

Brands need to turn ‘shiny’ technology into an enabler, not just an accessory

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The obsession with ‘the shiny’ in companies is a predictable trait. We covet technology that looks cool, can do so much, but it is either misunderstood, misused or forced upon poor innocent employees trying to earn a crust.

Digital advances are already so ingrained in our society that companies who don't adapt risk becoming a fossil in a changing world. In a culture flush with tech, brands need to look beyond ‘the shiny’ and begin to tackle digital literacy.

Stop following the crowd

For progressive marketers (but perhaps not their customers), social media has become the bedrock of brand/consumer interaction. Link this with the rise of mobile smartphones and practically anyone, anywhere can access their favourite brand's Facebook, YouTube or Instagram page.

A recent study by Accenture revealed that [87% of businesses noted a clear progress in embracing digital technologies within the past year](#). The statistics are encouraging, but brands need to be cognizant of why they are embracing technology; simply jumping on the bandwagon because it's flashy and popular is dangerous. In the case of social media, brands who take social media as representative of truth run the risk of making titanic errors of judgement, because much like an iceberg – social is only the easy part of brand/consumer interaction to see.

Technology is an enabler, but simply adopting it without understanding the why people use it is an error. Part of the solution is coming up with a calculated, digital strategy that not only gauges the statistical impact of social media sites on consumer engagement but also builds an emotional connection with your audience. Technology becomes irrelevant if a brand's message is not emotionally compelling and strategically prepared.

For example, a paltry [6% of companies were shown to have analysed their social media data appropriately](#) according to a recent poll. Clearly, the challenge is not merely about keeping up with technological advancements but using them in a way which is both practical and

advantageous.

Enabling or invading?

This challenge segues into a fundamental question for the modern brand – at what point does technology cross the line from enabler to invader? It's great to actively engage with your target audience, but with digital advances come responsibilities. Email or SMS spamming might very well alienate your consumers.

Technology is not an open invitation for brands and companies to bombard the individual with messages; it's a set of tools we have adopted as individuals to make our lives easier and more manageable. The fundamental paradox of the 21st century is that as the world becomes more digitalised, brands must strive to create more 'human' experiences that connect with the consumer. The technological conundrum is an anthropological one, and has nothing to do with 'the ideology of the gadget'.

Quality over quantity

The sheer quantity of tech platforms or social media that a brand incorporates does not provide a barometer by which to measure their success. Instead it is the content that resonates and people dwell upon and rarely for the reasons you would think. Quality is a relative characteristic, possibly even subjective. What you deem to be true can stand in contract to the opinions and feelings of your customers. In the worst case scenario your brand becomes an unwelcome and easily ignored invader into people's private space – lacking (regardless of all your efforts) a clear direction and a discernible message.