

A hand holding a globe on the left side of a vertical split, and a laptop screen on the right side showing a sunset. The globe is illuminated from the right, and the laptop screen is lit up with a warm sunset glow.

MARKETING MAGIC:

When creativity & technology collide

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“Creativity is the oxygen in marketing,”

Robert Geoghegan,
Diageo

Arguably the biggest brain in marketing, Professor Mark Ritson, once proclaimed that the idea marketers needed to be creative “was a load of baloney”. Instead, the good Professor insisted that “research and strategy” was the marketer’s sole role and then to drum it into – well properly brief – the true creative geniuses, the ECDs at creative agencies.

It’s interesting then when you attend any marketing conference – be it in Sydney or far away Cannes - two themes always resonate: creativity and innovation (with a good smattering of tech thrown in for good measure).

So is Ritson wrong? Is it time creativity or even technology replaced ROI on most marketers’ topline thinking? “Creativity is the oxygen in marketing,”

says Diageo’s Global Consumer Planning Director, Robert Geoghegan. “It is important in all aspects, from how we understand and collaborate with the people who use our categories, to making sense of brand challenges, and coming up with memorable solutions which will build our brands, as well as landing a sale.”

Perhaps the world’s most famous marketer, Procter & Gamble’s Marc Pritchard – who presides over an annual \$US7 billion budget – is even more optimistic of marketing’s place.

“Business will one day be the greatest force for good in the future,” he says before adding: “If there’s anything we learned in the last 10 years, it’s that technology is awesome and creates all these new opportunities.”

Nowadays there are a number of tech tools available to assist marketers

from programmatic data, insights, technology-infused mediums, digital transformation, CX, UX and all the other stuff. Systems such as HubSpot, Hootsuite, SEMrush and a plethora of social media platforms are all now part of any modern marketer’s kitbag.

As if to prove the power of technology and how quickly things change, in just three years TikTok has acquired 1.5 billion users in 155 countries.

But the priority of advertising and the creative process has never really changed. It’s always been about ideas. It’s always been about the human element. Technology has only ever really acted as the enabler. And it would appear on this point even the Professor Ritson agrees. In January, Ritson headed research that determined that brand size and creativity were the two most important contributors to marketing effectiveness. ➤

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“Unless you’re prepared to bulk up, unless you’re prepared to scratch your way up the league table, you’ll never get there,”

Professor Mark Ritson

Ritson examined a decade’s worth of Effie Awards to outline the core drivers of effectiveness and determined the top-ranked factor was “how big you already are”.

Larger brands have developed – among other things – a substantial “share of mind”, “share of shelf”, and equity level with consumers, Ritson determined.

“They have deeper pockets and bigger existing salience,” he added. And one of the primary reasons for building a brand is that “it gives you an unfair advantage in future effectiveness”.

For smaller brands, the lesson was clear: “Unless you’re prepared to bulk up, unless you’re prepared to scratch your way up the league table, you’ll never get there,” the Professor said.

That said, exceptional creative can help brands – big or small – make an impact, and this claimed second spot among the most important effectiveness drivers as identified by Ritson.

“Creativity drives so much of effectiveness – and we’ve all forgotten it in the last decade,” Ritson affirmed.

“We now need to remember it for the decade that comes.” Remembering these comments were from January.

Intrigued about what marketers actually thought about their place, their view on creativity and the importance they placed on technology.

B&T and partner Shutterstock* recently polled 400 of Australia’s top marketers and brand managers as well as

conducting extensive interviews via B&T’s ongoing Marketing Mavericks series.

The major findings of the poll – which, admittedly, were taken before the full extent of COVID-19 outbreak – included:

- Sixty per cent of respondents ranked creativity as being very important for marketers. Twenty-two per cent said it was somewhat important, while 15 per cent said it wasn’t important at all.
- A staggering 75 per cent of Australian marketers are worried about staying relevant.
- Artificial intelligence was voted as the number one technology that would bring most change to the marketing industry. >>

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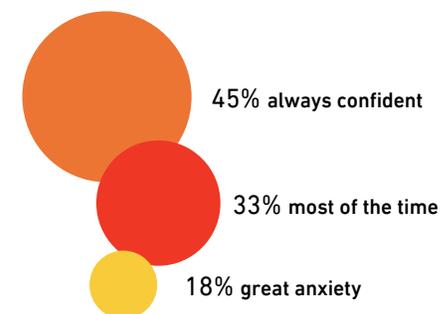
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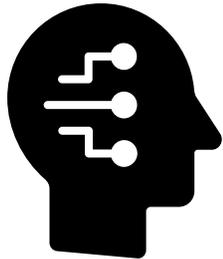
- Almost half (48 per cent) of marketing budgets are now spent on online and digital. With search, social, banner ads, online video, email marketing, mobile, Facebook and Google the biggest beneficiaries.
- When it came to data, respondents held mixed views. Forty per cent labelled it “essential”, 34 per cent said it “aided decision making”, while 18 per cent admitted they “never used it”.
- Marketers said the biggest impediment to creativity was a lack of budget, followed by skills shortages, confusion around the latest technologies and a risk-averse culture in the business.
- Fifty-five per cent said they’d like to bring more of the creative process in house. The main reasons being cost (40 per cent), time pressures (25 per cent) and more control (22 per cent).
- Some 35 per cent agreed they were concerned about the transparency they had with their agencies.
- Marketer’s biggest concerns in 2020 were viewability and measurement, talent and skills shortages, budget changes, the complexity of adtech/ martech, brand safety and the Google/ Facebook duopoly.
- When asked about their marketing messages and advertising, only 45 per cent said they were “always confident” they’d got it right. Thirty-three per cent said “most of the time” while 18 per cent said it always gave them “great anxiety”.
- Fifty-eight per cent of respondents said they were concerned about the high churn rate in the industry, yet 83 per cent said they could still see themselves in the same job/company in the next two years.



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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Why AI is marketing's next big thing



Artificial intelligence (AI) promises marketers the “holy grail”, this idea that brands can predict a consumer’s buying habits before they even decide they want to spend.

AI marketing is a method of leveraging technology basically to improve the customer’s journey. It can also be used to boost the ROI of marketing campaigns. This is accomplished by using big data analytics, machine learning, and other processes to gain insight into a brand’s target audience.

While experts are optimistic that AI will eliminate inefficiencies without creating widespread joblessness or eliminating the need for people, individuals and companies will need to create new kinds of jobs and embrace new fields in which to apply the human creative touch. An example of the dramatic impact experts expect AI to have on marketing is the prediction that consumers will begin to outsource purchasing decisions to machines, which will optimise selections based on an individual’s goals and preferences.

“using big data analytics, machine learning, and other processes to gain insight into a brand’s target audience.”

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Marketers will need both data and soft skills

Data scientists need to be able to think creatively to develop solutions to 'big data' challenges.

Modern organisations often have huge amounts of data at their fingertips, providing incredible opportunities for marketers to better personalise a message that best services their customers. But to really take advantage of all this data, businesses need data experts who are not only skilled in the analytics side of things, but who can convey information as well as lead and influence the actions of others.

A marketer proficient in data might not only identify where the prospects are dropping off in the purchasing journey

and then try and figure what could fix the problem. In other words, intuition and creativity are as important for marketers as is an ability to crunch the data numbers.

In the 'new work order', the marketing data scientist's role is an increasingly important one, as they can uncover consumer trends and drive a brand's development. But as expectations of the workforce evolve and jobs become more complex, employers too are increasingly seeking data scientists equipped with hybrid skills — a mix of both right-brain thinking (creativity and imagination) and left-brain thinking (maths, statistical and analytical skills).

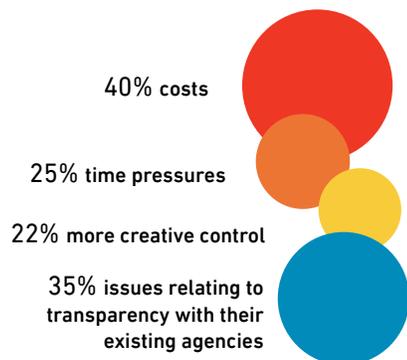
But beyond technical skills, soft skills remain very important – data scientists must be able to communicate complex ideas in simple terms, so that marketing teams and the rest of the C-suite can understand and benefit from their analysis. They must be able to translate data gobbledegook into plain marketing speak. Data scientists need to be able to think creatively to develop solutions to 'big data' challenges.

Therefore, rigid thinking won't work in any modern marketing team any more than it would work at, say, a creative agency.

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Why marketers will increasingly bring the creative process in-house



As reported, B&T's recent marketers' poll found that – mainly thanks to technology – marketers were increasingly looking to bring skill sets normally associated with third-party agencies in-house.

The prime reasons? Costs (40 per cent), time pressures (25 per cent) and more creative control (22 per cent). While over a third of respondents (35 per cent) had issues relating to transparency with their existing agencies.

In its recent 2020 Jobs Report, recruitment agency Hays identified a major opportunity for marketers

in Australia. Increasingly, companies wanted in-house marketers with high-analytical skills, the services typically offered by many agencies.

The report identified the most in-demand roles including social media and SEO digital marketing specialists, digital content managers, communications managers, marketing insights analysts and public relations specialists.

Employers, it noted, are looking for “extremely skilled and high-performing” people who can work in a full-service business. Hays said that organisations now see marketing as representing the voice of their customers or consumers.

“For marketers, fulfilling this function can be achieved credibly by reinforcing intuitive expertise with data,” the report noted.

“Consequently, we’re seeing an increasing demand for marketing professionals in all roles and at all levels who use data to make evidence-based decisions.”

And executive-level marketing professionals must be able to present data to senior stakeholders who do not come from a marketing background.

“They must do this in an operational tone that is aligned with the context of the wider business,” Hays noted. >>

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Why marketers will increasingly bring the creative process in-house

“As a result, employers look for commercially-minded marketing executives”

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Within the agency market, full service offerings are more common with more and more consolidation in Australia's advertising industry.

In the past a company would engage separate advertising, creative, digital and PR, but today most agencies either

offer a fully integrated service or work in unison to offer a one-stop shop. “Naturally then, agencies require extremely skilled and high-performing employees who can work beyond their capacity,” Hays noted.

“However, agency turnover is high while the supply of suitable candidates is low,” it said.

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

What will marketing's future look like?

“People crave meaningful stories about real people.”

There's a statistic bandied about in marketing circles that says 73 per cent of consumers couldn't care less if brands disappeared for good.

So, how do you ensure your brand isn't part of the 73 per cent? Here are some tips:

- The four Ps – product, price, place, promotion – are dead; digital killing the proposition some time ago. In its place are the four Es – engagement, experience, exclusivity and emotion.
- Digital now enables marketers to build one-to-one relations like never before. Today's consumers demand individual service and personal approach in every aspect of the CX journey.
- Brands that are superficial will get caught out. Price and promotion will only get you so far; people will leave if you don't engage them on an emotional level.
- Don't underestimate the power of bloggers, vloggers and other influencers. If they're genuine and trustworthy then consumers will put a lot of trust in what they have to say.
- People crave meaningful stories about real people.
- All the research says that young people don't trust brands. And what do young people like in their marketing and advertising? Music!

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Shift from aspirational to relatability

According to Shutterstock's vice president of global acquisition marketing, Matthew Cowley, the largest shift in consumer behaviour is the transition from aspirational to relatability.

In a time of such instability, consumers are no longer exercising their purchasing power for only indulgence or self-optimisation, Cowley adds.

Instead he says there is a shift in preference towards purpose driven brands, and a heightened awareness

of how businesses contribute to society. "It is more important than ever for brands to step-back from the 'business as usual' approach, especially with so many consumers across the globe being impacted financially, physically and emotionally by the pandemic," Cowley says.

"Marketers must evolve from transactional marketing and toward a community-building approach."

Consumers are also responding less favourably to brands that audaciously align product messaging with cultural

movements without authenticity. While acknowledging the daily reality is acceptable, the way brands engage with cultural changes must be genuine.

Cowley adds: "Don't do it for the sake of a few likes or to simply boost your engagement metrics — this will only alienate your consumers, and the wider target market. Opt for non-intrusive messaging and utilise social listening via digital channels to keep marketing efforts on track."

"Marketers must evolve from transactional marketing and toward a community-building approach."

Matthew Cowley

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Marketers need to be agile

COVID-19 has definitely highlighted the importance for marketers to be agile.

However, it remains crucial that any pivots a brand makes align back to the company's overarching goals and brand stance.

Some businesses have been too agile in their attempts to be relevant, and have neglected the crucial step of scenario planning. For example, Lorna Jane has recently been fined almost \$40,000 for advertising 'anti-virus' activewear, without properly considering the repercussions. Similarly, retailers like Rivers and Crossroads have been accused of using 'panic marketing', capitalising on consumers' anxiety to sell hand sanitisers.

"2020 is a year to think twice and then react twice as fast to adjust course when your plans meet reality."

The best marketers already dedicate time and resources to scenario planning; building out realistic outcomes and anticipating a broad range of potential risks. If you're not doing so already, you should.

This will allow you to pivot between approaches quickly and successfully. In such an uncertain environment, anticipating market trends based on past consumer behaviour is impractical. 2020 is a year to think twice and then react twice as fast to adjust course when your plans meet reality.

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Movements like Black Lives Matter means the messaging has to be right!

“Social listening and reflecting on industry movements will provide insights into how consumers are responding to the current climate.”

The pressure to get your messaging correct is not simply reserved for 2020.

Insensitive or imitative messaging can be detrimental to a business, and it shouldn't take a pandemic or a global diversity movement to recognise this.

However, the increase in call-out culture and brand accountability driven by consumers on social media has meant that not even the slightest error will go unnoticed.

Brands must ensure their new messaging aligns with past actions to avoid brand virtue signalling.

All areas of a business must work together — including leadership behaviour, operations, social media, human resources and more — to ensure consumer-facing messages and actions are authentic.

Social listening and reflecting on industry movements will provide insights into how consumers are responding to the current climate.

It will also highlight object lessons from brands that have failed to navigate it successfully.

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SO WHAT'S NEXT....?

Don't forget your email marketing

“With most people either working from home, or actively looking for jobs, email inboxes have never been so active.”

For Shutterstock's Cowley, good email marketing is an under-utilised marketing channel.

“I'm sure we all receive hundreds of spam emails from marketers each month, but it's quite rare that we are stopped in our tracks by a good piece of email marketing that converts to engagement or better yet, a sale,” Cowley argues.

“With most people either working from home, or actively looking for jobs, email inboxes have never been so active.”

With social media channels often filled with so much content, and misinformation, consumers are beginning to turn their attention back to their email inbox for interaction, information and entertainment.

Email open rates are currently up 25%, whilst unsubscribe rates are down. Marketers should take this opportunity to brush up on how to create engaging and interactive email content.

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