

If digital is interactive, why aren't we interacting?

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We might be spending in digital, but are we truly using it? Deirdre McGlashan explains why agencies should better use the capabilities each medium allows.

The commercial web and digital advertising have been around for about 20 years now, but have we really advanced the art of it?

Of course, spend is starting to fall into line with consumption (in some markets more than others) and 'digital' is part of every media conversation, but are we really using this medium to the fullest extent? Or are we treating digital as simply a channel designed to deliver more efficient and effective media buying?

If all our efforts are absorbed in building the new toolkit for digital, the bidding platforms, the measurement tools and the creative automation, then we are missing out on the bigger opportunities – the opportunities that are intrinsically part of this medium.

In the early days of the commercial internet, I had a great boss who pushed us to really explore and exploit this new medium. When we came up with ideas, he used to challenge us with the simple question, “Can that be done in any other medium?” If the answer was yes, then we had to start again because we weren’t taking full advantage of the attributes that digital media delivered – we weren’t truly using the medium. That question stays with me to this day and it means even more now when we’re thinking about both content and connections.

Take video for example. Fifteen years ago, I remember doing a lot with interactive video – either video with interactive elements or video elements that were triggered by a user’s interaction. Fifteen years on, why is this still the exception, not the rule, in the digital space? Why are we still mainly using linear video online?



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In part, I think it is because it falls outside the 'responsibility' of any agency. Media agencies don't think about asking for interactive videos, creative agencies don't think about creating them.

Great examples of video that can only be done online and in mobile are still few and far between, but they do exist. In Germany, we delivered a shoppable ad allowing consumers to see and purchase items in YouTube ads for eBay Collections; in the UK we've used sequential video systems to boost responses for Shell and put text in mobile video ads to reach consumers who watch on mute for Audi.

Truly using the medium isn't isolated to just video. In Vietnam, we've used digital out of home billboards to deliver fun messages to real people in real time as they wait for the lights to change for Coke, while in Mexico Sprite has used data segmentation to identify the most powerful content for our targets before it got made, using dynamic ads to keep the message fresh during the campaign. All of these truly use the capabilities of the medium at hand.

Fifteen years from now, I hope this will be the norm not the exception and that I'll be wondering if we're truly using hover boards to the fullest extent.

Happy New Year everyone!

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