

# Deirdre McGlashan on getting the value equation right

[DIGITAL](#) [OPINION](#)

BY DEIRDRE MCGLASHAN 13 OCT 2015 6 min read

Brands looking to get digital right need to be prepared to create a fair value exchange with consumers. Deirdre McGlashan, Global Chief Digital officer, explains.

As digital experts we often get caught up in the issue of the moment; right now it's ad blocking, a few months ago it was viewability and ad fraud.

These are important issues that we need to raise and resolve but actually the question I still get asked most often by clients is “am I doing digital right?”

There's good reason that they ask that question. In a recent IBM global study among senior marketers, only 5% said they were "extremely good" at creating compelling digital experiences for consumers, and only a third said they were "moderately good".

But why do so many marketers still feel they haven't "cracked" digital? The answer lies in how the question is phrased – doing digital right means having a business and communications strategy that integrates digital. Simply doing digital right on its own isn't possible.

Whenever anyone tells me they need 'digital', my first step is to explore with them what it is that they need from digital. Do they need strategic planning about how technology can help fuel their communications system; consultation on how digital technologies can be used to drive their business forward; expert video or display planning/buying; better SEM or programmatic; data capture or data analytics?

The word digital might cover any or all of these things.

A better question to ask in an era of consumer-controlled communications might be what value can brands add. If we want to communicate and earn permission to communicate, we need to understand what we can give consumers to make the connections they crave.

**Emotional boost**

The value that we provide doesn't have to be monetary, it can be the amazement and entertainment that great content provides, the emotional boost that an uplifting video gives or the utility that a really great app can deliver. It could even be an offer on something they have been researching.

As an industry we've provided such value in a selection of campaigns, not just in recent years but for decades. I can recall a campaign that I worked on back in 2001 in the US that created a racing game that incentivised consumers to watch Nascar races and look at ads to find the codes that helped "fund" their own virtual racing team.

In Year Two we were even able to add these codes to cartons of Miller beer and through the codes, see where sales were coming from in almost real time.

There are other more recent examples too. Early this year, there was a great campaign in Russia for 3M that allowed people to use banners as online post it notes, using retargeting technology to ensure they followed them around the web – making the ads useful instead of annoying.

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Similarly, MediaCom teams have helped Etihad provide busy business travellers with a bespoke LinkedIn app that allowed them to see where their contacts were in real time and have created a Coke campaign in the UK that let consumers, who were already seeking personalised bottles in real life, see a bottle with their name on it during the commercial breaks of the TV shows they were watching.

But while we can all think of standout examples like these, too many campaigns don't deliver value and undermine consumer receptivity for the ads that do. We all need to be much more mindful of our need to deliver value through our content if we want the connection to be successful and impactful.

There is also another aspect that needs to define our search for value. As an industry we can be too keen to seek to employ data and technology solutions to track consumers and see if our media is working.

Data and technology solutions are important, I couldn't imagine deploying a campaign without tracking it but sometimes it's useful to take a more human approach and ask consumers to close the loop for us by giving them value for doing so in a smart and engaging way.

If they say "hi, it's me again" or "I saw that content, thanks" because we've given them a reason to, isn't that better? Yes, the data is important but ultimately it's the humans we want to make a connection with.

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