



Build Your Engagement Engine: Part 1

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PUBLISHED
September 2013

THE RUNDOWN

Marketing has changed. Once, offering killer creative was enough. Now that's just the first act. In the participation age, consumers want an opportunity to tell brands what they think of their content — and expect brands to prove they're listening. In the first act of a series of three articles, David Mogensen, Head of Brand Engagement for YouTube and a former brand marketer for a Global Fortune 500 company, highlights some of the ways marketers are prioritizing engagement in their media planning through a combination of nimble media, ads consumers choose, and longer campaign windows.

When Kmart decided to promote how it was merging e-commerce with in-store experiences in a spot called "Ship My Pants," it knew it was taking a risk. "Kmart is known as a family brand ... and this is not a family commercial," Adriana Llamas Kogelis, vice-president of Sears Holdings Digital Marketing Division told a branding conference in June.

But it was a calculated risk. Instead of starting with a mass audience, Kmart targeted a core audience through digital first. In the initial 24 hours of the campaign, online sentiment reports were being filed up to the CEO-level every two hours. By closely monitoring the social media reaction the brand progressively amplified the engagement, seeding it in social media and using targeted ad buys including TrueView, YouTube ads that people choose to watch, to reach a defined, relevant audience. The brand expanded its online targeting from late-night show fans to more traditional Kmart fans. Within weeks, the spot spawned a sequel and, armed with the knowledge they had a hit, expanded from online-only to also include TV.

Now closing in on 20 million YouTube views, “Ship My Pants” is only one in a series of recent successes that highlight the importance of media planning in engagement, and the power of nimble media, ads that people choose and what happens when brands give themselves the time and ability to react to consumer response.

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1. PRIORITIZE NIMBLE MEDIA

Engagement is all about relevance — and relevance has a deadline, they like to say at DigitasLBi, one of the agencies we spoke to as part of the Engagement Project.

“You’re seeing brands developing their own newsrooms, rethinking their own processes to be in conversations,” DigitasLBi Senior Vice President and Head of Brand Content John McCarus told us.

In the participation age, consumers expect brands to not only listen, but to respond. This has marketers examining how much of their overall media spending goes to channels where they can change creative and targeting after the buy has been executed. What we call “nimble media.”

Nimble media channels provide two obvious benefits. The first is that they tend to be the media types that generate strong signals about when and how consumers are engaging.

The second is that they allow those insights to be put into action. Data and insights are of questionable value if they come after it’s too late to make any changes.

We’ve all had the experience of going back and looking at what worked and what didn’t in campaigns, after the campaigns have ended. The difference is now we can do that in near

real-time as the campaign is taking place and adjust to make it even better mid-campaign. In an age where consumers expect their favorite brands to respond to them, a nimble media campaign component is becoming a necessity.

Things to consider:

- How much of your media plan gives you the flexibility to make changes in allocation and creative on short notice?
- How nimble is your team? Can you collect the signals and use them to make better decisions mid-campaign?

2. GIVE VIEWERS A CHOICE

Even with all our demographic and psychographic profiling, most marketers agree that finding the right audience can be a challenge. A Catalina study looked at 10 leading consumer packaged goods companies and found, on average, 53% of the people who bought their products fell outside of the marketers' target demographics. Imagine the brand impact if their media included that 53% they're not even talking to.

There is an easy solution to this problem: Choice. In fact, at Google we are betting nearly all advertising will be choice-based in the near future. Why? Because people are already making a choice, even if media is forced upon them. Take a television commercial break for instance. More than half of us pick up an internet-connected device while watching TV. Forty-seven percent of American households have a DVR and 29% of TV viewing is recorded, according to a study by Motorola Mobility. Brands pay for those viewers — whether they're watching or not.

Everyone wins when choice is built into the ad. For the consumer, it's a better experience. Based on research we did at YouTube, unsurprisingly, nine out of ten people prefer choice-based ads.

Brands win because they only pay when people choose to watch. They effectively cut through the crowds to find those most likely to be interested. Because the audience is self-selecting, this allows brands to target their ads to a wider population, and suddenly, the 53% become part of the audience reached.

Equally important, the marketer learns from those who choose to watch their content. We've seen lots of brands use choice based advertising to do A/B creative testing. In a matter of days, brands learn the ads to which consumers respond the most, and use those insights to go big throughout their campaign. We've also seen many brands that discover new audience profiles and contextual targets they'd never considered before.

Things to consider:

- How many of your ads give viewers a choice?
- Do you know which of your ads people enjoy watching?
- What percentage of your customers fall outside your demographic targets?

3. STRETCH CAMPAIGN WINDOWS

It used to take weeks, if not months, to get campaign performance reports. By that time, in many cases, campaigns had ended or were concluding as the reports rolled in. Today, data is faster.

Broadening a campaign's length increases the likelihood of finding in-market shoppers and gives a brand time to respond to customer feedback, adjust campaigns and activate advocates. Many of the campaigns people talk about now build to a peak several weeks in, after marketers have time to collect signals from their target audience and mobilize them to spread the message.

This also affects the sequence of when different media takes the stage in your plan. By lengthening the window, and putting your media in order based on engagement and involvement, you offer those core fans a chance to advocate for you. Think about how you can engage them early, so they help spread your message as you ramp-up to the campaign peak.

Things to consider:

- How are you mobilizing advocates to spread your word for you? What channels are used most to share your content? What kind of content is shared the most?
- What data are you generating at the start of your campaigns, that you can implement prior to your biggest media weeks?

The best campaigns today are two-way engagements. They're from brands that built in time to listen and the flexibility to respond. They value their audience enough to give them a choice and a voice. By ensuring we have the pieces in place, we as marketers have an unparalleled opportunity to build deep engagement with our most valuable audiences.



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