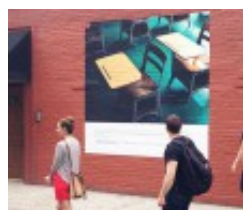


Four Mistakes That Can Kill Your Brand Campaigns

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It's no secret that the days of just "the three screens" are long gone. When that world died, the old wisdom of targeted, by-the-numbers ad buys died, too.

So, instead, these days we hear a lot of talk about **brand**-centric conversations and always-on **marketing**. And the people using those buzzwords often have no idea what they mean. I know that because I regularly see marketers ignore the implications of those concept and go right on making **branding** mistakes that undercut their **marketing** goals.

Here are four of the biggest mistakes I see, and some thoughts on how to fix them.

1. Forgetting the 'Always' Part of 'Always-On Marketing'

At Adobe, we talk a lot about the idea of always-on **marketing**—the idea that it's now impossible to control where and how customers interact with your **brand**.

We used to be able to control at least some of those interactions from the **brand** end: You'd present your message on traditional channels, such as TV, or conduct face-to-face outreach programs, and you could generally lead the conversation from the top down. The Web, in general—**social** media, in particular—has shifted that paradigm: Now, maybe 10% of the conversation is led by marketers while the rest takes shape from the bottom up, from the customer base itself.

The upshot is that your **brand** conversation needs to be open to adapting to these customer-led interactions. Staying "on-message" is counterproductive if that message isn't resonating with customers—or, far worse, if it's leading to mockery of your **brand**.

That's not to say you can't help guide the conversation. You can, to a small extent: When those unexpected online conversations happen, you need to show up, add value, be transparent, and say something clever or useful. Otherwise, you're shooting your own **brand** in the foot.

2. Focusing Exclusively on Ad Buys Instead of on Buying Behavior

When you go to book a hotel, what's the first place you check? For me, it's certainly not hotel

advertisements or travel agencies. It's customer-review websites, such as **Kayak** and **TripAdvisor**. And studies back up the idea that that's true for most consumers. Their buying behavior isn't driven primarily by ad buys any more; it's driven by [brand guidance throughout the buying process](#).

Now I'm not saying ad buys are a bad thing. They still play an important role in almost any campaign. But the point is that the hotel is no longer the crucial **brand** in a customer's decision-making process; instead, the booking service itself now takes center stage.

For many companies, this shift has radically transformed the way they put their **brands** in front of customers. The old logic might've looked something like "Well, if everyone's checking **TripAdvisor**, let's buy ads on **TripAdvisor**." But that obviously won't work, not only because many customers have ad-blocking software now but also because those customers aren't focusing as heavily on the ads; they're focusing on what their peers say on the booking service.

So, throwing more money at this problem isn't a solution. Your **brand's** solution needs to address the buying behavior of customers in the communities that interact with your **brand**. And that means understanding not just where they buy but also how and why they buy.

3. Not Putting the 'Customer Goggles' On

My previous point leads directly to this one. **Brand** marketers need to focus on understanding where and how customers interact with us, just like everyone else; accordingly, we've got to focus on the end-to-end customer experience. That means presenting the **brand** to the customer in a consistent way, from first introduction to long-term support.

People used to buy a product off the **marketing**, then call support once they had it in hand. Now, a customer might look up support videos on YouTube as part of the buying-decision process. In other words, the order in which customers engage with **brand** messaging has become all but impossible to control.

In traditional **marketing** you'd have the "pre" team that focuses on Web outreach and **brand** awareness, and a "post" team that focuses on product support and long-term CRM. But in the world of always-on **marketing**, there's got to be a lot more cross-pollination among the people on those teams. Instead of looking at **marketing** as a funnel, everyone associated with the **brand** needs to be thinking in terms of actual customer behavior.

4. Failing to Sell the New Paradigm up the Chain

Selling your **brand's** customer experience to customers is only part of the battle. Failing to sell these new approaches in the boardroom can torpedo the best **marketing** plan before it gets the chance to shine. The people higher up the chain want to see numbers—such as conversion percentages and the other usual data. Phrases like "**brand** conversation" and "customer goggles" can sound like a lot of fluff to them. And, in the wrong hands, that's exactly what they are.

But that "fluffy" approach has already worked for some big players, most notably Coca-Cola; its "Share a **Coke**" campaign generated huge sales numbers last year by simply encouraging users to share photos of their personalized **Coke** cans on **social** channels. That's why, this year, **Coke** doubled down with [even more customizations](#), including "Bro" and "Sis."

That approach is far from classic **advertising**, but it's working wonders for a classic product.

If you've got a plan for making your product a part of customers' lives, then you've got to find a way of selling upper management on the idea. A one-to-one correlation, as with traditional ad buys, may simply not exist in this new paradigm. But that doesn't mean the results won't be big. Rigorous research and proven case studies—such as **Coca-Cola's**—will go a long way.

An Ongoing Process

You need to work every day on understanding where and how customers interact with your **brands**, where and how they make their purchase decisions, and what kinds of engagement strategies translate into better sales numbers down the road.

This game still holds a lot of question marks, even for seasoned experts—and that's what makes it so exciting.

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