

# Unified, consistent messaging and the digital media fit

Back in the day, markets were conversations. They were thriving community meeting places and there was direct communication between buyers and the sellers. Here, people shared experiences and opinions with each other, gave direct feedback, and received immediate responses. Then there was a shift, and with that shift, came mass production and supermarkets. Consequently, the direct link of communication was severed.



Communication is the passing of thoughts, messages or opinions between one or more entities. When this communication was immediate and direct there was no opportunity for the story that the seller was telling to be misinterpreted.

This was a great way to do business. The buyer had to come to the market and all the information that was needed was available right there, and right then. A buyer would take their time to consider what it was they wanted, ask the questions they needed to, and got an immediate response.

Fast forward to the frantic pace of today however, and we find that this kind of trading has been severely interrupted. Now, everywhere a consumer looks, their attention is demanded.

As a result, brands, products and services need to communicate with their potential and existing market place through a variety of cluttered, oversubscribed spaces. It is therefore essential to ensure that the communication being put out there is recognisable and consistent.

## Integrated marketing communications

It's no surprise that using a multi-channel approach to communicating a brand message is highly impactful and increases the effectiveness of the communication when you measure this against reach, or frequency. It is for this very reason that brand managers for instance are sold on the idea of integrated marketing communication (as it is so often referred to as). The promise of course is that there will be a unified brand image across all the platforms and great effectiveness as a result. The crux however lies in the implementation - which can make or break these efforts.

There is definitely benefit in a comprehensive strategy that takes into account the value of a number of different mediums - and then evaluates each one to assess where in the overall campaign objectives they will have the best benefit. However, having the channels available and choosing to use them is one thing - ensuring that you manage to achieve clarity, consistency and maximum impact across all of them - another story all together.

## The digital media fit

One channel which clearly resounds as a medium that can pull everything together, is digital. When it comes to digital campaigns however, these are often undertaken as an afterthought or with what little budget there may be left after allocating to the more traditional mediums. Essentially, this is both a sign of the current level of understanding around the effectiveness of digital media by advertisers; and a sign of the level of importance in the media plan/strategy allocated to digital. As a result, the integration of a campaign follows through on some mediums, but often not all the way through to digital.

It is important to understand where, and how, digital fits into the overall picture.

Digital allows the creation and ongoing benefit of one-to-one relationships between organisations and their potential, as well as existing consumers. The main advantages of this are that once the line of communication has been established - a detailed, customised message can be sent to customers and that feedback can be gathered to enhance the experience of the relationship and the product or service. With digital, prospective customers can be identified, and specifically targeted and segmented solutions can be offered accordingly.

## **Strategy and execution**

Strategic marketing communication is as much about the brand as it is about the desired outcome. Building a clear path that centres around the current understanding and perception of a brand in the market place; and considers the current brand performance together with any inconsistency there may or may not be with customer expectation is certainly many times an overlooked process. These perceptions and potential inconsistencies need to be identified alongside the creative execution, the target audience, the right channels in which to reach them, as well as current economic trends.

The critical result of all of these efforts is the execution: consistent, considers activity in other channels, is measurable, and is seen in the right place, and at the right time.

It goes without saying that powerful, recognisable and memorable advertising will, can and does drive sales and move product. The more you understand people, the better you are able to create messaging that moves people. When you move people internally, you are almost certainly guaranteed to see amazing results from your efforts. However, the impact of even the most beautifully crafted message is diluted when the message is fragmented across different mediums, delivered through differing creative executions or not consistent in any way. Understanding the pitfalls and benefits of each medium, and ultimately, what they can achieve vs. the other mediums selected, will ensure results.

## **Digital success**

To succeed in the digital space you need to always keep two things in mind: consumers are savvy. They want to find the information they are looking for quickly, and they want to understand what your business is about. To find that information they need to be led there. We all know the saying, "if you don't know where you are going any road will take you there". Ultimately the point is to make the road lead to you, your company, product or service. With the clutter of marketing messages that a consumer is exposed to, it is essential that your message is consistent - regardless of where it is being seen, read or heard. This means having the same associations with the messaging across the various channels so that when your communication is received, it is understood and it can be tied to the same campaign in order to achieve the objectives initially set.

## **Conclusion**

Information that is consistent in meaning is more easily learned and recalled than unrelated information. It is key to send target audiences a consistent message that promotes the benefits of your company through unifying the marketing tools

you choose

Learn how to attain this consistency and more with digiVOX which has embarked on a series of one-day training workshops in partnership with Bizcommunity.com. The goal of these courses is to provide you and your team with practical strategies and ideas to improve your digital marketing skills as soon as you are back in the office.

## **Art of digital media planning**

The first in the series of workshops is entitled, *The Art of Digital Media Planning*, and is aimed at those responsible for investing marketing budget into the digital space. To be held in Cape Town on 15 October 2009, the workshop will look at each step of digital media marketing, from strategy through to planning and buying, implementation and results.

Adrian Hewlett, chairman of OPA SA, will provide an overview of the face of the South African online market. Andrea Mitchell will share 12 years of online marketing experience and will cover topics such as setting objectives, compiling the media plan, and reporting. André Britz will cover the steps to produce an effective digital media plan, while Jonathan Allan-Barrett will discuss insights regarding unified messages across all platforms, and how to select the right channel to reach objectives.

For more information, go to [www.thestartingline.co.za](http://www.thestartingline.co.za).

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>