

Micro-Moments Are Multiplying—Are You Ready for the Future of Marketing?

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Mobile has changed everything, but it's only Act One. Machine learning in marketing is set to drive the industry's next revolution. Google's Senior Vice President of Ads & Commerce, Sridhar Ramaswamy, reflects on the implication of this change and how leading brands will navigate the shift.

What's the next big thing? What comes after mobile? Where is marketing headed?

I often get asked these types of questions. Many of us who work in ad tech do. And while fortune teller is a job title most of us wouldn't claim, I am increasingly confident about what the future will hold because it's coming so clearly into view.

Here's why: The future coming into view is an acceleration of what we see today. It's unfolding before our eyes. And if we press pause and reflect for a moment on what's happening, it's as exciting as anything I've witnessed or worked toward during my 14 years at Google.

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Reflecting on the big picture reveals—in an equally obvious and striking way—just how much of a game-changer mobile really is. For consumers and marketers alike, mobile has forced a rewriting of the rules. Consumers have become more empowered than ever to get what they want, when they want it. Waiting has become a thing of the past. That translates into today's pervasive [micro-moment](#) behavior—immediately turning to a device to know, go, do, and buy. To capitalize on that behavior and win over consumers, marketers have been forced to rewrite the rule book. You've had to double down on addressing the needs of consumers in the moment, committing to being there and being useful each and every time you can help advance the journey. In short, marketers have had to start being a lot more assistive.

But mobile isn't just an epic game-changer. It's a prerequisite, Act One. Just one critical leg of the journey. Pick your analogy, but I like to think of mobile as the force that's accelerating a train we're all now aboard. It's critical to get it right—because strategic shifts made today lay the groundwork for what's coming.

As new smart devices continue to emerge and as consumers embrace new, more natural ways to interact with those devices (like voice commands), the micro-moment behaviors mobile kick-started will only multiply. And as data and machine learning become more sophisticated in enhancing everyday consumer experiences, the expectations for relevant, personalized, and assistive experiences will continue to skyrocket. We're heading toward an age of assistance where, for marketers, friction will mean failure, and mass messages will increasingly mean "move on."

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In this new age, it won't be enough just to be present across more micro-moments. We'll all be expected to stay a step ahead of consumers—to know their needs even better than they do. Successful marketers will have a much deeper understanding of their customers at every encounter. They'll focus on acquiring a detailed, data-driven view to really know them and help them along their individual journeys. That's the assistive mindset that will be required to win.

If I didn't believe so much in the role of technology, I might get worried. How can we as marketers possibly scale relevant messages and experiences across all devices at all moments? How can we possibly deliver smart marketing that recognizes each customer is unique, while simultaneously driving the bottom line? But I'm not worried. I'm thrilled. It is precisely technology—specifically the promise of data and machine learning—that will enable us to get this right.

Some organizational change will be required. And it will be necessary to embrace new standards for business as well as invest for the future. Here are three things to focus on as we navigate this shift together:

- Raising the bar on mobile: To delight and be useful, we need to deliver fast, relevant, assistive experiences. It's important to lay the groundwork early with incredible mobile experiences.
- Being smarter with data: A better understanding of consumers, coupled with smart automation, will enable personalization at scale. The ability to connect first-party data to media execution will be foundational to success.

- Embracing omnichannel assistance: Leading brands will bridge online and offline, delivering seamless experiences throughout the consumer journey.

There's much work to be done. But in many ways, this future is what we at Google have been building toward for the last 18 years with Search. We can apply our data, intelligence, and scale to help marketers deliver the most useful messages for each and every micro-moment. I'm no fortune teller, but I believe the future is going to be pretty exciting, and I'm thrilled to be on this ride with all of you.

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