

Digital-born killer ideas

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The state of current technology provides a staggering range of opportunities for brands – the technology is no longer the limitation – the limit is only our creativity. One of the speakers at our Tug Life pop-up events was **Alex Jenkins**, the editor of brand publication **Contagious**, who explained this challenge for businesses in a world where digital is a part of everyday life, rather than a channel.

He started with [the story of grains of rice and a chessboard](#) and how results can progress at a parabolic rate. We are, said **Alex**, at a point in technology where “we’re about halfway across the chessboard; significant progress at a rapidly escalating rate.”

When asked what the most ingenious **digital** idea he’d seen was, he replied Stuxnet – a virus that travelled via USB sticks for many years until it reached its desired destination, whereupon it delivered a devastatingly well-thought through impact. Clearly we’re not talking about brands hacking nuclear facilities, but what we should be aiming for are ideas that are natively **digital** – rather than essentially analogue ideas applied to the internet. So what can help **brands** come up with more of these **digital**-born killer ideas? Here are three thoughts that might help

1. Crossing data signals for sharper insights

Brands often have a lot more insights at their fingertips than they might think, especially in the **digital** space. We’re not fans of big data, though, for the sake of it. Where we find value is in crossing very specific data signals to unearth new angles. For example, using search data to understand what people are really looking for, **social** for what they’re sharing with their friends and media data to see how different audiences are responding to different contents and ideas.

2. Think of a curve

We can do a lot worse than take a leaf from **Nicholas Lovell’s excellent book Curve**, pulling apart the economics behind freemium games and applying it across other categories. I loved his point that most people don’t care about your product and never will.

Being brutally honest about who isn’t your audience is very helpful in tightening exactly who you are appealing to. He encourages us to think less about marketing messages, more about

experiences that audiences can share in, for free and share with their friends. He calls them “freeloaders” but not disparagingly – he shows that that these people in effect become a business’ **marketing** channel.

Then looking at creating experiences for “freeloaders” who then become your **marketing** channel – encouraging us to think less about **marketing** messages, but more about experiences that audiences can share in, for free, and share with their friends.

3. Technology versus humans

Yes, algorithms are important, but automaton-driven **marketing** is not the future. We humans need to focus our efforts on what computers can’t do. Stand out, charm and creativity still come from humans (despite IBM’s Watson now cooking) Creativity is still very human and very necessary and essentially, it’s about making a leap (whether big or small).

As **Alex** also said – **Skynet** is already here – it’s just not trying to kill us yet. Human creativity just might help us stay one step ahead.

Picture: (Flickr/DiAnn L’Roy)

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