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Digital and traditional – this time it's personal

Christine Khor warns it's a digital world and you need to keep up with it!

It is a fascinating time for the marketing industry. The likes of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have well and truly taken the profession by storm in recent years, becoming vital tools for marketing practitioners around the world.

The expectations and challenges for marketers have never been higher. With the convergence of new technology, the way marketers design a strategy requires a holistic and integrated approach. The industry has learned that interactive marketing can be a far more effective tool than the more traditional outlets – just look at the Levi's, Streets, Crust Pizzas and Jay Jays of this world.

So when marketing budgets were slashed during the GFC, it was to digital that creative marketers turned. Even marketers who were not enthusiastic or experienced users of digital activity – such as social media or SEO – began to embrace these new tools as cost-effective ways to reach and engage with their audience.

While the market has picked up and marketing budgets are slowly being reinstated, digital activity looks set to rise. According to a PWC forecast, 'Entertainment and Media Outlook 2010 to 2014', online spend will surpass \$2 billion this year, increasing to \$3.9 billion by 2014 (13.9 percent growth),

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which will put it ahead of the projected free-to-air TV spend of \$3.8 billion.

And while marketers are embracing this new space, it appears that Australian consumers are too. Interestingly, we are leading the world when it comes to social networking usage – according to Nielsen research we are spending a record six hours and 52 minutes per person per month engrossed in the social networking world. The US and the UK came in second and third at just over six hours per month.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

This changing marketing landscape is affecting companies and marketers alike and is presenting both challenges and opportunities. In many cases, companies have had to rethink traditional roles and approaches, in an attempt to embrace this new world. Here is what we're hearing from our clients and candidates.

WHAT ARE OUR CLIENTS DOING?

With a diverse range of clients of varying sizes and industries, we can see that companies are approaching the digital space in different ways. For every client that we see embracing this new world with sophisticated digital activity, we are seeing another cautiously dipping their toes in the water, learning by trial and error.

Many companies are also bringing digital experts in-house and we have recently seen an astounding number of SEO and SEM roles becoming available. And it's not just new roles that are opening up, we are also seeing brand new departments being launched – many companies, such as Telstra, Coke and Microsoft are seeing the benefits of having a dedicated social media team in-house.

In other instances, responsibility is falling on the existing in-house team who are expected to expand their knowledge and skillset to keep up with the times.



An interesting dynamic is how these new roles, people and departments sit within the current marketing structure. Again, companies are doing it differently. Some are integrating these roles physically within the marketing department so the new 'digital' marketers are sitting alongside 'traditional' marketers to ensure a consistent, seamless customer experience. Others are setting up the digital arm as quite a separate function. Which works better? Time will tell.

WHAT CLIENTS ARE NOW LOOKING FOR

The industry's changing landscape has, of course, meant that our clients' recruitment criteria have shifted.

Marketing in 2010 has moved beyond the traditional techniques of yesterday and our clients are now looking for candidates that can run integrated campaigns that mix the old with the new, whether it be through blogs, forums or podcasts.

We are still seeing the more traditional roles – the marketing managers, the brand managers and product managers – but we have recently witnessed a surge of more specialist positions, including the areas of social media, SEO and SEM.

And it seems that more and more of the position descriptions we are viewing are seeking candidates with digital knowledge and

experience. Our clients are now demanding a firm grasp of all available tools and the ability to utilise these tools in the most effective way.

'TRADITIONAL' MARKETERS – ARE YOU SAFE?

We are meeting with a lot of marketers who are feeling a tad vulnerable at the moment, recognising the gap between what they learned and practised all those years ago and what's ahead of them now. And, with recent industry developments, it is easy to see why they are feeling that way. But let me assure you that talented 'traditional' marketers are still very much in demand.

Of course, you do need to understand how these new tools and techniques work, but that's not to say you need to become a SEO guru in the next three months!

We are talking with many young candidates who are living in the digital world, who tweet, Facebook and blog. But many of these candidates don't actually get the value of those tools in a marketing or commercial context and that's where experience and creativity come in – the hallmarks of a truly great marketer.

Like all things, it's about staying on top of developments, staying relevant and seeing how you can best reach and interact with your customers. As, while the industry is ever-changing, one thing appears to be certain – the digital space is here to stay. **M**

Top seven tips for expanding your digital and social media knowledge

1 Become part of the digital world. Join LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter and immerse yourself in this new social media world. Concentrate on working out how these tools can be utilised for your clients or customers.

2 Educate yourself! If you do not know already, learn about SEO and SEM. Even if you are planning on outsourcing this, you need to be aware of how and why it works. Keep up-to-date with new technology and market trends as they develop.

3 Keep up to date with the industry as a whole. Watch what is happening in the US and Europe. Join groups and read relevant publications, both traditional and new media.

4 Use your agencies – get them to present to you the latest and greatest tools and even test them on how social media can be used on your brands or products.

5 Enrol in relevant courses about emerging marketing trends and digital advancements.

6 Be prepared to think outside the box and adapt to changes. As the world moves faster each year, new developments are coming thick and fast. The next new booms are around tablet PCs, unified communications, mobile technology and software as a service, and each of these will impact marketing tools and strategies.

7 Get involved in the online space by commenting on blogs – carve out a spot that you are comfortable in and start the conversation.