



The Shift to Constant Connectivity

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THE RUNDOWN

We're living a part of marketing history. The shift to constant connectivity is one that's transforming how we connect with people, providing access to so many more consumer moments than ever before, and powerful ways to be relevant and welcome at each one. The possibilities are incredible and the opportunity is huge – and the time is now.

Imagine being a marketer in the 1940s. It's the advent of television advertising. Your entire model for connecting with consumers is evolving and you're getting your head around the implications of having a captive audience tuned into screens in their living rooms. You're likely enamored by the opportunity to deliver sight, sound and motion – with great reach. But you'd need new assets, and new ways to position your brand and spotlight its benefits. You'd need new thinking about how to structure your campaigns – and your teams. As you witnessed a massive change in the relationship between people and technology, you'd be called to embrace the accompanying implications for marketing. Perhaps without even realizing it, you'd be living a piece of marketing history.

There have been a handful of these epic shifts in marketing. Clearly the emergence of the Internet was one. And we're in the midst of another one right now that rivals even that. I know it's happening, because I'm living it as a user, I'm living it as a Googler, and I'm living it as a marketer. This time the catalyst isn't a TV

screen or a computer screen – it's not really any screen above any other. It's constant connectivity, and the multi-screen reality it enables. And in my eyes, this transformation is even more monumental than any other to date because the impact on everyday people will be more massive, and the richness of business possibilities will be more magical than we as marketers could have ever imagined. Today's great shift – our collective movement from online sessions to online lives – has implications that truly explode the possibilities for connecting with people in meaningful ways.

It's an amazing time to be a marketer.

MORE SCREENS, MORE MOMENTS THAT MATTER

As marketers, we're people persons. Our job is to connect people with our products and brands and messages. What distinguishes great marketers is their unwavering focus on those people – on their needs, behaviors, intentions, wants – and an ability to avoid the shiny temptations of marketing solely to things – like devices, channels, technologies. This distinction has never been more critical. As technology advances and devices proliferate at unprecedented speed, the allure of marketing to things will quickly prove both insatiable and unmanageable. Instead, by staying focused on the people and motivations behind the screens and technologies, marketers can catch an incredible wave of opportunity.

Fundamentally, people still want to learn, discover new things, make confident decisions and purchases, connect and share with loved ones. But in a constantly connected world we have screens at our service – smartphones (soon to be a billion subscriptions worldwide!¹), tablets, desktops, and even a new generation of devices blurring the boundaries between them. We rely on them instinctively, hungry for instant, relevant information. Ultimately we're focused less on the 'devices' than on the 'doing' they support in our daily lives. We often seek convenience and speed. In fact 77% of mobile searches are in a location (home or work) where people are likely to have a PC available to them.²

With constant connectivity come critical new behaviors. People now signal the moments that matter to them, grabbing the device most convenient or functional for that moment. They also move seamlessly between devices – sequentially, simultaneously, and interchangeably. According to our research, 90% of multiple device owners switch between screens to complete tasks³, using an average of three different combinations every day. And during the 2012 holiday season we saw that more screens meant more shopping; Ability to shop on multiple devices resulted in both more frequent shopping and shopping across a greater number of categories.⁴ Ultimately, in a world where screens are woven into our lives, there are more consumer-initiated touch points – more moments that matter – than ever before. As people persons, our job as marketers is to win those moments.

THE POWER OF CONTEXT

With empowered consumers now connecting across an array of devices in a variety of situations, the way a marketer wins is by offering information people value in those moments. It's not that being relevant is a new concept. But being relevant to the moment is where marketing power – and consumer expectations – now lie.

Relevance is really a cornerstone at Google. Think about search. Our goal has always been that every single query would deliver information that people would find useful. That means delivering highly relevant results for 100 billion searches each month, with 15% of queries being new ones to address each day.⁵ With search advertising, we just extended that relevance vision so that marketing messages could be just as timely and useful. A person's query signals her intent – what she needs or wants at that moment – and search ads enable marketers to respond with a highly targeted message to inform or entice her, immediately – moving her from thoughts into action.

By using the signal of intent, search marketing got us closer than ever before to delivering the right message at the right time. Now, in the constantly connected world, something gets us even closer: Context. By adding information about where someone is, what device they're using, and the time of day, marketers can figure out the best message to show them – not just at that moment, but for that moment. That's relevance at its best.

Imagine two people searching for 'Italian food.' The first searches from a desktop computer at 9am on a weekday. Maybe it's someone at work exploring options for a restaurant reservation that evening. The second query is made by someone on a phone at 8pm on a Saturday night in a busy metro area, in walking distance to local restaurants. This person might just be browsing for information, but everything about his context suggests he's hungry now; a listing of nearby restaurants with directions would help.

Without context, marketers have no way of distinguishing between these signals of intent. But add context to the mix and suddenly they can be relevant to the moment. That means the exact same query can trigger two different ads – perhaps one with a clickable phone number or directions to help a hungry, on-the-go user, another with reservation information and menu options for the desktop user planning a night out. And with greater relevance comes greater results. Our data has shown that click-through-rate improves 6-8% for mobile ads making use of click-to-call functionality⁶, for example.

The ability to amplify the power of intent with context moves us closer to 'the perfect ad,' one that adapts itself to any context – mobile or desktop; day or night; in-store or at home – seamlessly delivering the most useful information at exactly the right time. That's a complicated task, but luckily technology can do the hard work – in the background helping to understand context and finding the message to match – leaving marketers to focus on what they do best: being as relevant as possible to real people.

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CAPTURING THE OPPORTUNITY: MARKETING TO WIN EACH MOMENT

Constant connectivity has exploded the number of moments in which marketers can connect with people. And not only are there more moments to consider, but each moment gives you the chance to speak to people in real-life situations with better, more useful information. That combination is a marketing gold mine.

The key for brands is to understand their value proposition for different consumer moments and align their messaging behind that. For a retailer, that might mean different ads during store hours (phone number, real-time offers, store locator) versus after-hours (product information, online customer service, open hours the next day). When promoting the store locator in their mobile ads, RadioShack estimated that 40-60% then visited a store, with 85% of those making a purchase.⁷ For a pizza chain it might mean tailoring smartphone ads for convenient click-to-call ordering or directions to nearby locations. In either case, it requires a moment mindset.

Regardless of industry or business-type, constant connectivity gives all marketers the chance to be great marketers. Marketers who are connecting with people in specific, real-life moments that matter. And things are just getting started. There will only be more screens in the future, more interoperability between them, and new consumer signals to respond to. That means there's only going to be more and more opportunities for brands to be present and relevant. Shifting to context-driven marketing now will ensure we catch the wave.

If ever there was a moment that mattered for marketers, it's now.

Sources

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