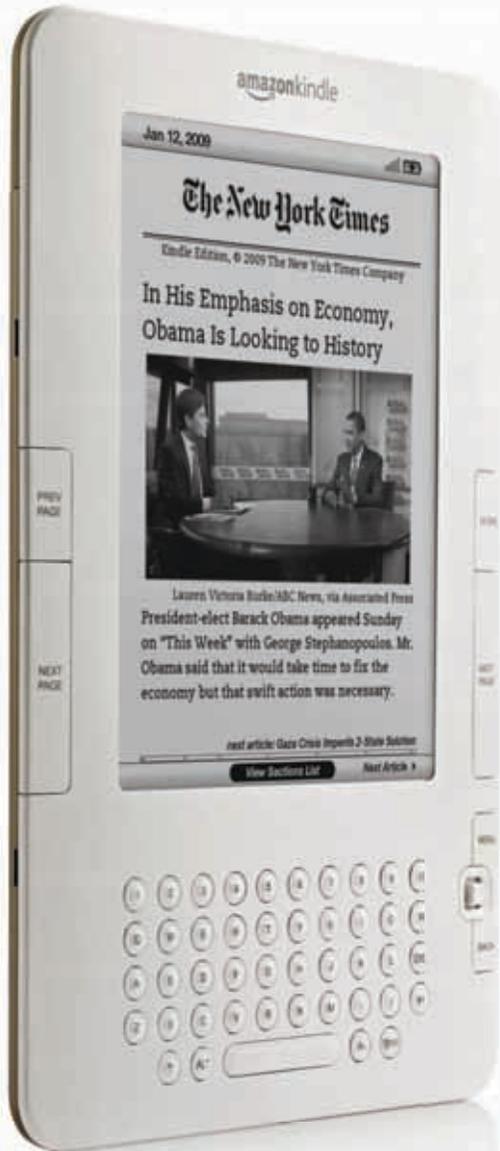


**MULTIPLE
TOUCHES
GET US
ALL
WORKED
UP**
BY RAN MULLINS



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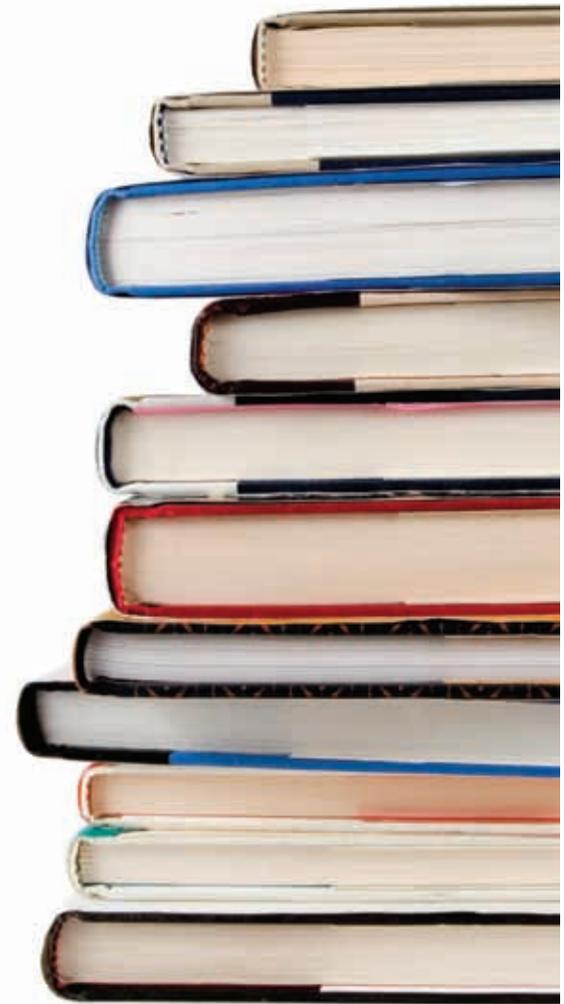
Since the web's inception 21 years ago, leading digital agencies have been committed to the craft and irrefutable potency of content and collaboration in the interactive brand experience.



Now that the web has become more ubiquitous and consumers have switched from fearing technology to demanding that technology be at their beck and call, it's time that traditional agencies become more digital, and interactive agencies create more traditional customer interactions.

An integrated marketing approach that connects consumer conversations and brand engagement in offline and online environments can make that brand's awareness grow beyond its normal consumer base. Regardless of the media, it's important for brand marketers to remember that the connections between brand and consumer are still what really make the difference.

It is time to note that long-held models of moneymaking in advertising and media have been drastically undercut by the shifts in technological innovations, new spending patterns, and the client enthusiasm for innovative ideas that don't fit previous molds. The December 2009 /January 2010 issue of *Fast Company* magazine attests to this notion by pointing out Ashton Kutcher's bid with Katalyst to "combine his rabid fan base and ... instinctive sense of how to engage the web generation" in order to "break down the walls between Hollywood, Silicon Valley, and Madison Avenue." Indeed, the evolving tastes and technology of marketing communications are making the previously insurmountable obstacles of yesteryear into moot points.





**TRADITIONAL
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TRADITIONAL BRAND AWARENESS IS DEAD

The promotion of a client's brand involves many marketing disciplines, not the least of which is identifying the media where the customer meets the benefit. The traditional brand awareness campaign may no longer be required for a company, product, and suite of products or services because the evolved integrated campaign aimed at increasing awareness, developing loyalty, and selling products and services is taking its place. Primary takeaway: No one wants to pay for pure traditional awareness when there are integrated vehicles and digital media opportunities that can provide meaningful measurement.

Traditional agency relationships are in need of a major recharging; otherwise, they risk their inevitable end in



obsolescence. Unfortunately, most traditional agencies cannot make the paradigm shift required to work in an integrated manner. They keep watching their media budgets shrink as digital agencies take more and more shares of the available dollars. The only problem with this evolution is that the brand gets dissected along with the budget.

The traditional agency is reacting to losing money and accounts when it should be proactively leading the client to deeper and richer consumer insights. Instead of being energized by the client's requests, they are begrudgingly adding expertise and experience just to execute the client's strategy. The traditional agency is trying to morph to meet the money rather than being driven by the opportunity offered from digital possibilities.

Today's integrated agency focuses on brand engagement for the client. Excited by the possibilities, this agency structure insightfully considers a variety of engagement points to reach a unified brand experience and arrive at improved brand performance. The engagement happens in the media where the customer chooses to receive content, and the integrated agency exercises its know-how to position the appropriate messages there. Currently, client purchasing and procurement departments are making decisions that should be made by chief marketing officers. While the structure of these organizations requires the involvement of purchasing, the power to choose agencies and their compensation structures should not be determined by that role. Ad agency reviews on media planning and procurement and ad

agency creative strategies should receive the utmost attention from the CMO. An advertising agency partnership provides value in new ideas and strategies that bring a breadth of opportunity to the table. When agencies are treated as an execution vendor, the true value is never realized.

Rarely does a truly revolutionary strategy come 100 percent from inside. It begins as the germ of an idea from somewhere in the team or department and is shared with third-party partners to gauge its relevance and potential adoption success. Let's face it, the whole advantage to working with an agency (as opposed to working with a boutique) is the knowledge acquired during the relationship. The agency that truly acts as a partner to marketing executives and adds not only ability, but brain power to grow the client's





business is the one that keeps the relationship. This, of course, requires more and more proven strategic creativity, interactive savvy and relevant customer insights. When this combination is delivered, the client will allow the agency many third-party relationships because the agency is leading the charge to “get it done.”

While the client may understand its own “needs” more intimately, the agency must be able to provide the oversight to meet and exceed the desired result. A vendor relationship can never really provide insights because the relationship is rarely stable enough to survive significant personnel changes and spending shifts. The agency must be the expert and know what works and what can be applied to the client circumstance. The agency cannot be so afraid to

fail that innovation ceases to exist. Regardless, the end result is not just inspired magic; it is the result of a logical process that leads the alignment of objectives to a platform, a launching pad for the creative work. Don’t get me wrong, both logic and magic are required, but one without the other will result in either a failed attempt, a flash in the pan with no staying power, or the worst of all possible worlds: mediocrity.

INTERACTIVE RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRE MORE DEPTH

Digital agencies are forcing traditional agencies to recognize that a brand is not made up of a single marketing discipline, but of the experiences encountered as multiple disciplines overlap. In this light, the brand platform

is holistic in nature, focusing on the process required to interact with these consumers online as the brand develops more fully. The belief is that identity, marketing, advertising and social public relations have all become interactive experiences that must be managed, mined and leveraged.

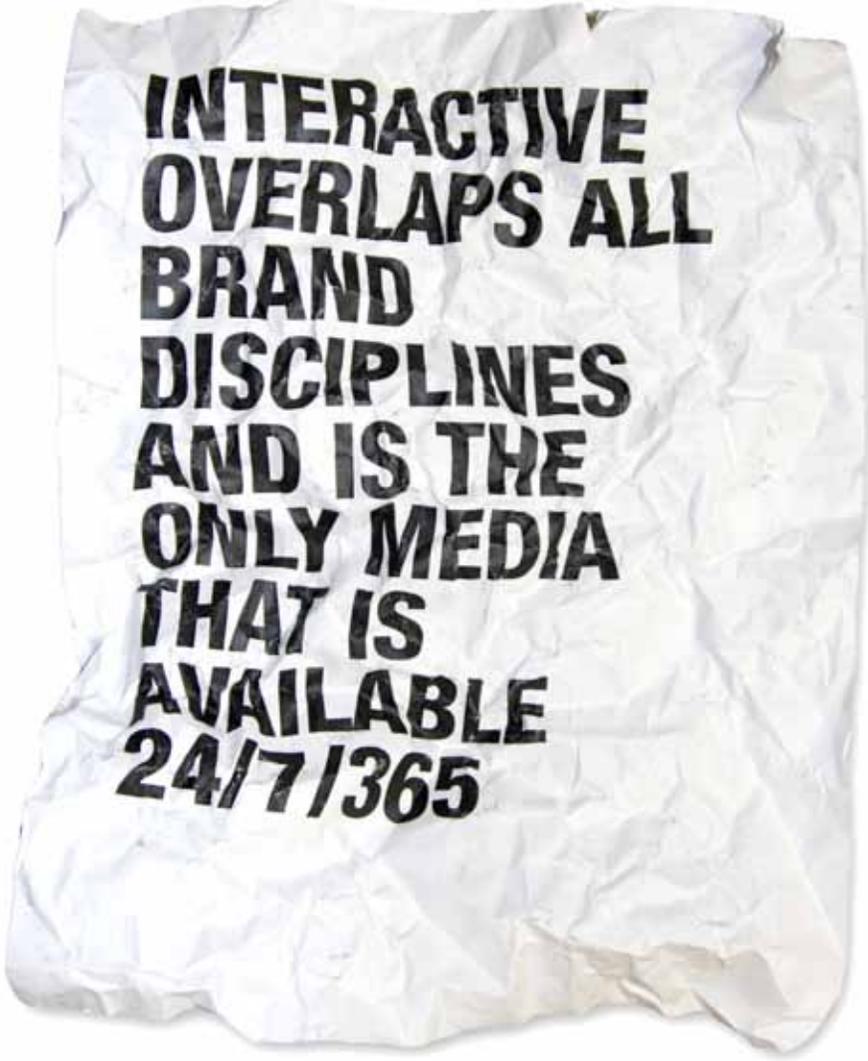
Integrated agencies have adopted the brand philosophy that interactive is at the core of creating a fully integrated brand. This philosophy posits that interactive overlaps all brand disciplines and is the only media that is available 24/7/365. Full-service interactive agencies are focused on maximizing brand performance for their clients through all necessary marketing disciplines and all brand interactions. Branding, together with savvy



interactive, provides an influential advantage over competitors in the marketplace. It is clearly not an “either, or” situation in which one concept trumps the other—it is “both, and.”

The web’s potential for visibility has increased exponentially over the past 12 months. Facebook has taught hundreds of millions of users around the world that the Internet can provide the services they want. Print media is now seen for the stagnancy that it represents, as users expect to be connected to their large and small communities from anywhere and everywhere. Print content will soon be revamped in the form of subscription services on tablets, slates and other devices, like the iPad, that allow users to browse a brand while remaining connected to their communities.

As technologies behind message delivery continue to advance, so too will consumers’ tastes in using these



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tools. This is why all marketers need to understand that they are content providers and that people will choose the medium for connecting to that content. All of our screens will eventually access the same clouds of information. Be it an iPhone app, an interactive television series, a magazine, or word processing programs, we will eventually have access to the content in whatever form we'd like. Our consumer behaviors will be dictated by our content wants and needs instead of the hardware screen or physical form we have access to at a given moment. The message could and should appear on any one of them.

It's for these reasons that integrated marketing focused on interactive engagement represents new levels of visibility and influence never before seen in marketing. And it is getting better

and better. We have only scratched the surface of what is possible and what is soon to come. As data networks and devices evolve, we will be whisked into worlds we never knew existed.

My best friend is 92 and spent a career in advertising, and I can assure you, his peers never saw the Internet coming. He was, however, around for P&G radio soap operas, which moved to television, which moved online, and which will move to ... **lfi.**



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Ran goes above and beyond to offer clients unique takes on how to make their branding connect with their audiences. As a driving force behind LFI's brand development process, he knows how to turn a brand's target audience into a devoted community of brand advocates.

