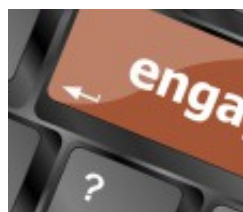


Why ads are giving way to search, social, content

Author : Drew Nicholson

Date : December 16, 2015



The Ad-Pocalypse: We Are Already In The Post-Advertising Era

Rod Banner has been a trailblazer in the B2B space--he's set up more B2B campaigns than most people have had hot dinners, but I couldn't help but think that his Insight piece had an element of driving via the rear view mirror.

I love the premise for his piece: **Howard Luck Gossage's** axiom that "Nobody reads advertising. People read what interests them and sometimes it's an ad." Despite all the changes reported, people do obviously read what interests them, always have. We've spent years developing stand-out "transmit" visuals and copy and it's that premise that brought us clients from The **Economist** to **IBM**. But **Rod** seems to be lamenting the death of the ad campaign--that's rather like lamenting the end of **Andy Pandy** or **Woolworths** (or even the black cab industry).

Revolution Is Inevitable

The fact is revolution is inevitable and we are already arguably "post-advertising." In B2B markets, which were traditionally much more direct and narrowcast in comparison to consumer markets, it's even more extreme. With no broadcast air cover in place, ads have already been subjugated to a walk-on part.

Hardly any clients are now leading with ads; most are leading with search. Getting found is the first task and given that business buyers are two-thirds of the way through the decision-making process before they even raise their hand to say "hi, I'm in your funnel," there is almost a case for leaving the top of the funnel to Google anyway.

Rather than ads being the **brand** recruiting sergeant at the top of the Attention Interest Desire Action (AIDA) model, we're now learning to create them for the I or D stages of the model. Re-targeting based on known behaviour becomes key and while some may think retargeting is irritating, if only 2% of web traffic converts on the first visit it's an obvious call to follow the interested.

Social And Content Are Key

What also becomes key is the role for **social** and content. Gartner has always said that apart from direct personal experience (of having bought from a **brand**), peer recommendation is the biggest determinant of buying behaviour. Content sharing is now so prevalent that the pyramid impact of creating the right content that will then be shared is key. And it works in all sorts of B2B markets. We're working with clients targeting SMEs with **products** that can be bought online, and clients targeting enterprise groups where the behaviour is more complex and multi-party (so content sharing is even more key).

Enterprise often (although not always) has a human sales intervention. Think power stations or aeroplane engines or datacentres; not too many are bought off-the-page, so the nurture path focuses around information exchange and providing rational and emotional triggers to encourage dialogue. SMEs and lower-ticket purchases are driving to sale, while complex purchases are fed by omni-channel, always-on programmes or "continuous commerce." The **marketing** funnel now becomes the sales engine.

The Premise Remains The Same

It seems to me that the overall premise is actually still the same--demand is still what we seek but the way to achieve it has changed. Work we have done with UPS has evolved from an advertising awareness/demand generation model to a content "campaign" that invites small businesses to learn about how to succeed in export markets. It's more than just about sending parcels, it's about helping them. For **IBM** we use information created around events (in this case Wimbledon) and repackage it. It feeds **social** channels, making data human and interesting and more than just business as usual. The data stories told are rich and shareable.

Rod talks about metrics and that is certainly a big shift. **Marketing** Automation (MA) is changing the landscape. It's definitively guiding us towards the best nurture paths; we are getting richer pictures of the activity that leads towards maximum engagement. The challenge here is not the tech, it's the people. Finding great MA specialists is the big challenge for most clients right now.

So it's not about ads, it's about engagement; not about formats we create but ones that customers engage with.

Who is Don Draper anyway?

//