

Not even on social media can, or should, a brand be a friend

 By [Natalie Jardine](#)

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After almost a decade of fighting for this, we're finally at a point where CEOs & CFOs have finally cottoned onto the idea that digital is the way of the future, and your communications and marketing strategies need to take this into account.

It's fantastic. Digital communications and activations are finally no longer the last in the line to receive whatever is left over of marketing budgets.

Getting carried away

For those of us who've been fighting to get to this day, It's definitely liberating. Suddenly all these ideas which we've had are feasible. When looking at how we're discharging our digital marketing spend, I'm concerned that we are getting carried away. From an anecdotal basis, however, we're seeing brands pop up in the most peculiar of spaces doing things that are entirely out of step for who they are. With the explosive growth of Snapchat, to give one example, we're already seeing a tsunami of articles professing how brands should use this service.

But putting our marketer hats aside for a second, do we really want our bank sending us pictures or videos which self-delete after 10 seconds?

The basic fact which - suddenly flush with money - we are ignoring, is that not every company needs a blog, presence on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, or whatever other social network is out there.

Even fewer, if we're honest, even need an app. However, a 2013 report from the University of Massachusetts found that 34% of Fortune 500 companies are now actively blogging, 77% maintain active Twitter accounts, 70% have Facebook pages and 69% have YouTube accounts. And even the most casual of social media users will have seen how many companies are trying to "talk to you" at all times wherever you are online.

Communication tools

In our zeal to create communities that are real, engaged, and translate to customer retention or new business leads, we're forgetting that at the end of the day, our corporate social media presences are corporate communications tools.

Look at the critique Dutch airline KLM recently faced when in attempting to be "tactical" it sent out the following message regarding the Dutch football team defeating the Mexican team at the World Cup in Brazil.



The core point to the countless marketers, commentators, and general social media users who took exception to the tweet, was that KLM is not your everyday social media user. While your Joe Bloke may make equally tasteless and insensitive comments, despite its best efforts to be engaging and real, despite its best efforts to not seem to be a "corporate" speaking from on high, KLM is a corporation and will always be judged as one.

This column isn't a hashing out of this saga, but a reminder to marketers that ultimately our brand accounts are still brands and ultimately must behave as such. A joke here and there, or the use of a daring social media tactic or channel may work perfectly for your everyday user, but ultimately - as a brand on social media - you must remember you are engaged in a marketing effort, because you're audience always does.

Digital and social media may have revolutionised how companies and brands communicate to their consumers, however they have not changed the basic rules of marketing.

Social media - or even digital, in general - marketing isn't about re-inventing the wheel, or latching onto every new channel, network, and meme there is out there. It's about doing what you've always done, being careful and considerate when connecting brands to people, only just on digital platforms.

ABOUT NATALIE JARDINE

I've been in media marketing for (what feels like) ages. I believe that the best-performing companies - in any industry - spend time and money on expert internal communication. I also like to drink Sauvignon Blanc, voice my opinion on the local music scene and cause havoc at the poker table.

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