

Blended and connected marketing Why harnessing Web 2.0 techniques demands changing your classic marketing

Digital Insight Report
October 2007

It's time for a change in marketing. We've seen periods of change before, but never on the scale now needed. The legacy of the first digital decade includes placing the absolute control of media in the hands of the audience, the removal of frictions in the access to knowledge, the capturing of conversations, a step-change in the scale of media fragmentation, and the arrival of whole new paradigms in communication. The pace remains daunting, and yet any brand failing to adapt, is assured to fail. Many classic marketing channels continue, but a new type of blended, connected marketing is called for. The arrival of social media, online social networks and the Web 2.0 era demands marketers rethink their approach even more.

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Introduction

Massive social and technical change demands a new type of blended, connected marketing.

It's time for a change in marketing. We've seen periods of change many times before, but never on the scale now needed. The legacy of the first digital decade includes placing the absolute control of media in the hands of the audience, the removal of frictions in the access to knowledge, the capturing of conversations and opinions from all stakeholders in ways unimaginable ten years before, a step-change in the scale of media fragmentation, and the arrival of whole new paradigms in communication. It's a whirlwind of change, at a pace that remains daunting, yet any brand failing to adapt, is assured to fail. Many classic marketing channels continue, but a new type of blended, connected marketing is called for.

Since 2000, we have been talking about the digital networked society and the implications for firms as their sectors make the transition. Our Digital Insight Reports explore patterns within these changes and provide some simple navigation to successfully make the transition.

Speed read

- The rapid pace of technological and social change impacting on marketers continues
- Rather than change being a gradual process, there is often a sudden crossing point
- The switch in audience focus and time is just the start of the process
- The impact of digital marketing forces a reappraisal of the existing marketing mix
- Social media, online communities and social networks have created new environments for communications that demand new types of responses
- Integrated marketing is now more strategic, harnessing the core strengths of each of the channels rather than simply distributing the same message
- There are several questions to ask yourself when using social media
- In the new era of blended marketing, not only the mix of channels changes, but the relationship between them needs to be rebuilt
- There are simple pragmatic steps you can take to blending your marketing together
- The future is less opaque than many think: many trends are now clear



Analyst's profile:

Danny Meadows-Klue has been a researcher and commentator in the digital networked industries since 1995. He managed the UK's first online newspaper - The Daily Telegraph - and has helped run web businesses ranging from social media and mass market portals to online stores, magazines, search and email services. He is the co-founder of the UK and European IABs, held their presidencies for four years, and has been lecturing on digital media and marketing for more than a decade.

“In the digital networked society, the mix of communications is radically different. Control moves into the hands of the audience, and brands need new approaches to achieve reach, recognition and respect. We're still in the early stages of transition, but smart marketers are already recasting their approach to place participatory marketing, social media, and the digital channels at the core of how they talk with customers. From professional services to a mass market consumer products, the media mix of 2010 is unrecognisable to that of 2000. The challenge for our transition generation is knowing how to get there.”

Understanding change

Crossing points: change is not gradual

Seven years ago, on a hot and dry afternoon, I found myself rummaging around under desks in a stark concrete basement at the end of a neglected corridor, under a hospital in Addis Ababa. We were laying Ethernet cables next to the pathology lab, connecting the first computing network, in the first computing room, of Ethiopia's first teaching hospital. It was one of Digital's early corporate social responsibility projects, and although I was there to think about what would come down these telecoms pipes, without them in place, nothing much was going anywhere. In the Horn of Africa things take longer than you expect, and normally need more effort than you can imagine, but the results can be far more rewarding than you dare suspect.

A few weeks later the British Medical Journal poured down those pipes and onto screens across the computing room. Doctors, students, researchers, and stray NGO workers were suddenly connected to what I have been calling ever since "the digital networked society".

It's hard not to overstate the significance of the crossing point we witnessed that day. Ethiopia's entire internet connectivity may have only been eight times faster than the local connection from a house to a street back in London, but in that moment a chasm had been crossed. Suddenly the teams in Addis had at their fingertips much of the knowledge of a London research institute; the tears and excitement on senior doctors' faces is something I still cherish, and still don't feel justified in sharing – after all, I was just helping some guys connect the cables.

“The web knocks down barriers we've all taken as unmoveable. It removes frictions in the movement of knowledge with scant regard for geography, professional memberships, copyright or comprehension of the receiver.”

What followed is familiar to everyone: email, search engines, directories, online journals, discussion forums – almost frictionless access to knowledge. That is the scale of change the medical industry has had to come to terms with in Africa, and the example makes for a neat microcosm of wider trends that every sector is going through. The web knocks down barriers we've all taken as unmoveable. It removes frictions in the movement of knowledge with scant

regard for geography, professional memberships, copyright, comprehension of the receiver, structure, quality, and often the laws that regulate the medical sector so inflexibly offline. For better or worse, our world has changed.

“Access to information gets democratized and the Google generation acquire new expectations for both knowledge and how to manipulate it”

When worlds change

These changes are far from gradual. They arrive at sudden crossing points like that day in Addis, heralding shocks to the status-quo, and creating new models for communication that everyone has to rapidly learn. Publishers, website audiences, manufacturers, consumers; all have to individually figure out how they are (re)connected together in these new spaces.

And then it changes again. The arrival of the internet in people's lives is not a single event, but myriad discoveries that each trigger changes in behaviour. The pace of innovation may be daunting, but many long term patterns of cause and effect are now clear. For example, as access to information gets democratised, the Google generation acquire new expectations for both knowledge and how to manipulate it. This means that as information comparison becomes more immediate and richer, a person's expectations shift upwards to match. Misinformation sits alongside academic papers within the same search results listings, which demands a new type of reading skill to process. The nature of content evolves and citations become an augmented part of all content. New models such as Wikipedia recast the notion



Wikipedia and YouTube: iconic social brands with the digital genes of the Web 2.0 era

of 'truth', and new knowledge structures are evolved to help people process the recommendations and beliefs of a wider community. On the darker side, the same tools that allow primary healthcare workers to relay diagnostic data from that hospital in Addis can be manipulated by unknown companies illegally selling pharmaceuticals to customers on the other side of the planet. The challenge for all of us in the transition generation is education – learning to be savvy and streetwise in the digital networked society.

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And then they change again

After the dotcom crash, a series of success story digital firms started to emerge. Under the microscope, their corporate DNA looked like it might share many of the same genes, and although the research techniques were crude - and the relationship between correlation and causation often unclear - these digital natives seemed to have a surprising amount in common. From around 30 different strands, the genes of the second generation of internet communications were isolated. In an industry infamous for its jargon, 'Web 2.0' became the new buzzword, and Facebook, Google, Craigslist, MySpace, Flickr, Wikipedia et al became its icons.

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But these digital genes can be copied, and smart media groups and marketers quickly latched on to this. The genes include the creation of platforms that connect people together (social networks), the ability to produce and then share content with others (social media), the success in architecting frameworks for participation (rather than producing all the content), and extracting and processing some of a community's knowledge, then sharing it back (collective intelligence). There are many more, but these have some of the strongest implications for brands, and illustrate the scale of the change.

Digital Blogging Academy

If you need to harness blogging and social media marketing for your brands, then our digital management coaching workshops will create the right roadmap for your blogging activity, teach you about the rules of the medium and get your plans on track.



“The sailor does not pray for wind, he learns to sail.”

Gustaf Lindborg, Swedish author

Who is it for?

A programme for to help marketing teams and board directors explore how to harness blogging effectively as a way of getting corporate and brand messages across.

What is it about?

Blogging has moved into the mainstream and transformed the role of corporate communication. This Academy shows you how to make your writing work hard for you online, build traffic to your blogs and avoid the common pitfalls.

Getting started

How do marketers navigate Web 2.0?

These are huge issues, because as social networking has transferred online, new networking platforms and techniques have opened up. With them come many new ways to reach customers, and thousands of social spaces brands can participate within. As tools such as blogs, personal profiles and social media have become more accessible, anyone who wants to has been able to create a web page. They can air an opinion that becomes discoverable through search engines and leave a breadcrumb trail about your brand.

If that seems a little daunting, the good news is that while there are thousands of tools, marketers have only five main ways to harness them:

1. Architecting their own communities
2. Participating directly within a community
3. Sponsoring or be associated with specific communities
4. Supplying community participants with information and motivation
5. Observing and learning from how participants discuss and behave in relation to their brands

Advertising in social media spaces

There's a huge excitement around social networking and social media, but that doesn't mean the same techniques from traditional advertising placement will work here. For example, many of the social media are private or semi-private spaces, with content that individuals have chosen to share with their friends. Your brand may be able to buy media space that includes thousands of these pages, but there's a question as to whether you really have their support, or whether you're invading their space.

Next up, think about the nature of this content a little more. There's a great deal of content out on the web that you probably wouldn't want your brand associated with, so if your campaign includes social media then consider how your brand can be protected.

Here are a few key questions to ask yourself:

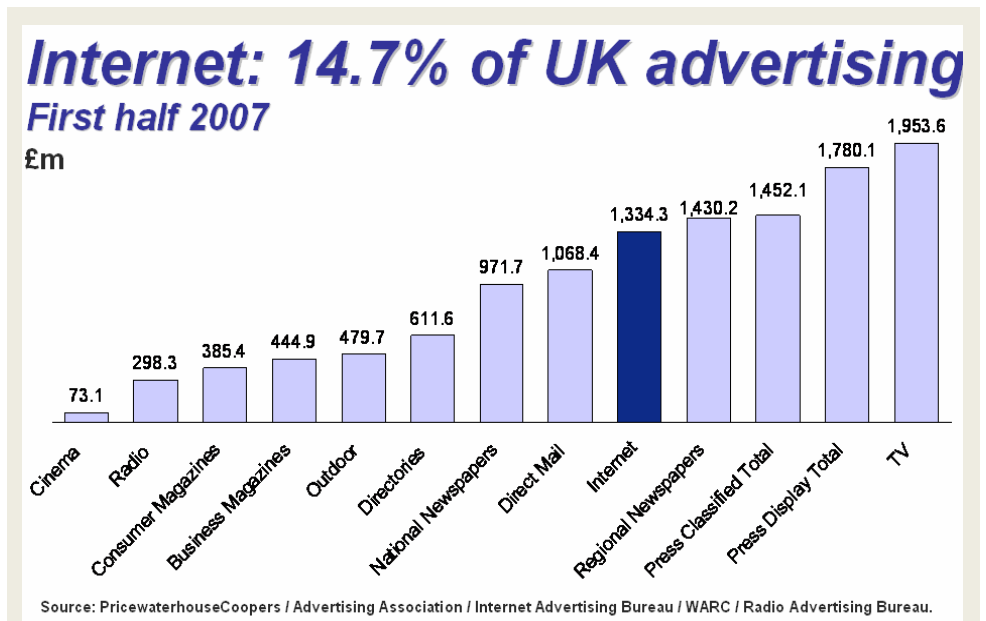
- What profanity filters are in place to block your ad appearing next to inappropriate content?
- What gives your brand permission to advertise in this space?
- Are you considering customising your creative to fit with the needs of social media?

- If you have a presence in social media, then could your campaign benefit from integrating your social media advertising with your own social media content?
- Can your campaign factor in social media from the very start to ensure the integration really works?

Social media give you a massive range of tools to work with, but even simply advertising in these spaces using simple online graphical formats can create risks unless you think them through.

Taking part in the conversation

This is the tricky one for many marketers, but the blunt reality is that marketing is moving rapidly away from the interruptive model to grab attention, and into a new era of engagement that solicits attention. It's a massive cultural change for classically trained marketers, and a humbling experience to shift in your mindset to simply taking part in a brand conversation rather than controlling it. But that's where marketing is: the world is full of savvy consumers



15% of all advertising budgets in the UK go into the web. Search engines alone match the size of the radio and outdoor ad sectors combined. Digital's team forecast that web spend overtakes TV in 2010. This switch to the web shows how marketers are starting to rebuild their media plans.

who are media literate and sceptical about marketing. They are taking back control of their attention. The motto? Cooperate, don't control.

If you decide to take part in the conversation, then remember a few of our golden rules.

1. Remember this is someone else's space and you are a visitor; it's a personal space so treat it with respect
2. If you make comments be courteous and keep on topic
3. When you are writing as a firm, make it clear and be transparent in how you present yourself – there's a massive debate here about ethics in marketing and although many agencies are establishing themselves as subversive posters, it's not something we're going to support
4. Every community and market is different, so walk through the ideas with a few people from different sides of your industry first to sound them out; remember once your material is in the public domain it's out there – so a gentle dry run is well worth it
5. Check your posts carefully before they go live, in blogs create a voice and personality, in communities have a strategy for why you're contributing, and in wikis do rigorous fact-checking before anything goes up

As a few heads are normally better than one, try involving a couple of colleagues to act as a sounding board about what is going up and how it's being presented.

Going beyond matching luggage

So what is 'blended marketing' (and why do marketers get it wrong)?

Blended marketing is neither new, nor transient. Integrating your messaging across platforms is a hygiene factor for marketers; it happens intuitively. Using the best media channels to do the job is so elementary we hardly acknowledge it. Yet why do these principles so often fail to retain traction in online?

The problem is that when the view of the new digital channels is framed narrowly through the lens with which marketers view classic media, they will fail to see anything close to the full picture or potential; marketing behaviour is repeated, rather than rebuilt.

'Integration' doesn't mean simply making the web banners look like the press artwork. That 'matching luggage' approach is only a starting point, not the end-game. 'Media-neutral' doesn't mean simply choosing your channels based on where audiences are. Sure, people

have reduced the time they spend with classic media (printed journals, broadcast television, magazines etc), and their switch to the web at home and at work demands every marketer re-evaluate their strategic mix of media. That's simply common sense. 'Delivery' of the message doesn't simply mean shouting it repeatedly in every pathway; marketing has moved on, even if many marketers have not.

Smart marketers are blending channels together to exploit the unique communication powers of each platform. They replace the monologue approach that dominated marketing, with dialogue. They harness the opinions and voices of their customers to endorse the brand, rather than simply presenting it. They look through a lens that appreciates the transparency and democratisation of the digital networked society, creating communications in tune with the culture of a landscape rich in blogs and wikis. And along the way, they will probably build a whole new model of how campaigns work.

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How can I develop a more blended approach?

Bold marketers might seize the grand broom of change and sweep away all current thinking in their organisations, but most people take life in slightly smaller steps. So here are five things to try in your next campaigns.

1. Try placing the web at the heart of the mix, using it as an engine to process and advance the brand activation created through other channels
2. Extend the depth and richness of information on your own site, by letting its content and messages reach out into the high traffic digital media properties your target audiences now log on to
3. Try using the web as a return path to connect customers back to the brand
4. Try harnessing established technologies like podcasts and videocasts routinely to present and discuss products at a time convenient to the viewer

5. Try taking part in conversations with your customers to listen and respond

Five ways to get there:

- Open your minds and your browsers; explore the new networked spaces to build your understanding of how they work
- Free up the time of your best people; let them lead and give them the space they need
- Be prepared to change; uncover ways to listen effectively to market signals, and create ways to be responsive and adaptive
- Learn; build digital marketing learning into the fabric of your business
- Experiment; unless you continue exploring the diversity of digital channels, you'll neither get them right nor right again

As the old style interruptive tactics of marketing are replaced by engagement and participation, firms that nurture this among their customers will uncover a new type of brand relationship.

Measuring and monitoring online social media

Starting by listening

There are so many conversations going on within the web that it speaks volumes that most marketers still choose not to listen. This giant world wide wireless has hundreds, maybe thousands, of voices all talking about the brand and the sectors of almost any firm. The conversations can be filled with a richness and insight about the business, its market, and the customers' needs. Failing to listen to such an exceptionally clear channel would be a crime against market research, yet this is still almost the standard practice inside many firms.

However, there are some very simple solutions. Googling up the brand names and sector issues is a great place to at least start getting a handle on what's happening out in the uneasily regulated and democratised web. Look for the match of keywords, follow the links and tumble down through the blogosphere to the places where debate is really happening. It's a chance to hear from customers, prospects and stakeholders in their very own words, and being the web, conversations are often neatly archived so you can explore the bits you might have missed as well as the links the participants came from. There has never been a market

Digital Social Media & Web 2.0 Academies

Marketing management training to help brands and publishers navigate digital tools and platforms to build new relations with customers. Learn how to build sustainable audiences, stronger messaging, and great content for the fastest growing part of the web.



“Learning is like rowing upstream: not to advance is to drop back.”

Chinese proverb

Who is it for?

Media owners, marketing teams, and anyone involved in architecting or participating in online communities.

What is it about?

Web 2.0 has washed over the industry like a tidal wave, but building the software is only the starting point. This Academy will explore the concepts behind Web 2.0 and explain how you can harness social networking, collective intelligence and user generated content in your marketing

research tool like this, and any brand manager not regularly ambling through these spaces is missing a big trick.

Search engines are just the start. For many brands, the web is now as much about reputation management as relationship management, and even if the firm is not actively engaging in blended digital marketing, smart marketers have no shortages in toolkit providers who can help translate these conversations into something the firm can digest.

Google itself offers a range of ways to see what content has been published, mid-weight tracking tools like Meltwater can package the results further, while the heavyweights of social network analysis (tools like Onalytica) provide much deeper insights as they join up the dots from one blog to the next. The heavyweight approaches rest on the academic discipline of social network analysis, which have enjoyed a rebirth on the web as communication models fleshed out in the 1970s suddenly get to be applied readily to issues, people and brands in a way their architects never envisaged.

Starting by starting

For impatient marketers, the great news is that in true internet speed, these tools can normally be deployed instantly and show you exactly what you've missed. Whatever the firm's strategy for blended, connected marketing, simply plugging in online research to listen to the conversations already happening about a brand can be a very simple and effective way to start.

Digital futures

What are the changes yet to come?

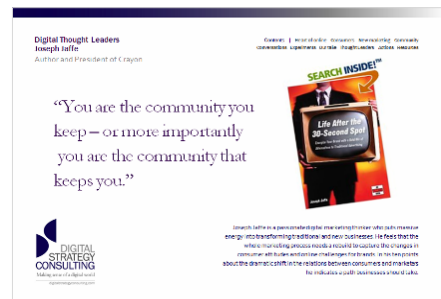
The good news is that for a channel with so much change, the future isn't as opaque as many think; or at least, not all of it. Moments and events may prove impossible to pinpoint, but social and technological patterns are much clearer to read. Here are ten strands of the near future your marketing will need to harness.

1. The web will become many times more important to your customers than it is today; treat today as simply the early steps in a transition to the digital networked society and not the end point
2. Your customers will develop a portfolio of online communities they refer to for advice, recommendation and peer reassurance about your products – they will place their trust in what they hear

3. Many media brands from classic media will make the transition to the digital networked economy, still delivering you an audience, but often using different publishing models
4. The value of information is weak without context; search engines and communities provide context and enhance value
5. What you are familiar with on the web today will migrate into our pockets tomorrow; mobile platforms are simply a gateway into the same data
6. As the barriers of access to knowledge melt away at every step in the supply chain, more questions will be asked and more answers will need to be found
7. Getting your products and information found at the very moment of a customer's greatest potential interest will remain critical, but the number of tools and techniques will continue to swell
8. If your firms' actions fail to match their words, the gap will be exposed
9. Achieving impact when communicating through your classic channels will continue to be pressured
10. The businesses that succeed will be those with adaptive marketing structures that can learn these new environments and quickly respond



Digital Insight Reports
 In times of In times of huge economic and technical change, knowledge becomes a critical success factor. We created the Digital Insight Reports to bring you insights from a particular part of this fast changing industry. They are independent perspectives on key issues around business or marketing in the digital networked economy.



Meet the Digital Thought Leaders
 Why do some firms get it so right, that their audiences and revenues explode? In periods of huge economic and social change, knowledge becomes the critical success factor, so we created the Digital Thought Leader interviews to bring you closer to people and brands shaping the digital networked economy. They are based on discussions we've had with them and are published monthly.

Digital Action Plan

To translate a Digital Insight Report into clear business outcomes, here are some tips for the next steps.

Consider how the future trends we discuss will impact your business.

1. Can you adapt to harness them?
2. Can you get ahead of the market?
3. Do some have specific relevancy?

Explore making your marketing more blended and connected

Take a step back from your day-to-day marketing, and consider how blended your firm's approach really is. Listing out each channel, the creative and the marketing model (how the activity will drive sales) can be a useful start. Then explore ways to gradually improve the connectedness of your marketing. Here are five examples:

1. Try placing the web at the heart of the mix, using it as an engine to process and advance the brand activation created through other channels
2. Extend the depth and richness of information on your own site, by letting its content and messages reach out into the high traffic digital media properties your target audiences now log on to
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4. Try harnessing established technologies like podcasts and videocasts routinely to present and discuss products at a time convenient to the viewer
5. Try taking part in conversations with your customers to listen and respond

Community and social media

Discuss which of the five community and social media strategies are right for your brand. Regardless of the digital platform you are looking at, almost all will fall within one of these:

1. Architecting their own communities
2. Participating directly within a community
3. Sponsoring or being associated with specific communities
4. Supplying community participants with information and motivation
5. Observing and learning from how participants discuss and behave in relation to their brands

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Making sense of a digital world

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