paramount. I think we are only scratching the surface. I think we'll probably see some big potential legislative offerings or changes coming that will affect what we can do with data, how we use it, and how we communicate with consumers. I think that will start in 2019 and go into 2020 and beyond.

ALASTAIR *What will you do differently in the year ahead?*

CHRIS I want to keep my foot on the gas for transformation. Transformation can only be considered a success when those on the ground see it and feel the difference. When our local marketing managers and even our sales managers can articulate the change they have seen in the impact of media, then we will have delivered that promise of transformation.

Targeted Byron Sharp



Now data can make TV more effective, even Byron Sharp, the guru of reaching out to all category users, should welcome more accurate targeting says MediaCom's Global Chief Data Officer David Beale

Illustration Mitch Blunt

Brands and their agencies face a dilemma. On the one hand, evidence from Byron Sharp shows that brands should drive reach of all purchasers in the category as often as possible. What's more, according to effectiveness gurus Field and Binet, TV remains a critical part of the mix for delivering this reach and cost-effective growth.

But at the same time, the ability of TV to deliver the requisite levels of reach has deteriorated rapidly. Over the last five years, the number of Gross Rating Points required to reach 50% of an all adult target audience has risen by 50% in the US, 40% in France and 22% in the UK. Other markets show similar trends, which makes Byron Sharp's vision harder to deliver. There's a reach gap, and it's getting bigger – especially among younger audiences. It's also becoming significantly more expensive to generate that reach.

To fill the gap, some brands have boarded the personalisation-at-scale bandwagon, targeting high-value individuals with personalised messages. But this is an extreme reaction. Huge amounts

of money have been invested in the technology and data to deliver such personalisation – but it's questionable whether the investment can be recouped.

Moreover, not all reach is equal. So, while it is possible to fill the reach shortfall with digital activity, it might not be possible to match the impact that TV-driven reach generates – especially at scale.

The dilemma is that TV remains critical, but there's a reach gap and efficiency is diminishing. So, to compensate, we are facing a huge investment in a data-driven solution. Ultimately, this compromises the Byron Sharp/Field and Binet dream and makes it harder to deliver effective reach of category users.

But there is a solution. One that retains the ambition of delivering Byron Sharp's reach strategy addresses the shortfall in TV delivery against the real category users and frees up budget to fill any reach gap.

That solution is the intelligent application of data.

By applying the same data we use to activate personalised digital activity at scale to TV we can plan airtime to actual category users

instead of demographic proxies for category users. That may sound like a semantic change but it's actually hugely significant.

Fusing our behavioural data with TV viewing data enables us to plan a campaign against specific interests – dog owners, say – instead of BC1 25-45-year-olds. Planning in this way frequently generates in excess of 10% improvements in the cost of reaching the people that Byron Sharp demands we contact: category users.

Data allows us to deliver actual category users, rather than people who look like category users.

Right now, we're testing a new solution in the US called mVideo. It's a GroupM response to this challenge and we hope to start rolling it out globally soon to deliver reach that matters.

Fusing behavioural data with TV viewing data enables us to plan a campaign against specific interests

Delivering reach more efficiently in this way releases investment for more in targeted video activity – filling the reach gap against a consistently defined target audience. And more than this, by using a single data source to plan activity across digital and TV, we can measure cross-media reach and identify those that have not been exposed to the TV.

Incremental video support can then be directed at these individuals, maximising reach against category users. Thus, Byron Sharp is satisfied, personalisation at scale is delivered, relevance is maximised, and ROI is stabilised.

The same data sets can also be applied to other channels such as radio and outdoor too. This lets us quantify and identify an audience in more detail than traditional media metrics allow and invest more accurately.

These principles can be applied to every sector, ultimately, making TV more powerful and more effective while, for the first-time, reassuring marketers they are actually reaching all (or many more) of their category buyers.

If it's true that TV will become more programmatic in the future, then some of the more technical lessons learned online will be applicable to our most important medium, but that will take time.

For now, it's important to remember that data isn't simply the preserve of digital, it can be applied to every channel and every strategy. The impact is massive, and with smarter targeting strategies, it can help any brand. ✖

BLINK

“ ”

**Exploration is the engine
that drives innovation.
Innovation drives
economic growth.
So, let's all go exploring.**

*Edith Widder,
Scientist*



We love buzzwords in our industry. Right now one of the biggest is 'agility'. The art of moving fast, shaking things up and, often, breaking things in pursuit of something better.

However, implementing an agile culture means different things to different people. Many believe agility is about working at 'pace' or giving autonomy to individuals at the expense of their teammates but both approaches are misleading.

Firstly, agility doesn't just mean speed of delivery. If you start shortening deadlines without making fundamental workflow changes, you'll only end

up cutting corners and getting below par work from a burnt-out team.

Agility isn't just about individual autonomy, either. While a good 'agile' team should be given semi-autonomy from the wider business, no one individual should be given higher decision-making power than the wider team. Instead, the best ideas come from a collective with clear roles and responsibilities.

Another misnomer is that being 'agile' means having a lack of structure, hybrid roles, and an unclear end goal. This anarchic view, which typically stems from a lack of preparation and process, may create the illusion of flexibility – both within the team and outside – but, ultimately, it produces nothing more than poor work completed in stressful circumstances.

Planning, process, and procedure may sound counter to 'agile' ways of working, but from my experience of running such projects over the past two years, creating order in the chaos helps projects run faster, maximises the skillsets of team members and produces strong, differentiated work. >

Turning agility into growth



Agility isn't just about working faster; it's about building structures that help you act first and grow fast.

Liam Brennan, MediaCom's Global Director of Innovation, explains

Illustration Jack Bedford



Building structured agility

So, how do you make agility happen? There are many ways you can apply agile working – Harvard Business Review's Agile at Scale adapts some of the core concepts for larger organisations – but you certainly need to focus on three key areas:

TEAM DESIGN

First, you must design your team to be lean (note that doesn't mean small) to minimise communication lines and reduce consensus congestion (and know when to pull in skillsets as required). You might also want to think about changing your team's behaviours and ways of working. The Scrum processes, which involves concurrent workstreams with regular check-ins, for example, emphasises creative and adaptive teamwork in solving complex problems. It can maximise your team's skillsets while increasing efficiencies.

COMPRESSION

Teams can spend a lot of time waiting for the next deliverable. This can lead to overload when a project drops and impact other projects, too. Workflow processes made famous by Japanese firms such as Kanban, used in the Toyota Production System, are useful for understanding how to reduce lead times to maximise workflow.

STREAMLINING

A large portion of time spent working on projects isn't all that useful. That's not to say that it leads to poor work, just that there are certain elements in the processes that weren't required. Reflective, internal feedback loops that focus on the continual elimination of waste (AKA lean development) helps bring project timelines down, increase output, and decrease the amount of superfluous work.

Our MediaCom BLINK teams follow structured processes within lean 'squads' (consisting of specialists with little to no reporting hierarchy) to produce work at high volumes and speed without sacrificing quality.

This is not an outcome created by doing things on the fly. It requires preparation in terms of team makeup, roles and structure, custom workflow processes, a continuous focus on KPIs and the experience to know when to deliver or close.

Famously, brands such as Specsavers, Mondelez and Paddy Power have set live 'reactionary' ATL campaigns in under 24 hours using thorough pre-planned

Approaching agility in a considered way uncovers new opportunities for real growth

go-to-market processes. MediaCom has recently run a simultaneous technology test for a large multinational using our 'agile' processes in one market, with business as usual processes in another market – time to go live was shortened by three months and work required by 60% for similar outcomes.

Google, Amazon and Facebook – three companies we often think of as agile – were all start-ups once but by following orderly processes and procedures have maintained that attitude and approach even as they have grown into three of the largest corporations in the world.

By approaching 'agility' in a considered, structured way, businesses of all sizes can uncover new opportunities and find real growth. ✕

BRAND STORIES



Emma Botton
Marketing Communications Director, Tesco

MEDIACOM *What does the next level of growth look like for Tesco?*

EMMA BOTTON We continue to put our customers at the heart of our business. Plenty of growth opportunities exist where we are able to predict and exceed their expectations. It's one of the most magical elements of the job!

MEDIACOM *What are the challenges you need to meet in order to get there?*

EMMA BOTTON There are plenty. One for now is about the economic climate, the absolute levels of disposable income for the weekly

shopper and how they can stretch that further, with the help of Tesco. We've always been by the side of our customers offering great value (100 years this year), so we think we are well placed to help.

MEDIACOM *What would success look like for you (and us)?*

EMMA BOTTON One area we've been investing in is lots of great econometric studies and we're building our bank of rich knowledge and expertise. In a business of the size and scale of ours, there are plenty of levers to pull and I think it's our collective responsibility to ensure we use this hard



data to demonstrate the profitability that communications planning (and then the delivery of that) can bring to the business.

MEDIACOM *How can MediaCom and GroupM help you achieve these growth ambitions?*

EMMA BOTTON I would love MediaCom to consider spending our money – every single pound – as though it were your own. That's what I ask my teams to do. We're building much more of a cost-conscious culture and community, and people are really starting to look at it that way. So, if it were your own money, would you be

putting it behind that channel? Behind that campaign? Behind that asset? How confident are you that it will be a really effective use of our investment?

We've got lots of great effectiveness modelling tools and understanding in the UK, but how can we now transfer that across our other markets and across the group and start to improve? Lastly, how can MediaCom as an organisation predict the media trends, not just amplify or jump on them? How can you help us be much more dynamic and much more reactive to the changing environment of communications planning and serving our customers a little better every day?



6 ways to grow your brand using voice

Voice is the most intuitive form of customer interaction. MediaCom's BLINK team explains how you can use it to grow your brand

Illustration **Andrea Manzati**

Voice isn't the future, it's now. As Natural Language Processing evolves so our dependence on a voice-activated world is growing. Speech recognition error rates are now at human parity at just 5%, according to Microsoft.

Google predicts that by 2020 50% of all search queries will be made via voice. Furthermore, social barriers to entry such as 'embarrassment' (i.e. I don't want to sit in Starbucks instructing my phone to run my bath) will evaporate.

As a result, Gartner estimates that brands who redesign their websites to support visual and voice search will increase digital commerce revenue by 30% by 2021.

Google's Voice Assistant - Duplex - supports more than 30 languages (watch the YouTube clip of the unveiling in May 2018). Microsoft's call centre solution is already able to transcribe conversations more accurately than a team of humans.

With consumers gaining confidence in interacting with these platforms - both voice-enabled digital assistants and the voice-enabled speakers - brands need to embrace the interface now.

One way they can do this is by building voice experiences accessible through voice assistants. Domino's, for example, has taken advantage of this in the UK, making ordering pizza easier from Alexa.

Alternatively, brands can develop voice capabilities within their owned assets. This could be within the products themselves (e.g. voice activated white goods) or even within the packaging. Brands can also look to build products that complement existing voice systems. Bose has done this with smart speakers that boost the volume and the quality of the music customers listen to.

Success in the voice arena means remembering six things:

1 Find the right micro-moments

Identify the brief but powerful opportunities that will reduce pain points or friction in your consumers' lives. As customer journeys now undulate in ways that give us more opportunities to interact, track down all the 'I-want-to-know', 'I-want-to-go', 'I-want-to-buy', and 'I-want-to-do' moments where your brand can be useful. This will help you define the primary use cases you need to develop for. Never forget the 'Why'.

2 Remember speech is emotional

The human brain will naturally respond to voice with a stronger emotional reaction than from text, so maximise this. Conversational interaction is not just about information retrieval. Yes, users want to know your company's address or about a feature of your product, but increasingly they are also looking for help with getting things done - like scheduling an appointment, buying an item or getting customised advice, for example. Move past passive information provision and focus on enabling user actions in an intuitive, engaging way.

3 Develop a persona

The intimacy of voice means brands can be sublimely creative at building a fully developed brand personality. Be consistent with, but do evolve, your established brand identity, ensuring you consider the gender, age and tone sensitively. Be aware of local market nuances too. Also, think about the potential twists and turns of the conversation and craft clever reactions and interactions. Don't forget to form POVs on unrelated topics such as jokes or politics. Go beyond functional information. >



4 Optimise your content Use algorithm optimisation to make sure voice assistants surface their skills or actions. And don't forget that to be truly assistive you need to be everywhere your user is. User journeys may cross devices shifting from voice to keyboard, from Siri to browser, for instance, if requesting cinema listings so consider the journey flow and optimise for multiple contexts and settings.

5 Shout about it Once you've invested in voice you need to promote it. The most successfully adopted skills or voice apps are those promoted through fully integrated campaigns consistently routing potential consumers to activate and engage with your brand's voice.

6 Be useful If you're not using voice to be useful there's no point. Whether it's building a skill to entertain the kids with Lego competitions on a rainy day or a toothbrush timer that tells stories for two minutes so the kids do indeed brush that long, be sure you satisfy a consumer need. If you are, you'll create a spark that will hopefully lead to regular engagement and re-use. Don't be too gimmicky, however. Time-short consumers will quickly tire of novelty.

If you care about growth, being an early adopter brand on voice is vital. Now is the time to capitalise on this inevitable behavioural shift. Get it right and you'll see customer satisfaction improve, touchpoints expand and revenue increase.

As humanity and technology collide, you have the power to shape tomorrow today and deepen your customer relationships like never before. ✕

CASE STUDY

Lo Chingón Está Aquí

Starting a movement to celebrate Mexico's melting pot of cultures

Client **AB InBev, Cerveza Victoria**

Market **MediaCom Mexico**



STORY

Eighty per cent of Mexicans are "Morenos" – with brown skin. They are the native people of Mexico but had become a marginalised part of Mexican society.

70% of Morenos experience racial discrimination. And they are never featured in advertising.

So Cerveza Victoria started a movement to bring attention to this injustice.

Our campaign started with mobile phone footage of a Western-looking actor berating a director for expecting her to stand behind a Moreno in an advert.

After it was shared 1.5m times in just 19 hours, we released a second video showing the actors coming together and explaining "not all beauty is white – advertising made you believe that."

Cerveza Victoria committed to casting Moreno talent in its advertising in order to foster a climate of inclusivity.

We issued a call for other brands to follow suit, lobbying the Mexican Association of Advertising Agencies to push for industry-level quotas.

RESULTS

More than 14 million Mexicans used #LoChingónEstáAquí and mentioned Cerveza Victoria – we were the number 2 trending topic globally.

Cerveza Victoria boosted its share of voice by 40% – 10% above target – and achieved its best-ever monthly sales.

But, most significantly, sales shot up 12% year-on-year.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

- Festival of Media Global | Gold: Best Launch Campaign
- Festival of Media Global | Gold: Brand Bravery Award
- Festival of Media Global | Silver: Best Use of Content
- M&M Global Awards | Gold: Best Campaign Led by Media



14M
HASHTAG USES

40%
SHARE OF VOICE
INCREASE

Seize technology to enjoy business and personal growth...

Oh yes!



If you want your brand to grow fast, you need to embrace the mayhem of innovation says **Bianca Best**, Managing Director of BLINK and Strategic Partnerships

The future is being incubated at our schools, but in the wrong way. Just ask education guru Ken Robinson, who delivered the stimulating Ted Talk about how schools are killing creativity. He laments an antiquated ethos that enforces learning by rote, an approach that yields little value later 'out in the big wide world' given that our children will enter adult life at the most unpredictable and volatile time in history.

As grown-ups, we also need to adapt to what has been called the age of information, the age of acceleration, the technical revolution and even the second industrial revolution. We need to

be able to handle a pace of change that's unprecedented. The world is pulsing with newness at ludicrously fast speeds. Moore's Law identified in the 1960s that the number of transistors on a chip doubles each year, whilst the cost of production halves. The story of the last six decades has been about our ability to cope with ever greater processing power, available at ever decreasing cost.

The impact on the marketing landscape has been huge. Data and digital are omnipresent, making campaign evaluation tighter and more optimisable than ever. We're engaging with a new breed of consumer who is impatient, discerning, vocal and suffering from mass media bombardment. To

deliver business growth we need to create meaningful moments.

And then there's globalisation. We're more connected, always on and geographical boundaries have been obliterated for bountiful trade and commerce. Scale has become everyday ambition.

But in the words of Thomas Friedman, New York Times technology columnist and best-selling author of Thank You For Being Late, we should not fear today. Conversely, he invites us to step headlong into the mayhem, seizing the opportunity that comes with all this freshness. He states: "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."

Innovating and growing

What does this mean for businesses? It means accepting innovation and adaptability as core cultural imperatives. It means being comfortable with failure. It means 'intra'preneurialism.

Dr Astro Teller, Google X's most-renowned scientist, describes how innovation is necessary for businesses to survive and thrive. "Innovation is a cycle of experimenting, learning, applying knowledge and then assessing success or failure. And when the outcome is failure, that's just a reason to start the cycle again." He implores us to start working differently today.

It's not just about working differently, however. It's about think-

ing differently. It's about adopting a mindset of curiosity, exploration and continual invention. In a world where knowledge sharing is made possible through cloud technologies connecting brains at the blink of two blue ticks in a WhatsApp feed, the ability to spark new ideas is constant. These new ideas create new value. And it's this new value that creates growth.

I see a deep correlation between growth in our companies and growth in each of us individually. When we personally invite collaboration to transcend 'what is' with 'what could be' we become more powerful and collectively more impactful out in the market.

Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella illuminated this last summer with

It's new ideas that create new value. And it's new value that creates new growth

his acquisition of Github, stating: "Developers will be at the centre of solving the world's most pressing challenges. However, the real power comes when every developer can create together, collaborate, share code, and build on each other's work."

That's his personal strategy for pre-eminence in the global digital economy. And we should have a similar plan for our own personal economies. Reid Hoffman, co-founder and chairman of LinkedIn, tells us: "Your life and professional career is in permanent beta. We are all works in progress." In his book, *The Start-Up of You*, he tells us that to succeed professionally today you need to think and act like you're running a start-up.

Embracing network intelligence

If we can embrace the network intelligence we have at our fingertips, through the prolific social networks available, we have the potential to push our impact upwards exponentially. We can access new information when we want it and collaborate immediately to evolve it. But if we can also combine this with bravery, we have a formula for extremely valuable contribution.

These networks give us the potential to harness technology to drive growth across both personal and business realms simultaneously. Now, that is true innovation.

In this new world, I wholeheartedly concur with Ken Robinson, nervous that we're educating children out of their creative capacities. Innovation unequivocally requires creativity and a dash of trial and error. In his words: "If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original."

We should be educating our children and ourselves to embrace failing fast and seize the magnitude of tech-enabled possibilities at our disposal today.

Photo: iStock

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Failure marks a brilliant growth moment. It is not a miserable, flat end, rather the spark of a progressive new beginning.

Bianca Best, Author and Managing Director of BLINK and Strategic Partnerships, MediaCom



How structured innovation drives growth



Structured innovation programmes give you the freedom to experiment and find new growth. **Gulrez 'Gary' Arora**, Global Lead, Launchpad at Mars speaks to MediaCom's Global Director of Innovation **Liam Brennan**



Illustration Martin Azambuja

Although innovation is a powerful force for business success, large companies can sometimes be too slow to adapt. Corporate red tape, endless rounds of approvals and a general fear of failure can contribute to a bureaucratic culture that holds onto ideas and solutions that no longer serve the enterprise and its needs.

That means they miss out on the growth that comes with being first to market with a new media channel, a new way of selling their products and services or new product development.

This is particularly challenging in the marketing space, where consumer shopping behaviour and media consumption has changed rapidly due to technological forces (mobile tech, on-demand media, the growth of e-commerce). >



In recent years, younger brands, such as Uber, Airbnb, Dollar Shave Club and Netflix have all used new technology to disrupt and displace large, traditional corporates who have been slow to change. New brands are also emerging – in every vertical from haircare to mattresses and drinks to snacks – built with new technology at their core and a digital-first mindset.

Being digitally native and data-centric, they are able to compete with traditional market leaders by better understanding the consumer and their path to purchase, reducing friction in the buying process and move at a pace that traditional brands simply cannot match.

Streamlining for success

For large companies to navigate this new world successfully and maintain growth it's essential to streamline work practices and make innovation a daily part of their lives. Structured innovation programmes give them a way of doing that.

Since the summer of 2017, Mars has been running 'Launchpad', a programme which helps it collaborate with technology startups and work in new, agile ways.

The goal is to help Mars brands harness and leverage new technology to stay relevant and reach, engage and convert consumers in a fast-changing, digitally-influenced, world. It works by asking Mars associates to submit a business challenge or identify an opportunity for business growth leveraging data and technology.

Briefs are selected by senior stakeholders at the company such as the Chief Marketing and Chief Customer Officers and then the Launchpad team identify suitable start-ups to work with, before executing a live pilot.

"We review each pilot, scale those that have been successful, and learn from those that weren't," says Gulrez 'Gary' Arora, Global lead on the Mars Launchpad programme. "Currently, we have 30 pilots underway anchored to our priorities around reaching the right consumer at the right time with the right message, immersive and interactive content (voice, chatbots, augmented reality, gaming, etc.) and new ways to drive seamless conversion across multiple channels and platforms."

Proving structured innovation works

Launchpad has already produced several successful pilots for Mars. This includes the development of a new digital commerce platform that allows consumers to virtually gift packets of candy, and the creation of new consumer targeting models built from behavioural, emotional and search data (which have seen media results improve by up to 80%).

Launchpad has also helped Mars build solutions for On-Demand delivery and new models for click-and-collect ordering and use robotics and artificial intelligence to improve in-store stock compliancy and product fulfilment.

"Digital has revolutionised the consumer path to purchase; it's dramatically impacted the behaviours of our consumers as well as retailers. And because this space is ever-changing, we must evolve with the mindset of fail fast, fail cheap," says Arora. "We know not all new ideas work as expected and the key is for us to capture learnings and share across our brands and geographies. With Launchpad, it's about discovering what's possible, connecting the dots, and turning hypotheses into knowledge rapidly and inexpensively."

The dangers of losing control

Of course, these sorts of innovation programmes don't come without challenges. Strong expertise without culture fit is a recipe for disaster, and employees can become quickly disengaged by organisational resistance and the lack of support within key areas of the business. The recipe for success is to bring the outside in – hire experts, partner with the disruptors, and invest heavily in helping them to build a network and understand the culture, but also operate outside of normal company bounds.

"Because Launchpad has its own funding and support structure within our business, it gives us the freedom to take risks. The most important thing is that we are constantly analysing and assessing our performance, to ensure we improve our innovation playbook for next time," says Arora. "There is so much change that even a company as big as Mars can't find the smartest solutions as quickly as we need them. But by working with startups, embracing collaboration, we are letting our associates benefit from the strength of our existing culture, alongside outside expertise."

The main benefit of working with startups is creating a culture of agility, and that should include the ability to take an innovation – along with new features, products and services you create with it – to market as rapidly as possible. Long-term value is also created for the start-ups by giving them a platform to sharpen their product, scale globally, and often a mutually beneficial partnership with a larger brand.

Building bespoke programmes

Over the past two years, the MediaCom BLINK team has been working with clients, such as Mars, to help develop, shape and manage tech-focused innovation agendas designed to solve critical business challenges, navigate emerging technologies, and help drive growth for the future.

The best innovation programmes are tailored to the needs of specific companies and built to deliver innovation against their KPIs, which means even the failures teach them about their core areas of concern.

These programmes bring innovation to large corporates at the speed of today's technological change. Once proven they can then be rolled out across the wider company landscape, bringing growth to the whole company.



Creativity = data + imagination + empathy



The best answers for brand growth will come from a combination of imagination, speculation and focus on data, says MediaCom UK's Chief Transformation Officer, **Sue Unerman**

Illustration Jack Bedford



There's a reason that organisations that have real diversity thrive. It is not just a tick-box exercise. It's the synthesis of people with differences in opinion, personality and thinking. It's the ultimate "Avengers Assemble" team (as WPP UK country manager Karen Blackett puts it).

These teams are not groups of people who love hanging out together (they may do, they may not). They are teams whose natural inclination is to go in different directions, to go at different paces and with different motivations. Whose behaviours don't fit one nicely orchestrated corporate values box. But who come together with a single goal. In our case, it's to grow our clients' business.

It's a rare person who combines the best of what used to be described as left-brain and right-brain thinking. The geographical concept of the brain may be out of date, but you all know what I mean. Imagination and speculation, combined with forensic concentration on data. The best answers for brand growth will come from such a combination. And such a combination requires a diverse team working together.

Data understanding alone gets you only to the halfway mark of great thinking. Imagination and empathy take you the rest of the way to brilliance.

When people bemoan the split of creative and media, they're probably talking about this. And whatever building people sit in, there is a need to combine good concrete data analysis – including a robust understanding of the difference between correlation and causation – with the ability to dream, to confabulate, to tell stories.

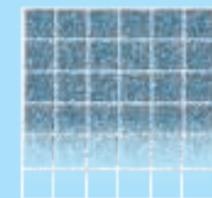


In the end, imagination is what the planner must use to fill in the gaps between data points.

Let me give you one example of a food brand whose data team found that discount offers performed significantly better (and against expectations) if served to potential customers the night before rather than immediately before use. They of course immediately doubled down on serving messages at this time, and there was a great hike in the short-term response.

This is interesting, but not as interesting as the "why". Why is this the case? And what is its impact? The discount in question wasn't a large one and the food brand was in the mass-market category. Let's use that one data point to imagine the customer. As is so often the case, there was no budget for more research.

The coupon was being predominantly taken up by people who were properly budgeting for their lunches and who were planning ahead. So far, so interesting. There's so much more, though. For any great team, the nugget of data could be used to not just drive the creative execution of that offer, but to feed into broader creative development, strategic positioning



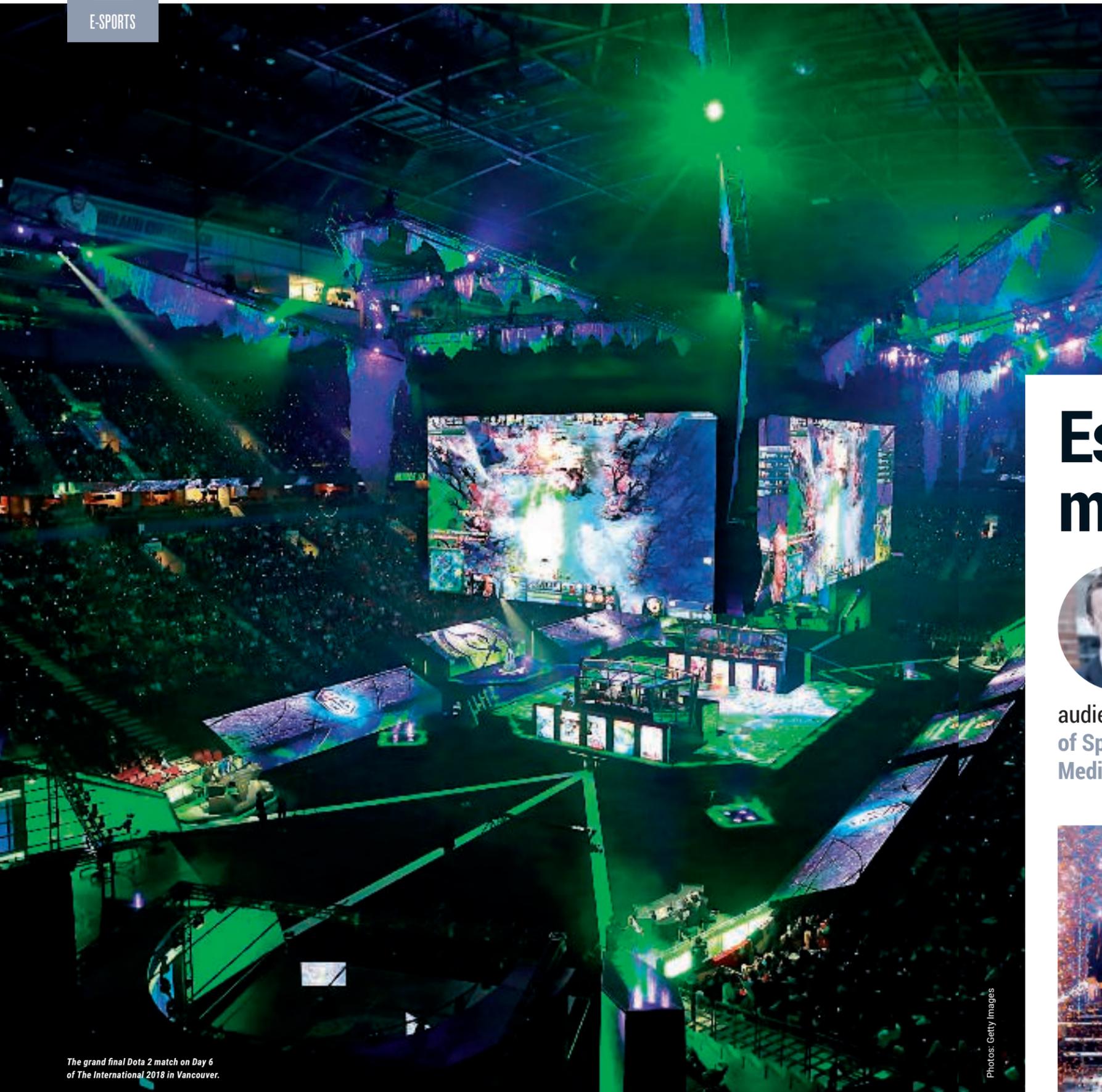
of the brand, menus and service values of the organisation. Maybe a new type of offer would suit this customer segment's lifestyle – for example, five lunches for the price of three to ensure careful budgeters commit to one food outlet, thus breaking category norms to drive loyalty and repeat business.

What else can we imagine from this one data point? How can we empathise with this audience? (And for the true meaning of empathy, see Dave Trott's blog, "Sympathy v empathy"). If buyers are planning weekday meals carefully, are they budgeting for a blowout at the weekend? Would a partnership with a glossy magazine be a great move, so that the frugality has an upside, with some affordable luxury? Or the chance to win tickets to an ITV Saturday night show?

It's one tiny bit of data that could so easily be siloed in a direct marketing team. One tiny bit of data that could lead to a brand growth transformation. In tough, competitive times, no nugget of data should go unexamined, because true creativity means data analytics combined with imagination and empathy. ✕

This article first appeared in Campaign.

It's a rare person who combines the best of what used to be described as left- and right-brain thinking



The grand final Dota 2 match on Day 6 of The International 2018 in Vancouver.

Photos: Getty Images

Esports goes mainstream



Millions tune in every day to compete and watch esports. But how can brands win with these growing audiences? Misha Sher, Vice President of Sports and Entertainment at MediaCom, explains...

Imagine being in a stadium packed with tens of thousands of screaming fans glued to their seats, mesmerised by the talents battling it out to be the best team in the world. If you're thinking this is the World Cup final or the Super Bowl, you'd be wrong.

In fact, this is a new kind of sport which has taken the world by storm: esports organised multiplayer video game competitions. According to NewZoo, the global esports economy is estimated to be valued in the region of \$900m this year, up 38.2% on 2017, and predicted to reach \$1.65b by 2021.

This is big money and tournament prizes already stretch into the tens of millions. In fact, in 2018,

Dota 2 International, the world's biggest esports tournament, offers \$25m in prize money. Put into perspective, the winner of the Tour de France, the 100-year-old cycling competition, gets just \$2.5m.

Esports has become mainstream for consumers and players but it remains new territory for many brands.

Understanding esports

Many marketers still think gamers are a bunch of nerds playing in their parents' basements. The reality couldn't be further from the truth. Professional esports teams train 8-10 hours a day, have coaches and nutritionists and receive salaries like other sports people.

What makes esports different from traditional sports though is the audience: millions of tech-savvy, affluent and highly engaged millennials. These are people who have become all but unreachable through traditional media and advertising.

While these millennials have taken control of their media consumption by deleting cookies, using private browsers and blocking ads, esports gives marketers a way to reach them.

While the initial sponsors of esports tournaments were pretty native – think energy drinks and hardware brands – in the last 18 months, we've started to see mainstream brands enter the space. Mercedes-Benz, Gillette, Coca-Cola, LG, Mastercard, Unilever and Snickers have all invested advertising dollars and Nike has just signed a global endorsement deal with a League of Legends star, Jian Zihao.

This trend is only going to accelerate as the genre grows but right now the level of investment remains relatively cheap compared to traditional sports. The added benefit of getting in while the industry is still developing is that the early runners and riders will enjoy the biggest benefits in the longer term.

Engaging with esports

If your brand's desired audience consists of tech-savvy, affluent millennials then it would be negligent not to consider how esports can play a role in your marketing and communications mix.

To have a chance of building trust and equity with these audiences, however, your brand needs to go well beyond exposure and the typical spots and dots. As marketers, you need to ask yourself: what you can bring to the table that will benefit the viewers, the players, and the games? The esports community is eager and open to welcome brands into the fold – just so long as they bring value to the equation.

Time spent planning or thinking innovatively will be rewarded because first impressions are everything as esports fans can be unforgiving if they feel a brand is in it for themselves. One brand that has authentically leveraged its presence within esports is Gillette. The male grooming brand teamed up with ESL, one of the largest tournaments, to reach a younger male audience. Adopting an experiential approach, the brand offered to groom the players and gave fans the chance to personalise razor handles using a 3D printer.

Unilever brand, Axe Hair, meanwhile, collaborated with Cloud9, one of the leading esports organisations, following players on the road, capturing digital and print content around the players' matchday styling routines.

The esports ecosystem is new and fast evolving and will be unfamiliar to many. Knowing

where to invest and how to execute can appear daunting. Your agency can help with navigation and identifying the right audience and event.

The key to getting esports right is to ask where the sweet spot is for a brand in your vertical and develop a clear strategy around that. The space is there to own, you just need to work out how to play the game. ☒

\$25M

Dota 2 International, the world's biggest esports tournament prize money

\$2.5M

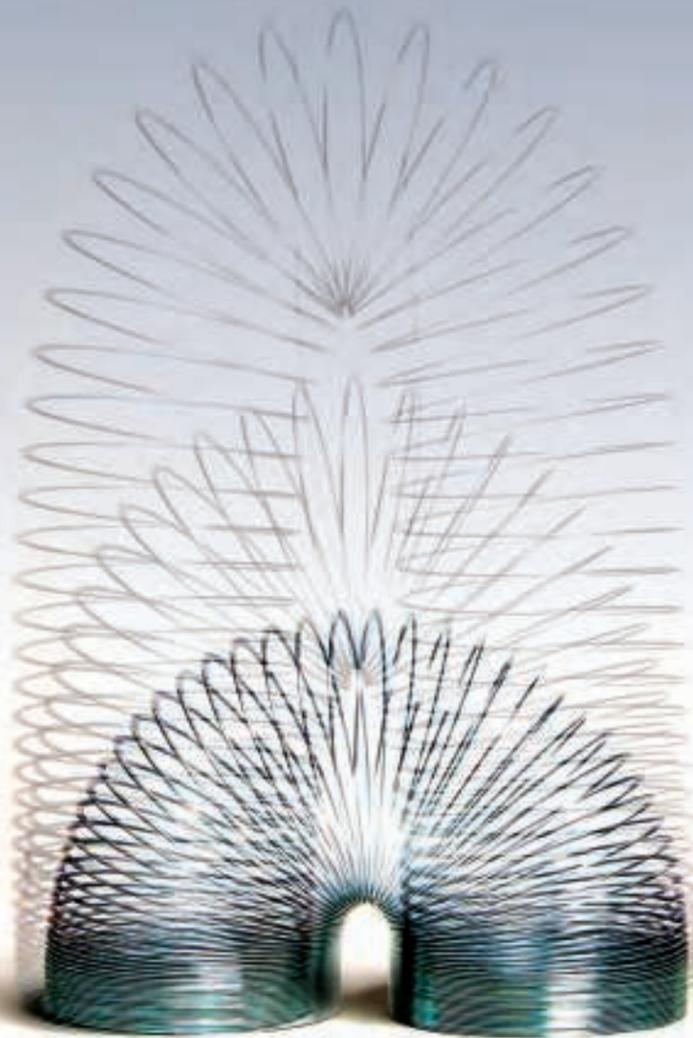
Tour de France 2018 prize money



“ ”

Growth begins outside our comfort zone.

Syl Saller, Chief Marketing and Innovation Officer, Diageo



When we think about India and ‘influencers’, we often think Bollywood and sporting celebrities. True, the country has no Zoella or Chiara Ferragni, but the pattern of influence is changing and dramatically moving away from the old celebrity clichés.

Instead, a vibrant new sector is slowly emerging. Social media content creators, driven by their obsession with food or comedy, are starting to appear at enough scale to enable a new kind of influencer campaign.

This is a huge opportunity for brands looking to grow in this market, despite the comparatively low levels of penetration. Right now just 25% of Indian adults use the internet, according to Pew Research and social media usage is even lower.

That’s partly because social media penetration is rising (Statista says it should reach 371m by 2022, up from 142m in 2015) and those currently in the loop are predominantly young and urban consumers (Mumbai and Delhi are hotspots). It seems influencers and social media are already changing the way India makes its purchase decisions.

The direct nature of the communication between influencer and fan makes this a powerful channel both at the research stage and for the final stage of the purchase journey.

Data cited by influencer marketing expert Gaurav Singh Bisen, reveals that:

86% of Indian women will look at social networks before making a purchase

71% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase based on social media

86% of the most viewed beauty videos on YouTube were made by influencers

Those kind of numbers are the reason why nine out of 10 marketers in India planned to run at least one influencer marketing campaign in 2018. >



India’s influencer evolution



India’s influencer market is evolving beyond Bollywood but there’s still a long way to go. **Ana Thorsdottir**, Head of Influencer Marketing Strategy at MediaCom, explains

Photo: Getty Images

Bollywood vs the creators

While the biggest numbers are still to be found in Bollywood – last year, Forbes India named Bollywood’s Salman Khan as the number one social media celebrity in the country – other types of influencer with reasonable scale also exist.

Sometimes dubbed macro influencers, these are professional bloggers, video content creators or creatives of multiple mediums. They feed rising consumer demand in areas such as comedy and take consumers beyond celebrity lifestyle and updates on the latest movie-type content. Typically their follower counts are in the hundreds of thousands rather than the millions that can be delivered by celebrity accounts.

Nikunj Lotia, part of BeYou Nick, and a popular Indian comedian, for example, posts weekly YouTube videos in Hindi with English subtitles and regularly gets more than 1m views.



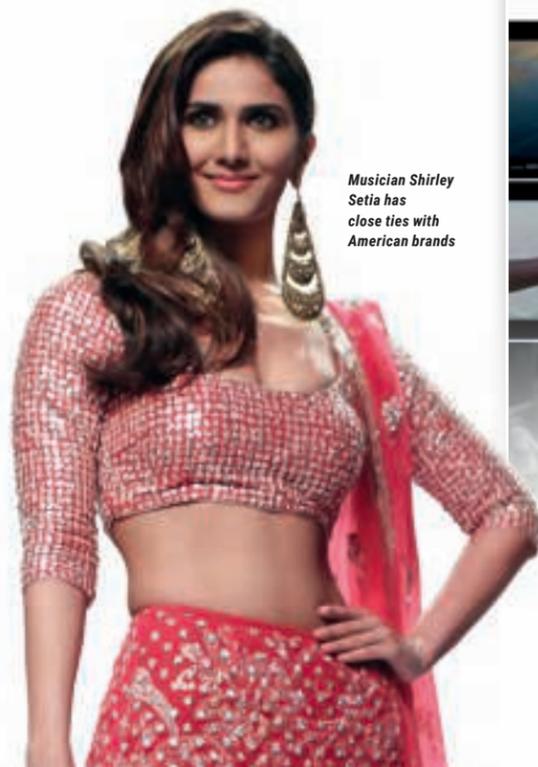
Comedian Nikunj Lotia's YouTube videos regularly get more than 1m views

Macro influencers feed rising demand in areas such as comedy and take consumers beyond celebrity lifestyle content

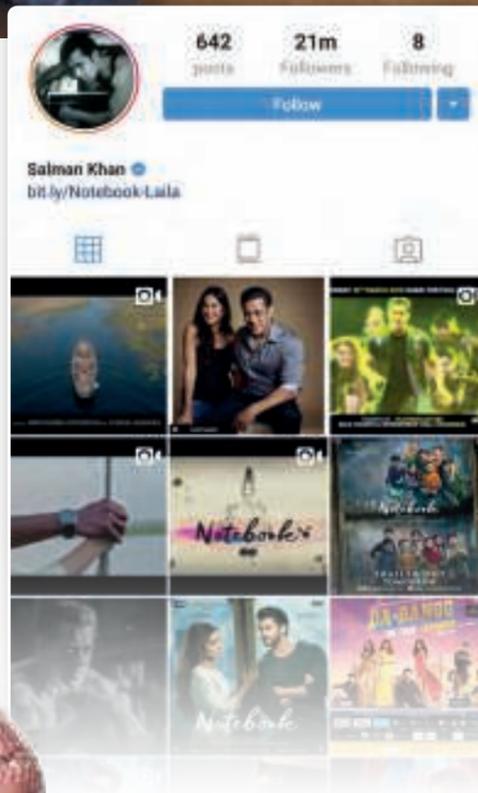
Some are diversifying and expanding beyond one discipline or channel. Musician Shirley Setia is a good example of a varied content creator and has close ties with American businesses and stars like Marshmello.

At an even smaller level, there are also micro-influencers who have between 1,000 to 100,000 followers but have developed high levels of trust and daily direct communication with their audience. For brands, this means they can often achieve up to 30% engagement per post.

What we are seeing now is the slow evolution of an ecosystem focused on key audience passion points such as food, comedy, music and travel.



Musician Shirley Setia has close ties with American brands



Successful influencer partnerships

With the market still developing in India, here are six tips to ensure successful influencer partnerships:

- 1/ Ensure the influencer you select is a good 'fit' for your brand. This is not just a data exercise but also requires that subjective factors are taken into account.
- 2/ Ensure influencers understand the creative direction of the campaign but let them be themselves. That means letting them generate content ideas but also signing off proposed video treatments in advance.
- 3/ There are more than a hundred different languages and dialects spoken across India so ensure video content is subtitled if it needs to travel across the country.
- 4/ Make the partnership public right from the start. Encourage influencers to interact with their audience about it. This could involve asking subscribers for suggestions on how to create relevant content, for example. This approach makes the audience feel much more part of the content, creating a more authentic, collaborative and engaging experience.
- 5/ Be aware of additional production costs such as videographers, editors and props. It's quite common for Indian influencers to come with a crew, which is not that common in European markets.
- 6/ Measure the impact. These will depend on campaign objectives and it's worth flagging them up to influencer partners, so they know what they are accountable for. But they will include awareness measures such as the number of impressions, total reach and number of views; engagement measures such as average video retention rate, average video duration and interaction percentages; as well as saliency measures like traffic driven to the desired destination, the sentiment analysis of their comments and follower interaction with the content.

Photos: Getty Images, Istock



Social media penetration is highest among young and urban consumers. Mumbai is an influencer hotspot

Looking at the recent stats, and based on our experience working with top tier influencers in India in 2018, it's clear that the market is still maturing. But India is catching up and brands should remember that they can get higher value

for their small budgets here than in Europe or the USA. With social media usage rapidly growing in India, we're going to see even more content creators emerging and growing here, and it's an exciting market to observe in this space. ❖

adidas

Simon Peel, Global Media Director, adidas

MEDIACOM In 2015, you launched your 'Creating the new' strategy, which was defined as an accelerator for growth to the year 2020. Now you are more than halfway through your programme, what have you achieved so far? What are you most proud of?

SIMON PEEL The business strategy has been a great success. It's seen adidas share price quadruple, its revenue and profits increase almost double-digit YOY and a greater focus throughout the organisation. Perhaps the thing we are all most proud of is that the business focussed on its long-term brand values, which clearly then beneficially affected growth.

MEDIACOM What does the next level of growth look like for adidas?

SIMON PEEL Currently, adidas is focused on efficiencies and how they align with the effectiveness derived from the business strategy. This is essentially looking into how we blend both short-term and long-term business effects.

MEDIACOM What are the challenges you need to meet in order to get there?

SIMON PEEL The first is not to become overly obsessed with short-term efficiencies at the expense of long-term effectiveness. What this means is ensuring the business strategy that created the



growth adidas experienced, is not compromised. And that the brand doesn't retract.

The second is to ensure metrics don't become the sole goal. The metrics we align ourselves to are there as a proxy to growth. Not the goal in itself.

The final challenge is aligning teams internally who have different objectives, KPIs and understandings of what drives growth. So that we are all pushing in the same direction, rather than against ourselves.

MEDIACOM What would success look like for you (and us) in the future?

SIMON PEEL For both adidas and the MediaCom team that works on our account, success is to keep driving the right approach forward. It's important not to cave to easier options or rest on our laurels.

MEDIACOM How can MediaCom and GroupM help you achieve these growth ambitions?

SIMON PEEL By being honest and brave with us. Not giving into pressures that deliver short-term goals alone. They are obviously important. But we need to always remember and promote what got adidas the growth in the first place – a focus on the long-term health of the brand. ❌



5 ways for brands to succeed in social commerce



Leon Zhang,
General Manager,
National Head of
Social Media at
MediaCom China

Illustration Mitch Blunt

Social media and e-commerce are both growing sectors in internet marketing. What happens when we combine them, and what are the best ways for brands to get started with social commerce?

In recent years, brands in China have become very interested in social commerce. China's social commerce market is estimated to be worth RMB ¥1.14 trillion in 2018, growing to a staggering ¥3 trillion by 2020.

An indicator for future growth, social commerce is also being supported by government policy. The 13th Five-Year Plan for the Development of E-Commerce issued by the State Council in December 2016 actively encouraged business models based around social media networks, while a series of other relevant policies and regulations have created a favourable environment for the development of social commerce in China.

The term 'social commerce' refers to a model derived from engaging in e-commerce in social media environments. More specifically, this model involves using social media formats to acquire and interact with customers; for example, by showing and sharing products (thereby encouraging them to complete purchases online).

The essential difference between this model and traditional e-commerce is that it is based on trust built through social media. Trust is the foundation of gaining customers and driving sales, so as social commerce is inherently based on trust within communities and acquaintances, it has major advantages in this regard.

There are three types of platforms in the social commerce ecosystem:

Commercialised social media platforms

(e.g. WeChat Commerce (Weishang), which is based on WeChat, and influencer-based e-commerce)

"Socialised" e-commerce platforms

(e.g. Taobao KOLs (Taobao Daren) and Taobao Live Broadcasting (Taobao Zhibo))

Independent social commerce platforms

(e.g. group buying e-commerce and content-based social commerce)

Brands can engage with these platforms in a number of different ways. To succeed in social commerce, the following five tactics could be considered:



1/ USE THE CLOSED LOOP FROM E-COMMERCE TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND BACK TO E-COMMERCE

User behaviour data from e-commerce platforms is used to guide the precise targeting of ads on the social media side. High-potential customers are then taken through a process that brings them to the e-commerce side. End-to-end performance being tracked throughout the process.

All major social media and e-commerce platforms support this aspect. For example, Tencent and JD.com's 'Jing-Teng Plan' and Alibaba and Weibo's 'U-Wei Plan' initiatives have made use of their platform data to establish strong foundations for this method.

This method is also easier for brands that are moving into social commerce because it still consists of media placement and e-commerce traffic flows, which are both mainstream brand marketing methods. Consequently, a brand can effectively increase its overall marketing conversion rates with just a small step.

If we take an automotive accessory brand as an example, e-commerce platform users will exhibit behaviour such as searching for keywords like 'branded car accessories' and following/liking or purchasing related products. These users are potential customers, so by accessing back-end data,

Talking up subjects or events can turn a particular product into a hit product

it is possible to match these user groups to corresponding users on social media platforms and then use lookalike methods to expand social media user groups and place ads with a high degree of precision.

This relatively straightforward ad placement consists of little more than using social media behavioural data to precisely place ads, but it generally achieves better results – and if the relevant users are taken to the e-commerce platform, they are more likely to end up purchasing. Platform data can then be used to track effectiveness from the social media side to the e-commerce side, like, for example, the conversion rates from social media ad impressions to e-commerce store browsing/bookmarking.

2/ ONLINE INFLUENCERS PROMOTING PRODUCTS THROUGH E-COMMERCE

Many online influencers have their own stores and use their influence to promote products to their fan base, guiding their audience to make purchases at their own influencer store. Data from Weibo shows that the platform hosts over 35,000 e-commerce KOLs with over 910 million followers.

Some of the better known online influencers in China, such as Zhang Dayi and Xue Li, are household names and are good examples of how online influencers can become e-commerce stars. On Singles' Day (November 11) 2017, sales of four online influencers' stores exceeded ¥100 million.

Brands can work with online influencers by providing products – usually limited edition or custom products – that can be used for promotion or sales.



For example, in July 2018, Givenchy partnered with fashion blogger Gogoboi. Gogoboi posted an advertising message on his WeChat account and drove users to purchase: 42 Givenchy Duetto handbags in seven different colours were sold out at a price of ¥7,490 per bag in 72 hours. The platform carrying these items was Gogoboi's own e-commerce site "Bu Da Jing Xuan", an online mall adapted for use with WeChat, effectively making Gogoboi a Givenchy distributor.

The reason that online influencers are able to promote products and drive sales so effectively stems from the trust they have built with their fan base over the long term through their choices and recommendations. The thinking behind this type of partnership model is different from that of conventional 'hard advertising' (i.e. traditional print media and TV) and can only be put into practice and achieve good results through in-depth collaborations where both parties benefit.

Advertising messages posted on WeChat by influencers like Gogoboi are highly effective sales drivers



3/ CREATING HIT PRODUCTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO DRIVE OVERALL SALES

The use of social media marketing as a way of talking up subjects or events can make a particular product into a hit product. The hit product then attracts platform users to the e-commerce store or even physical stores and can bring in traffic and drive further sales of related products.

One example is 'Zang Zang Bao' (or 'Dirty Pastries'), a chocolate pastry bakery product. The product really took off when people started sharing pictures of their chocolate-covered faces on social. Hey Tea, too, a Chinese tea brand, made excellent use of this method as well. While it would be very difficult for most brands to achieve the level of sales Zang Zang Bao and Hey Tea have managed, this type of thinking can still be an effective way to drive sales.

Looking at hit products in the market, particularly those which are food related, a number of characteristics are immediately apparent:



They have distinctive features and memorable aspects

For example, the name Zang Zang Bao ('Dirty Pastries') has a strangely appealing dissonance.

They use humour

Social media consists of inherently fragmented scenarios, and any content that makes people laugh creates a strong impression. For example, a nut snacks product 'Baba Guazi's' slogan "taking a bite makes you calm down" is a popular catchphrase among young people today.

They use hot topics, celebrities or online influencers

Making use of people or events that generate their own traffic can be enormously helpful in terms of the effectiveness of campaigns.

They are fundamentally good products

Consumers are discerning; if the product is not good enough, marketing becomes a manipulative exercise that will ultimately have a negative impact on word-of-mouth and repeat customers.

4/ COMMUNITY MARKETING AND E-COMMERCE

Communities, such as WeChat groups, are founded on trust that has been built up between community leaders and community members over time. So, when the community leader offers the members appropriate benefits or interactions, conversion rates are generally higher than those achieved using conventional advertising methods.

This provides an opportunity for community e-commerce, as the relatively deep interactions between community leaders and members can be combined with exclusive benefits provided by brands to effectively stimulate community interaction, guide traffic and achieve sales. An increasing number of brands are adopting this method, particularly those in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), fashion, and computing, communication and consumer electronics (3C) sectors.

5/ SOCIAL INTERACTIONS ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS

Social interactions on e-commerce platforms can be used to drive product sales. For example, the content generated by Taobao KOLs (Taobao Daren) appears in many locations on the Taobao mobile app homepage, and actually, most of the content in sections on Taobao app homepage is contributed by Taobao KOLs.

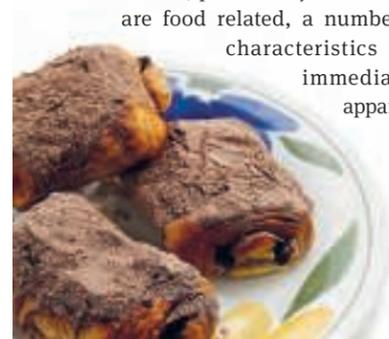
Another example is Taobao Live Broadcasting (Taobao Zhibo), where the process of live streaming social interactions creates a variety of points of entry through which consumers can be induced to purchase products. As such, content and social interactions take place on the e-commerce platform, so they are already a step closer to the purchase. This also provides many opportunities for brands to collaborate, for example, through content placement.

Similar trends are also present in other countries. Examples include Amazon Influencer Program, which provides a self-service tool for popular influencers. Qualified influencers get their own customised Amazon page, and when customers purchase products on the pages they share, the influencer gets a commission. Similar e-commerce influencer methods with commissions have actually been around for a long time, but this official move by Amazon provides further evidence of the e-commerce giant's confidence in social commerce and its future potential.

The methods described above are just some of the ways to win with social commerce. As the social commerce industry develops we'll continue to see new sources of energy and inspiration for brand marketing and sales. ✖

A version of this article was originally published by Forbes China.

Photos: Getty Images, iStock



Final thoughts

Without a growth mindset, transformation is painful and difficult. But with a growth mindset, you have a better chance of delivering growth, both personally and for your organisation. Here are three paths to consider for growth in 2019.

1/ Can you find a way to get existing customers to buy more? This might be through product or service innovation. It might be by streamlining the customer journey, opening new paths to purchase or as simple as reducing website load times or making the "buy now" button a bit bigger.

2/ Could you target more people? Customer segmentation is still very predominant. But it can go too far. Read Byron Sharp's How Brands Grow for a point of view that would insist on food and drink brands targeting anyone with a mouth, skincare brands targeting anyone with a face and entertainment brands targeting anyone with time for leisure.

3/ Become famous for what you're good at. Fame is often dismissed as showy or extravagant. Yet real front of mind and spontaneous awareness is worthwhile. Getting talked about for the right reasons isn't easy, but it does pay back, and an integrated strategy – integrated through the line and throughout the customer journey, from awareness to repeat purchase – is essential to this. This works on a personal level, too. Work out what you're great at. Double down in that area and make that your focus for fame.

Is anything or anyone certain in 2019? The only certainty is that a growth mindset is essential.

*Sue Unerman,
Chief Transformation Officer,
MediaCom UK*



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