

Is 2016 the year the word 'digital' is finally consigned to history?

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Just as technology has become an integral part of consumers' lives, so '**digital**' - once thought of as a highly specialised **advertising** field - has become a core platform no **brand** marketer can afford to ignore. Is it time the **marketing** industry updated its terminology to reflect this?

Each month The Forum questions members of The **Marketing** Society on a hot topic. For more on membership, visit www.marketingsociety.com.

YES

Katy Taylor Group marketing and customer experience director, Go-Ahead Group



Almost every customer journey now includes some element of **digital** interaction, whether **social**, mobile or interactive. Our customers expect consistency across all channels, including face to face, and demand high standards of service across all the ways they interact with us, whether that be passenger information, retailing, campaigns or customer services.

We need to deliver the right quality of experience for each context, regardless of whether the passenger receives it through a **digital** device or in the physical world.

In the latter, we are keen to improve the analytics that have been developed in the **digital** environment. That's a field in which specialist **digital** skills can help. But all marketers need to have one foot in the physical world and one in the **digital** world, so that performance across all channels can be measured and improved, and **brand** promise delivered consistently.

NO

Joshua Graff UK country manager and senior director, marketing solutions EMEA,
LinkedIn



When it comes to **digital**, and its transformative effects on consumers and corporations, we're still in the teenage years. While silos have broken down, many organisations still have far to go before **digital** is truly embedded in the boardroom.

They'll only get there with the right talent. Companies need not only a **digitally** proficient workforce, but also specialists and **digital** advocates who can constantly bring others up to speed. It's reassuring to see some organisations recognising this and giving **digital** its well-needed seat at the board. But penetration isn't high enough and we have to do more.

The goal of any **digital** expert is to educate, steer and embed it in their organisation so that **digital** becomes second nature. Get this right, and, in theory, their role becomes redundant. In reality, **digital** is evolving at such a speed that the skills gap is widening and these roles will be critical for many years to come.

NO

John Watton Director, digital marketing EMEA, Adobe



The phrase '**digital marketing**' may not be around forever, but companies will still be talking about it in 2016.

The barriers between our physical and online worlds have become weaker, and the growing use of in-store technologies (such as iBeacons) is a good example of how **digital marketing** has broken free of the confines of our computers. Just like cloud computing is becoming simply 'computing', the same will happen for **marketing**. '**Digital**' will become the norm wherever consumers are, and the term will be dropped.

We shouldn't dismiss '**digital**' prematurely, however. A vital aspect of any campaign is knowing your channels well. Maintaining a consistent customer experience across all platforms is key to ensuring **brand** loyalty, and having the right **digital** expertise is essential to using these channels well. Until all marketers are cross-platform experts, organisations need dedicated **digital** specialists to lead the charge.

MAYBE

Rob Pierre Chief executive, Jellyfish



There's no getting away from the fact that the physical and **digital** worlds are blurring, and have been for a while now. More and more, we are seeing this convergence in our industry, with this year's Women's Aid 'Look at me' campaign marking a UK first for **digital** out-of-home.

The emergence of programmatic and its likely move into TV is another example of how **digital** is becoming intrinsic to every campaign.

In years gone by, **digital** would have been seen as an add-on to a traditional above-the-line campaign, but today's marketers tend to think **digital** first. It's clear that it can no longer be treated as a silo.

However, **digital** is still a specialism, and so, as a **marketing** term, it still serves a purpose. As the physical and **digital** worlds continue to blur, the term '**digital**' may indeed become irrelevant – but I don't think we're there yet.

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