

Digital Thought Leaders

Matt Brittin

Google UK country director for advertiser sales

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“We are only at the beginning of understanding the potential of the online world.”



In just over a year at Google, Matt Brittin, the search giant's UK country director for advertiser sales, has fast become one of its most recognisable faces. Here he explains why.



Making sense of a digital world

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Digital Thought Leader

Organising the world's data

It's been another amazing month or two for the folks at Google as it emerged in the UK they had topped ITV1 in revenues, as well as plucking the prize for world's most recognised brand, and now one of the US top five firms by market cap. Google's Matt Brittin is clear that the market is still changing fast and so is marketing. In this type of world why would we even talk about targeting a demographic. With search taking over 8% of all UK adspend, it's well established as a media channel in its own right, and yet the pace of development remains daunting.

“In this type of world why would we even talk about targeting a demographic”

“At Google we don't think we have all the answers. Sometimes it feels like the start of a rollercoaster because you know something exciting is coming.” For Brittin, the scale of change is part of a longer term trajectory in marketing. “Back in the 70s it was real simple in marketing – you went onto the TV and sold your product, reaching the nation. By the 90s marketing had changed and the targeting of specific demographics had grown up. This led to massive increases in the number of white goods and auto brands, and all that before the internet came along.”

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Google's five key themes for digital marketers

- Be found: always on, every market, full coverage
- Follow the consumer to drive conversions
- Speak with one voice across media
- Engage, listen and respond
- Manage data, actively



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.

“Success in the digital networked economy takes a different type of thinking. We created the Digital Thought Leaders series to help you meet people who have the right formula and are shaping the new digital landscape. As media and communications undergo revolutionary change, there is a sunrise on whole new sectors and a sunset on others. Reading this landscape can be the greatest of challenges, but is key to building wisdom and vision about where to take your own brand and strategy.”

The internet simply accelerated this, but its arrival coincided with a growing need among consumers for new models. As this happened, a new landscape emerged for marketers which was both fundamentally different, and riddled with opportunities. "It made things much tougher for marketers," explains Brittin.

"Today's marketing is about knowing how all of us participate in different activities and different media. When you think about what influences you to buy something, it's partly about recommendation from others and partly about research."

A long way still to go

Brittin's argument is that as an industry, the marketing world is just at the beginning of understanding the changes, but some of the stats leap out at you. 90% of people say they must have broadband within a month, but 90% will also say they can live without a microwave for a month.

With that pace of change, Brittin is clear that "it's pretty hard for us to predict what will happen in nine months' time let alone nine years' time."

But in terms of how to create change, Brittin echoes a challenge we've seen in hundreds of companies this year. "Often it's the organisational issues that get in the way, preventing us [the marketer] from doing what we actually do."

Research proving the brand effect of search

Some of the latest research from Google is neat for unpacking the customer journey and quantifying the channel effect. How online ads drive offline sales has been a challenge for years, but their work with TV and online display advertising has proved that the combination was five times more effective (on key marketing metrics) than a TV and print campaign. Brittin's team also discovered that the search campaign added a further 22% uplift in the campaign's overall efficiency. But even if search wasn't intended to be a part of the campaign, then it's interesting that the statisticians are still finding that search volumes rise 20% further because of the spill-over in brand activation created from other channels.

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In the world before the web, the Radio Advertising Bureau in the UK ran a smart project that proved the media multiplier effect of radio. That's in evidence now much more with search than it ever was with radio, and some of these new research waves will really fuel ad budget channel shift in 2008.

The future is universal search

On the future, Britten talks about the convergence in information rather than devices. "What's actually happened is that we have more, and different devices. Some do converge (like text and voice). What's converged is the information we're using. One of the things we think and worry about at Google is consumers [their behaviour and attitude]. So we're focussed on the idea of universal search that works across the web, books, images and video and audio; and we'll do it with the speed that we currently do with the web." That's a great vision, and one that pretty much everyone connected to the web is waiting for. Four years ago I gave some lectures about how Google was eroding the barriers of language, and how within a decade we'd have immediate real time text to speech translation. In the early days the quality of the translation let you down, but now that the translation engines are getting smarter, the quality of user experience rises and the barrier weakens even further. Massive changes on the way in a short timeframe.

“What’s converged is the information we’re using (rather than devices).”

Britten is clear that the quest for knowledge analysis within Google is nowhere near being finished, as new horizons unfold constantly. "We're always trying to work out more clearly what it is that the consumer is looking for. We've built much better translation engines because we understand much more about how languages work, and that allows us to deliver fast translation on the fly."



Meet Matt Brittin

The UK is Google's primary market outside the US and is one of the world's leading e-commerce and online marketing environments. Matt leads a team which combines online marketing, media and specialist industry expertise to help Google's UK clients and partners make the most of online opportunities. Sectors covered in depth include Finance, Travel, Technology, Retail, Media, Classifieds, Consumer Products, Healthcare and Automotive.

Prior to Google, Matt spent much of the last ten years working in media and marketing, with particular interests in strategy, commercial development and sales performance.

Mobile Google


The role of what Google might – or might not – do in the mobile space has been dominating blogs and bars for the last few months. Brittin is clear that “there’s been speculation for much time about the production of a GPhone, but on Monday we announced Android, the first genuinely open handset operating system and we’ve also announced the Open Handset Alliance to help produce high quality tools for consumers across multiple devices”. What’s particularly interesting about this is the thinking behind it: “we think it’s useful to have some open standards to reduce the costs of innovation and increase the scope of what can be delivered”.

“Things are changing so fast that the most important thing you can do is to try stuff. This is a project that’s never completed.”

In terms of innovation, speed and the pace of change, Brittin is clear that time is a luxury brands no longer have: “things are changing so fast that the most important thing you can do is to try stuff. This is a project that’s never completed. You have to always be in beta, always testing and learning, testing and learning all the time.”



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