Almost twelve months ago, a group of graduate students in the Integrated Marketing Communications department of Medill met for the first time to create this issue of the Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications (JIMC). They worked hard to come up with a theme that reflected the school’s brand, provide topics that pushed forward the knowledge base of the profession, find innovative thinkers in the profession who would write provocative articles, and then put these articles together into a publication that continued the JIMC tradition started more than 25 years ago. We think you will find this issue of JIMC continued that very successfully. The students should be proud of what they have accomplished. Their ideas, skills, perseverance, and hard work once again demonstrate all that they have learned. Enjoy reading this.
Welcome to the 2019 edition of the JIMC!

The 2019 edition of the JIMC comes at a unique moment in time for those of us in the marketing communications field.

When the leadership team came together to brainstorm this year’s theme, Marketing (R)evolutions, one thing was evident to us: our society, our world, was undergoing a major shift. From polarized political landscapes to an ever-changing tumult of business practices, corporations, governments, and institutions around the globe have been confronted at once with new challenges and a range of new opportunities.

By necessity, those of us in marketing have had to address these rapid changes and disruptions with our own solutions, doctrines, and counter moves in order to keep up. Whether we are evolving our practices alongside the market, or we are completely revolutionizing how we approach marketing, the field of Integrated Marketing Communications is at an inflection point, with the outcomes still very much in flux. This journal, therefore, is an exploration of the innovations and disruptions our contributors have witnessed, propagated, or anticipated in their respective verticals of marketing communications; each piece of content showcases how the IMC consumer-centric approach has informed their perspectives.

Continuing the legacy of the 2018 journal, the 2019 journal has articles, research pieces, interviews, and alumni profiles. Our associate editors have all worked diligently and carefully on the originality and relevance of each piece, and we are proud to present the end product.

I would like to thank all of the students and faculty members whose time, efforts, and advice made this edition of the JIMC possible: Senior Lecturer Nancy Habor, Associate Dean of IMC Vijay Viswanathan, Professor Clarke Caywood, and IMC Program Assistant Robin Young for their guidance and support throughout the process; Copy Editor Ben Mandel, Creative Director Viola Liu, Editorial Director Andrew Hodgson, and PR Director Sheryl Zheng for their dedication and initiative in co-creating this journal; our associate editors, creative editors, and digital strategists for providing editorial guidance, connecting with our authors, helping with the design and creation of these pages, and maintaining an online presence for the JIMC; and our thoughtful contributors for writing their respective articles and sharing their expertise with us. The 2019 JIMC would not have been possible without all of you.
Andrew Hodgson 
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Prior to his time at Northwestern, Andrew graduated from the University of Missouri in 2016 with a Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of Arts in History. Andrew spent a year covering the University of Missouri’s athletics program for the Jefferson City News Tribune after graduating. A native of Pittsburgh, he is primarily focused on strategic communications, digital and social marketing, and creative branding with an emphasis on sports (while also incorporating his interest in analytics and investor relations, which he explored during his time at the IMC program). Among the clients he has worked with in his time at Northwestern, his favorites continue to drive his passion for IMC’s data-driven, consumer-centric approach to marketing communications. He hopes to bring her creativity and curiosity to a career in brand strategy and digital content. Originally from the Bay Area, Hannah loves the outdoors and speaks Farsi fluently.

Hannah Toutouchi 
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Hannah received her Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies with a minor in Professional Writing at the University of California, Santa Barbara before attending Northwestern. She worked in both the legal and editorial fields, in roles focused heavily on writing and editing. Hannah came to Medill with a fascination for storytelling, multimedia, and technology; these interests continue to drive her passion for IMC’s data-driven, consumer-centric approach to marketing communications. She hopes to bring her creativity and curiosity to a career in brand strategy and digital content. Originally from the Bay Area, Hannah loves the outdoors and speaks Farsi fluently.

Viola Liu 
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

It has often been said that creativity is the enemy to analytical thinking, and that the two can in no way be reconciled; however, Viola embraces them both. Viola has many artistic skills: innovative design, video production, video editing, and special effects production. She loves bringing a different perspective to things and visualizing them in her own way. Viola is pursuing the marketing analytics specialization, which was a main reason why she came to Medill. Her ability to transform data into actionable growth strategies and leverage analytics to create meaningful stories will drive her future career goals after Medill.

Crystal Chow 
CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Crystal is a passionate storyteller, with three years work experience in journalism, PR, and marketing communications in real estate. Just dealing with the cold numbers, Crystal focused more on solving customers’ problems, improving their lives through storytelling, and understanding their needs. Originally from Taiwan, she loves traveling and meeting new people, bringing international perspectives and creative energy into her career and life.

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cate received her Bachelor of Arts in Writing, Rhetoric, and Culture from James Madison University in New York City. She worked on the sales and marketing teams of Indulge Magazine and Refinery29.com in New York City. She graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Writing and Rhetoric, minoring in Creative Writing, from James Madison University in Virginia, having been raised in the Washington, DC area. Cate has an avid interest in brand and content strategy as well as production.

Katie Hsieh  
MARKETING ANALYST

Katie is an energetic and analytical marketer with extensive experience in E-commerce and technology marketing. Previously, she worked in management roles in Silicon Valley, as well as the dynamic education services industry. Katie works collaboratively to seek out potential problems and innovative insightful solutions for companies. At Medill, she is fascinated with digital marketing and plans to become a data-driven marketing analyst in her future professional life.

Omar Ijaz 
MARKETING ANALYST

Omar is an aspiring strategist who uncovers insights and connects the dots. Graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University, he majored in Marketing with a focus on Product and Brand Management, as well as receiving a Certificate for Product Innovation. After VCU, Omar worked for an IT startup that allowed him to wear several hats in the broad field of marketing. At Medill, Omar is focusing on brand strategy and digital interactive marketing.

Benjamin Mandel 
COPY EDITOR

Benjamin is a Chicago native and a Northwestern University alumnus. Prior to pursuing an IMC Master’s degree, Benjamin worked in media and communications at a Chicago-based nonprofit focused on advocating for sustainable vertical urbanism, where he had the opportunity to write and edit academic publications as well as work with the press. His passions include music, playing guitar, traveling, and hiking.

Sheryl Zheng 
PR DIRECTOR

Sheryl discovered her interest in marketing while working for a consulting agency in Beijing, China. She is particularly interested in marketing analytics and how data translates into insightful stories and meaningful implications for brands to act upon. She is a passionate, semi-serious runner, once trampled through a desert in Inner Mongolia, and loves to act, having played the leading role in two theater productions. She was also a journalist for her university gazette, where she wrote articles on spotlight events such as Kofi Annan’s visit to Peking University.
Brittany’s career interests in consumer insights, strategic planning, and communications have been shaped by her work experience in media relations, communications, and organizational effectiveness. Throughout Medill’s IMC program, she has been able to implement strategies that use consumer insights to drive messaging and communication plans for a variety of clients. Medill has given her the tools to leverage her skills with her curiosity for human thought and purchase behaviors. She wants to pursue an impactful career that builds profound connections between people and brands through the evolving IMC process.

After earning her Bachelor’s degree in Mathematical Studies from the University of Waterloo, Flora worked as a Senior Associate in the Financial Services sector at PricewaterhouseCoopers. Her other working experience includes being an IBD summer analyst at Morgan Stanley and an intern at a down syndrome non-profit organization. She is currently transitioning to the marketing field with strong interests in brand storytelling and digital technology innovation. Flora’s career goal is to become a market researcher who can help provide expertise in customer insights and help brands connect with their audience using strategy and digital solutions.

After receiving her degree in Marketing from the University of Georgia, Shea worked for an international logistics company and then moved to Chicago, where she became a project manager at a specialized agency that handles branded promotional premiums. At Medill, Shea is specializing in Brand Strategy. Her interests include visual communication is powerful and plays a crucial role in storytelling in the world of marketing.

Diana majored in Psychology and Communications at the University of California-Davis before coming to graduate school. She has worked on graphic design since high school and specializes in magazine layout. At the IMC program, her concentrations are content marketing and digital marketing. She believes that visual communication is powerful and plays a crucial role in storytelling in the world of marketing.

Nicolette graduated summa cum laude from the University of San Francisco with a BSBA in Marketing. Before attending Medill, Nicolette was able to garner experiences using her newfound affinity for connecting data-driven insights and storytelling, in everything from the beauty and fashion industries to a technology driven offsite construction company. Nicolette looks forward to focusing on delivering innovative communication-based strategic processes and initiatives.

Jack is a full-time student in the Medill Integrated Marketing Communications program. As an undergraduate student at the University of Notre Dame, he held internships in marketing management and data science. Jack looks forward to applying his skills in the increasing data-driven marketing landscape.

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Derek, an aspiring product and data analyst, drives business forward with his background in economics, his consumer-centric thinking, and his extreme enthusiasm about uncovering universal human truths. Before Medill, he got his bachelor’s degree in Economics in Beijing and held multiple professional roles in analytics across different industries, including technology, consumer goods, and consulting.

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Sujia is an aspiring market researcher, a passionate digital marketer, and a strategic communicator. She graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with a degree in Supply Chain and Information Systems. With experience in market research and event planning from her work at Caterpillar and Masentri, as well as her own online store, she looks forward to becoming a marketing communications professional in the tech industry.

RUSHIL MOHAN
Rushil enjoys the intersection of qualitative and quantitative information. His work experience in whole brain-thinking and strategy has most notably included time at a strategy consultancy, Sony Pictures in India, and with a startup while at Northwestern. Rushil returned to Northwestern for his masters in IMC specifically focusing on coursework that needed qualitative understanding of big data, research-based validation of creative ideas, and structured disruptive and incremental innovation.

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Diana majored in Psychology and Communications at the University of California-Davis before coming to graduate school. She has worked on graphic design since high school and specializes in magazine layout. At the IMC program, her concentrations are content marketing and digital marketing. She believes that visual communication is powerful and plays a crucial role in storytelling in the world of marketing.

ANITA MARIA GARCIA BUSTAMANTE
Before studying at Northwestern, Ana worked on the Business Development team in a risk consultant firm, and she graduated with a bachelor’s degree in International Relations from ITAM in Mexico. At Medill, she was able to formalize everything she has learned in practice, expand her vision of marketing, and learn the skills that will help her become a world-class specialist. Ana’s main interests are consumer insights and market research.

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JAZZ JENKINS
Jazz loves the power of words and the sound of music. She graduated from Northwestern University in June of 2017 with a BA in Communication Studies, Sociology, and Integrated Marketing Communications. Her avid love for Northwestern could not end there! Three months later, she enrolled in the MS program, where she continued to cultivate her love for creative storytelling, consumer insights, and strategic planning. Her previous work experience includes sports marketing, advertisement sales, market research, and brand strategy. She hopes to pursue a career that allows her creativity, curiosity, and consumer-centric thinking to unite people and brands.

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Brittany’s career interests in consumer insights, strategic planning, and communications have been shaped by her work experience in media relations, communications, and organizational effectiveness. Throughout Medill’s IMC program, she has been able to implement strategies that use consumer insights to drive messaging and communication plans for a variety of clients. Medill has given her the tools to leverage her skills with her curiosity for human thought and purchase behaviors. She wants to pursue an impactful career that builds profound connections between people and brands through the evolving IMC process.

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After earning her Bachelor’s degree in Mathematical Studies from the University of Waterloo, Flora worked as a Senior Associate in the Financial Services sector at PricewaterhouseCoopers. Her other working experience includes being an IBD summer analyst at Morgan Stanley and an intern at a down syndrome non-profit organization. She is currently transitioning to the marketing field with strong interests in brand storytelling and digital technology innovation. Flora’s career goal is to become a market researcher who can help provide expertise in customer insights and help brands connect with their audience using strategy and digital solutions.

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**RACHEL WEINBERG**

Rachel is a marketing professional with a passion for content creation and strategy, digital marketing, and storytelling. At Medill, she is focusing on brand strategy and content marketing. Rachel is also a contributing editor and theater critic for the Chicago region of BroadwayWorld.com, one of the nation’s largest theater news websites.

**YIXUAN (SHERRY) XIE**

Yixuan (Sherry) Xie’s academic and research interests lie in strategic planning, branding, and content marketing. Yixuan graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English Language and Literature from Fudan University, and also has a master’s degree in Language and Literacy from Harvard, where she took several courses and participated in some projects that enabled her to understand research methodologies and basic product design procedures.

**YUTING (TING TING) XUE**

Yuting (Ting Ting) is specializing in brand strategy and digital marketing at Medill. Before Medill, Ting Ting finished her first IMC master’s degree in Hong Kong, and she had four-year full-time job experience with roles as a corporate communication strategist and consultant. Ting Ting is committed to helping brands always be relevant to their customers with brand truth and human truth.

**SHIYING YAO**

Before coming to the IMC program, Shiying received her bachelor’s degree from Sun Yat-sen University with a major in English Literature. She previously worked at Starcom as a media planning intern and at Amway as a brand management intern. Aspiring to be a data-driven strategist and consultant, she came to Medill and is now focusing on the specializations of marketing analytics and brand strategy.

**MONIQUE DEZARN**

Monique has moved from a creative role at Dell to an agency position after graduate school. Throughout her time in the IMC program, Monique has focused on brand strategy and hopes to parlay that interest into an advertising agency position after graduation.

**RIDHIMA NAGALIA**

Ridhima is a passionate problem solver who aspires to use analytical thinking in a creative way to touch people’s lives. She experienced both the agency and brand side of marketing prior to starting at Medill and, moving forward, hopes to use her mathematics background, combined with her learnings at IMC, to build a career in the fast-paced world of tech. Using empathetic marketing to drive a customer-first approach is how she envisions her career progressing over the coming years.

**PAYAL JHAWAR**

Payal brings two years of experience in food marketing with her to the IMC master’s program. From doing business development for India’s Yelp to interning for Apple, Payal has added enriching experiences to her repertoire. At Northwestern, Payal focuses on brand strategy and has worked with clients such as Kohler and the Chicago Film Festival in bringing effective strategies to life through omnichannel tactics. Originally from India, she is now looking forward to start her marketing career in the US following graduation.

**PRAYUSHI AMIN**

After earning her bachelor’s in marketing from Drexel University, Prayushi worked as a display media analyst for a performance marketing agency. Merkle, in Charlotteville. Prayushi came to Medill with an interest in brand storytelling, creative strategy, and experiential marketing. She is very passionate about identifying and communicating brand values through creative advertising and hopes to find a future within this field.

**JENNA BRAUNSTEIN**

Program Assistant, Journalism

for being the official photographer of the JIMC.

**JIM CAREY**

Adjunct Lecturer

for facilitating connections with the alumni.

**RUSTAM ALIYEV**

Web Applications / Software Developer

for his help with the development of the JIMC website.

**SHIYING YAO**

Associate Director of Marketing, Medill

for her advice and branding support.

**JANE FIES**

for being the official photographer of the JIMC.

**JUDY FRANKS**

Software Developer

for her integral help with logistics.

**JANET FLORES**

Program Assistant, IMC

for her constant general support.

**RUSTAM ALIYEV**

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**SPECIAL THANKS**

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How to Stay Relevant: Innovation and Disruption in the Digital Age

Early in my career, I had the great fortune to work with Steve Jobs for the launch of the Macintosh. He was incredibly difficult and amazingly brilliant, absurdly detail oriented and ridiculously demanding – he didn’t always get it right the first time. He faced the same question of relevancy. It’s hard to believe now, but back in 1984 Macintosh’s entry to the market was a failure. Steve wanted to position it as the rest of us – the be-all, end-all business computer for the corporate IBM PC user. He made for success. But he didn’t always get it right the first time. He faced the same question of relevancy. It’s hard to believe now, but back in 1984 Macintosh’s entry to the market was a failure. Steve wanted to position it as the business computer for the rest of us – the be-all, end-all to replace the IBM personal computer in corporate America. Sales slumped, and it was looking pretty bleak for the heralded Mac Division at Apple.

Business customers ignored the new computer, but Steve was listening intently to those who didn’t. It became clear to him that Macintosh was appealing to a certain sort of person – the exact opposite of the corporate IBM PC user. He got the advertising right (recall the famous and award-winning 1984, Big Brother Macintosh ad); Macintosh was about rebellion. But he got the target market wrong. It wasn’t IBM PC users
who were going to buy into the Apple revolution. It was corporate revolutionaries who would prove to be his customers. And they were ensconced in the tiny enclaves of corporate creativity – in advertising departments. Creatives fell in love with the graphical user interface and the rebellious personality it evoked. Little by little they began to sneak it into their companies through the back door and out of sight of the IT department. The “computer for the rest of us” slowly morphed into the “computer for the best of us” as the Macintosh cult was born.

But it was too late for Steve. He had been kicked out of Apple because his Macintosh project bombed. It wasn’t until he returned to the flailing company that he doubled down on the original positioning and capitalized on the nascent cult with his Think Different campaign. By listening to his market, Steve captured its imagination and ultimately its loyalty, enabling it to grow. Understanding Apple’s DNA and communicating it effectively became his strategy of choice for positioning Macintosh, and then the iPod, the iPhone, and the iPad. He revolutionized the personal computer industry from a technical standpoint of course, but he also revolutionized the way we as consumers derive value from them, all through using Apple’s core DNA in positioning and communication.

Looking to the Future

Fast forward to today and correct positioning based on DNA and effective communication is still the answer. But much has happened between then and now, specifically the advent of the internet and the digitization of everything (incidentally, a force driven largely by Apple itself). Differentiation is still a critical strategy to deploy to achieve relevance, but in today’s world differentiation must be unpacked on a deeper level to withstand the scrutiny of all the media we now use to build our brands, much of which we do not control. Differentiating a company today starts with understanding its core DNA. Companies are like people; they are built by people, composed of people, and exist to serve people. And like people, they have DNA. Understanding that DNA and leveraging it is the key to positioning in the information age.

The good news is, company DNA is a lot less complicated than human DNA, and there are just three kinds of companies in the world. Those that focus on customers as their primary driver are “Mothers,” like Nordstrom and Lyft; those that focus on product as their organizing principle are “Mechanics,” like Oracle and Walmart; and those that focus on concepts and fundamental behavior change are “Missionaries” like Starbucks and Tesla (and Apple). Mothers, Mechanics, and Missionaries structure themselves differently, hire different kinds of people, measure success differently, and focus on different things in meetings. Once a company understands its strengths, competencies, and true identity in the market (its DNA) it can then use communication – the art and science of both listening to and talking with the market – to successfully position itself against the competition. The idea is to identify a white space in the market landscape that is ideally suited to the company’s DNA, and then use marketing and communication strategies and tactics to ensure ownership of that space.

When an integrated marketing communication program starts with an understanding of a company’s DNA, it has a far better chance of creating traction in the market because it’s authentic. And just like people, when you know what you’re made of, you can make something of it. Knowing corporate DNA (or purposefully steering it to a new place with substantive changes to a business) is critical because it enables a company to leverage its strengths in a very noisy environment starved for authenticity. Just as people are more successful when they leverage their innate talents and abilities, so too are companies more successful when they do the same. When every employee is aligned with the corporate DNA and behaving consistent within its parameters, the company automatically becomes more powerful. When forces align, progress occurs. And in a world where authenticity is a rare commodity and highly valued, marketing that aligns with DNA is more likely to be sticky in the market, enabling innovation to shine and disruption to transpire.
Jim Lecinski
Associate Professor
@ Northwestern Medill IMC

Direct to Consumer (Businesses, Relationships, Channels)

Why Legacy Companies are Scrambling to Transition

Let's start with a broad question – what does “Direct to Consumer” (DTC) mean?

A DTC brand is one that has a significant direct relationship with the consumer – primarily the ability to transact without a third party. A direct transactional relationship can occur on the internet, as illustrated by “digital-native” startups and e-commerce aggregators like Booking.com. But my primary area of concern is with legacy brands in packaged goods or hospitality. How do they forge DTC relationships as their industries become commoditized?

Can you elaborate on the problems that these brands and industries are facing?

Let’s start with hospitality – it is an area that has become increasingly intermediated because online aggregators created transparency of information, and consumers realized the commoditized nature of the industry and prioritized price above all else.

Large packaged goods brands, on the other hand, inevitably sell one-size-fits-all products that justify their costs and acquisitions. Since smaller brands are able to provide more personalized recommendations, similar prices, and create authentic relationships, packaged goods can’t get by with just shipping to your door.

Does the problem then lie in channel distribution?

Yes and no. Retailers like Nike have always had a successful omnichannel distribution strategy by providing customized options online and specific stock keeping units (SKUs) in stores. Packaged goods, on the other hand, have a harder task because they don’t have a personalized option, and physical store sales still hover around 80 percent. The issue is that it used to be 100 percent, and now they need to simultaneously slow the in-store decline and create online share.

Let’s talk about “digital-native” DTC success stories like Warby Parker or Away Luggage. What are their biggest reasons for success?

It’s a combination. They are able to very quickly gauge and implement consumer tastes, which helps in providing relevant products and also their own inventory planning. Second, they build a base of passionate, vocal advocates and have garnered earned media even before release. Third, their manufacturing models allow them to provide more features without the price premium that a brand name commands.

They are also building longevity from the offset with lifetime guarantees and product replacements – thereby not needing to win every sale, every time. And of course, there’s the first-party data collection, which creates transparency and trust with the customer and can be used for hyper-targeted marketing.

But DTC brands are rarely achieving the scalability of legacy brands.

New DTC brand scalability is interesting because they are not trying to be in everyone’s lives in a small way. Instead, they want to be front and center of their niche target market. Take Shinola for example; they’ve gone from watches to bicycles to wallets and shoes to insoles. Their biggest reasons for success?

Parker or Away Luggage. What are these customers also allow tremendous brand permission. If Purple mattress uses their technology to go from mattresses to shoe insoles, you can be sure that Purple consumers would take that over your “mass-market” Dr. Scholl’s insole.

Are there Legacy brands that are successfully transitioning and showing the benefits of a direct relationship?

Hilton’s investment in their own app for loyalty users comes to mind. They’ve offered free Wi-Fi, double points, early check-in and more – all features that are not possible if you book through an aggregator like Booking.com. They even let you select your room, as you would a seat on a flight, and partnered with Google Maps to look out the window of the room. They’re taking charge of giving consumers transparency and choice.

Leave us with a final thought, Jim.

Legacy brands need to be quicker in identifying the threat of “small” DTC brands. The threat and competition of these disruptors should be aggregated. Each of these companies grows exponentially. A half share-point today is five brands with two share-points each tomorrow – and in most industries that’s billions of dollars.

These brands are changing expectations of “normal” service and encouraging people to talk about good and bad experiences alike. Since word-of-mouth is king, this has a cascading effect and can quickly move a lot of demand from legacies to disruptors.

Interviewed by Rushil Mohan

Jim Lecinski is an Associate Professor in the Medill IMC program at Northwestern. Before joining Northwestern, Jim spent 12 years at Google, where he was Vice President of Customer Solutions. He has also held leadership roles at major advertising agencies including Young & Rubicam and DDB.

Winning the Zero Moment of Truth, Jim’s book about the new marketing model, was published in June 2011, and has been read by over 300,000 marketers worldwide. He holds an MBA from the University of Illinois and a BA from the University of Notre Dame.
Sports Media in an Evolving Digital Landscape

How much do you think digital and social media has changed sports media?

It’s changed dramatically. One way you can look at it is the fall of the highlight show; the notion that you have to wait until 11:00 p.m. eastern to see highlights of what’s happening when now within a minute of a play it’s all over social media – it’s been discussed, it’s been replayed.

How do you think all that change has affected the way teams and programs market themselves to fans?

There’s more direct marketing through social media. And it’s inclusive; it’s two-way. You’re not just marketing to someone; you’re marketing with people and asking them to respond. For example, trivia contests for giveaways are inclusive, asking for more fan participation. It’s not just bearing things out to the audience and potential customers, it’s rounding them up for community engagement.

What are the biggest positives that all this digitization has had for sports media?

Certainly the immediacy, the ability to interact, which can be positive. The accessibility allows fans to access people in sports media or even players and coaches directly. That’s a step forward for the empowerment of the fans.

Are there any sports marketing efforts that have really stuck out to you over the course of your career, either in a good way or bad way?

Actually, one of my students wrote a column about the “This is SportsCenter” campaign that Wieden+Kennedy did to improve the SportsCenter brand. The way they embedded the whole SportsCenter theme is certainly memorable. SportsCenter, from my view one of the best marketed shows of all time, has now become a victim to social media.

Nike has used “Just Do It” consistently all these years. “Just Do It,” and “Bo [Jackson] Knows,” have been incorporated into headlines crossing over into culture, referenced within the media. I would imagine that’s the ultimate goal for an advertising campaign, to exist beyond the campaign until it becomes embedded in our society.

With all this information now readily accessible, how do you think the relationship has changed between communications staffs and reporters?

I was actually just on a panel with someone on a team down in Atlanta, and one thing he said was he had an expectation upfront of knowing what the story was going to be about. He wanted a sense of how his team’s brand would be portrayed in the story, and as a journalist I thought that’s not something I want to give away.

Social activism in sports isn’t new, but with something like Twitter it’s easier for a lot more people to be more up front and visible, so how do you think that whole dynamic has changed?

You hear and learn more about where players stand. This might have been something as recently as five to 10 years ago that the media wouldn’t have been as interested in, so it wouldn’t have bothered to ask. That’s part of the reason we never knew where players stood on these things, because they were never asked. Now they don’t need to be asked. They can weigh in when they see something happening; they can put their two cents in. And more importantly, they can be pro-active.

If you go back to Carmelo Anthony – with his Instagram post it was a call to action for his athlete peers to do something. Just his post was an action, and that led to him setting up a meeting with members of the community in Los Angeles with the police officers. They talked things out, and each side learned a little about the other side. Whether that’s dramatic change, I don’t know. Whether it can lead to that, I don’t know. But it’s something. It all started with an Instagram post.

How do you think globalization has affected sports media?

I don’t think American sports media has changed. I always find it interesting to compare. Look at, say, Shohei Ohtani with the Angels (See Figure 1). There were 200 credentialed Japanese media members at his first home start. When an American goes overseas to do anything, no one really follows, no one really cares. You have American soccer players playing in the English Premier League and that’s not something we really follow. American sports media is still isolated.
Interviewed by Flavia Santos

Ligia Aguilhar is the Head of Marketing at Thinkship, a digital business consulting firm that helps small and medium companies solve complex challenges through technology. In addition to her work at Thinkship, Ligia writes a blog about innovation and technology for one of the most prominent Brazilian newspapers, O Estado de S. Paulo. Before joining Thinkship, she was Director of Marketing at Strike Social, where she developed and implemented the company’s content marketing strategy, resulting in 45 percent monthly growth on their blog. Ligia also managed the company’s external communications and social media presence. Top-tier placements have included Adweek, Forbes, and Inc Magazine. She earned a master’s degree in Media Strategy & Leadership from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism in 2016 to complement her background in journalism.

Content Marketing in a Digital, Startup Environment

In your opinion, how can content marketing help companies achieve their financial goals?

Content marketing is a powerful marketing strategy to drive demand for products and services. It helps brands build trust with customers and a reputation that will last in the long term. We know customers often do research before they are ready to buy. When you create valuable, relevant content to position your brand as a thought leader in its segment, you attract the right audience to your business and put your brand on the top of consumers’ minds when they are ready to purchase, driving sales and contributing to financial goals.

What metrics are most critical to measuring the success of content marketing?

The best metrics vary according to the company’s goals. Some metrics that I consider especially important to measure content consumption are unique visitors, unique page views, and source because they help me understand how my audience is growing, how people engage with my content, how they find it, and which posts perform best. When it comes to engagement, metrics such as average time on page, pages per session, new vs. returning visitors, and referral traffic give a clear understanding on how people interact with your content, how social media and referral links support your strategy, and what improvements are needed to get people to perform the actions you want when they visit your website. Lead capture forms, newsletter subscriptions, and conversion tracking are some relevant metrics regarding conversion.

In terms of digital marketing, how can marketers integrate the consumer and the digital platforms to create a brand experience?

I think it all comes down to having a clear understanding of the consumer’s behavior to understand their preferences and where they are in every step of the purchasing path. It’s important to learn how they behave in the digital world, what appeals to them, what they care about, and what they are talking about. With this data, you can design a marketing strategy that will touch them along their whole journey in a way that your brand can add value and bring something new to the conversation.

How do you evaluate the competitive landscape for digital strategy?

The digital market is extremely crowded and competitive. Brands need to invest wisely and really understand how digital works to be able to get any benefits from it. Think of paid social, for example. This can be a useful tactic as long as you listen to the data, design a carefully planned targeting strategy, understand the strengths and weaknesses of each social channel, and optimize your plan to reach the right people at the right time on the right platform. Without this type of effort, many companies end up spending money on some tactics only because they are popular and not because they have a clear understanding of how they can benefit from them.

What is the most interesting part of working in a startup for you?

The most interesting part about working at a startup is having the ability to build the marketing strategy from the ground up and see the impact of your work through the growth of the company. Startups are dynamic and give you an opportunity to work in different aspects of marketing at the same time, which, in my opinion, makes you a better marketer in the long term. Whatever specialization you choose down the line, you will have a much better understanding of how marketing works after performing multiple roles at a startup. The challenges of working at a startup are the fast-paced environment and the limited resources. You generally work in small teams and have an incredible amount of work to do in a very short time. This is also what makes the work really exciting. You learn and grow as a professional much faster.

What are the key capabilities a marketer needs to perform as a Marketing Manager for a startup?

Startups often hire marketers to support their sales strategy and generate leads, but often a marketing manager ends up going beyond this task and having a crucial role working closely with the leadership to guide business decisions and develop recruiting and team building strategies. I think marketers interested in working for startups need to be dynamic professionals more than anything else. They need to really believe in the mission of the company and be able to keep up with the fast pace of startups.

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Exploring the IMC Process at an Integrated Agency

As a marketer, do you see a world that is purely driven by behavioral data to identify the right customers?

No, I see data and creativity being linked inextricably, and that’s the leap that the industry has yet to make. The answers can’t all come from data. There has to be an inspiration, a human element that when you work on the insights, you’re going to get an inspired experience. There has to be an emotional connection that is purely driven by behavioral data to identify the right customers. But the data and insights are the fuel to ignite the creative fire.

What according to you is an insight? And how do you discover a true insight about your target?

A true insight is something inspired with it. This intangible creative capability is going to be those who have a marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, and the ability to utilize it’s the marriage of data and creativity, 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Finding Clarity in Media's Messy Transformation

In your book, Media: From Chaos to Clarity, you outline five macro forces that marketers can use to help make sense of the current messy media world. For those who are unfamiliar, can you briefly describe those five macro forces?

The first one I call Convergence, the idea that once media become digitized, they look strikingly similar. I call it the screen democracy because any medium imaginable can now come with a screen. Convergence liberates content where content used to be stuck in a particular silo. Content can now wind up anywhere. The second force is Symbiosis, which is the idea that media exist in symbiotic relationships with each other. This created a major power shift from professional media producers and marketers who historically controlled messaging to recognizing that that power is shared with consumers, who can promote whatever content touches their heads and their hearts. Consumers have become accelerators of great content. If you engage a consumer, because the circuits are open, crazy stuff can now happen.

The last force is Content Economics. This is the idea that the distribution mechanism itself is not what truly drives value, but it is content, and specifically great content, that has the ability to draw the attention and engagement of audiences. Without great content, the pipeline holds no value whatsoever. We are seeing evidence of the ability of great content to command economic value; consumers are having a pretty easy time understanding and accepting that.

I would argue that one of the biggest changes we have seen since your book was originally published is the proliferation of big data in marketing. What impact do you think this has on the five macro forces, and how should we as marketers be thinking about data in relation to our decisions in media?

In Media: From Chaos to Clarity, I talk about a fundamental formula that I call “C” to the third power.” The first and perhaps most important “C” is Content. Not good content, but great content that can truly provoke the second “C,” which is Consumers. If consumers become engaged, then they accelerate this content through the third “C,” which is Channels. Channels become helpful tools that consumers use to engage with that content.

You will notice that there is no “D” (for data) in that energy formula. I believe that data gives us a profound view of what’s going on, but data unto itself is not the strategy. Data is the lens through which we can study those three fundamental “Cs.” I’m concerned that data is being misused as a strategy unto itself. It’s a mirror that helps us to better understand something else that’s going on.

Let’s discuss the fourth macro force – brands – a bit more. When the book was originally published, you mentioned that transmedia brands were rare. What’s the status of transmedia brands now? Are we seeing more of them in the media landscape? Why or why not?

I would say that they are still rare jewels. What we are seeing more today than we could have possibly understood back in 2011 is without them, you’re in deep trouble. In 2011, I celebrated ESPN as a phenomenal example of a transmedia brand. ESPN has since fallen on some tough times because their business model was so closely tied to cable as a distribution mechanism. I think the important lesson for us is that a weaker player would have never survived the current strife that cable is going through. While ESPN has certainly gone through its bumps and bruises, it’s still there. I would say that what I think I’ve seen over the past seven years is an example of the resilience of transmedia brands. What I’m seeing is maybe not more or less transmedia brands than I had seen in 2011, as much as the critical importance of, and resilience of, those who have made major strides in becoming a transmedia brand.

Finally, the theme for this year’s journal is Marketing (R) evolutions. How do you think that the five macro forces play into this, and how do these macro forces relate to past disruptions in the marketing field? What can we learn from past disruptions in media and marketing as we move forward?

I think we are truly in the midst of a revolution. We are leaving an era where media effects could be studied and defined. And what I’m seeing more and more is a breakdown in these absolute laws and the much more relative potential of the media. The interesting thing is that relativity scares some people because you have to learn two scary words: “It depends.” Introducing ambiguity into marketing is something that’s very uncomfortable. But relativity also leads to exponential outcomes, which was something we didn’t have before. I think it’s very exciting, but it also takes a willingness to let go of absolutes and really focus on content innovation and recognize that if you put great content out there, the true potential of what could happen is beyond our scope of capability to even understand. To me, that’s a great revolution to be a part of.
How Media, Content Marketing, and Brand Building Have Revolutionized Ad Sales

What major changes have you witnessed in marketing since the beginning of your career?

When I started my career, there were less than 50 television stations, no internet, and audio was synonymous with radio. Now, we have unlimited channels, which includes YouTube and anything that people stop and watch. This has changed viewership habits. When I first started the business, your mobile device was something you made a phone call on. Now, studies show a phone call is only 1/12th of a mobile device’s use among the average consumer. There was no social network that we know now, and in terms of marketing to people, there is more fragmentation. But there is also a greater ability to understand consumers’ individual passion points.

Brands feel they need to be on every platform, all the time, when marketing to Millennials and Generation Z. How can brands leverage both relevancy and targeted messaging?

We need to remember the way we go about things may change, but in a lot of ways, regardless of if you’re a Boomer or a Millennial, as you start to go through life cycles, there are still commonalities. Most of the recent studies on mature Millennials say, “Wow! They are much like the generation before them.” The one thing I think marketers don’t realize is that the habits are the same, but the means to go about those habits are different.

One common mistake that I’ve seen is that marketers don’t look at the life habits of the age groups that they target; they go after the buzz. They dive in on Instagram without understanding what habits are there.

So, what happens is that without connecting to the habits they don’t connect their message. They go after Instagram as a silo and don’t understand that Instagram, Facebook, TV, and podcasts are really part of a person’s daily habits when you look at them in totality. Most marketers miss the relevancy and become saturated or redundant because instead of following the habits, they plan for platforms. That’s not how the consumer thinks! To this day, marketers have separate digital teams that don’t talk to their mass market, radio, or local market buying teams. I think this is a huge failure.

Technology has quickly evolved, changing the digital landscape. Furthermore, consumers are increasingly impatient. Has this affected your business? How has this changed your strategy?

I think NBC Sports Regional Networks has a greater understanding of the business. Those that are doing it right understand that there has to be a reward along with the branding message. Yes, consumers are able to skip through advertisements, but regardless of the platform, there has to be a reward. Data shows that consumers are willing to sit through a 15- to 30-second ad commercial as long as the reward on the other side is worth it. For example, you are running 8:1 in terms of content to ads, and it should really be closer to 22:1. I think that has changed.

Furthermore, I think our strategy has changed drastically. We are more of a consultant with our clients and not just sellers. We are working to give them better scenarios as they go forward. Over the last three years, I’ve seen an improvement in the understanding of joint success. If you asked me 10 years ago, it was really about the ratings on the television side and a sprinkle of creative digital. Now, it’s really about collaborating with the client and getting to a point where you can talk to various teams.

Where do you see advertisement sales and marketing going within the next five years due to the constant innovation of digital and virtual marketing?

Marketing is going to primarily focus on habits, or what I call passion points. Also, there is going to be an increase in the selling of brands. For example, ESPN is a company that does a great job of communicating its brand image. Whether it’s a digital, social, or broadcasting entity, its brand is consistent. We are going to see marketers really push the value of their brand and align themselves with brand identities. Successful companies will start to build out their brand image across multiple platforms and the entire field of communication.

Speaking on personal and professional evolution, what are some challenges you had to overcome in building your personal brand?

I think that the one thing I have learned is that you have to set your goals and recognize opportunities when they come. I think the biggest challenge for me was getting into marketing, know that it’s going to be fun, frustrating, and challenging because there is always change. That’s the beauty of it. Marketing to me is about making businesses relevant to consumers and building a link to a passion or need. You can do that from so many diverse angles, so companies have to have a diverse pool of mindsets. Your intellectual diversity is going to be your capital. Mine it, grow it, stretch it, and know that it is going to bode well for you over time.

To be open to change! If you are going into marketing, know that it’s going to be fun, frustrating, and challenging because there is always change. That’s the beauty of it. Marketing to me is about making businesses relevant to consumers and building a link to a passion or need. You can do that from so many diverse angles, so companies have to have a diverse pool of mindsets. Your intellectual diversity is going to be your capital. Mine it, grow it, stretch it, and know that it is going to bode well for you over time.

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For people who see a strong future in this field, what would be your best words of advice?

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For people who see a strong future in this field, what would be your best words of advice?
As People Change, So Will Our Methods

What is the role of cultural fluency in marketing today? How can marketers become ambassadors and integrate cultural fluency into their daily work? How is this a challenge in the workplace?

The role of cultural fluency is central. We live in a very modern world, where people embrace their culture, heritage, and identity — all of which shape the way people see the world. It is important to understand that each of us comes to consumerism with a lens shaped by our experiences, so in a world where culture is fusing, people are weaving in and out of their own culture, sampling other cultures, and claiming bits and pieces of them as their own. Cultural fluency is a very important tenant in marketing that acknowledges this dynamic and leverages it to design experiences and messaging that is particularly relevant.

At Spark Foundry we have a vast number of Millennials who work for us. Millennials are very diverse and inclusive by today’s definition. They live a life where they enjoy seeing and interacting with other cultures, which is why the concept of cultural fluency resonates so strongly. But when it comes to corporate investment in messaging and advertising, we are seeing a little bit of a lag in efforts that actually reflect and acknowledge a changing constituency. We are pushing our organization to be proactive and bring the conversation of cultural fluency and relevant messaging to the table because we know that it can be hugely impactful in driving growth.

How has your current role evolved since you started? How long have you been doing multicultural marketing?

I have been in marketing for 30+ years, and the emphasis on multicultural marketing and general marketing has been two separate but complimentary concepts. Over the years, these two concepts have begun to come together, and people have wondered how and why they should be thinking about multiculturalism — is it still relevant in a more diverse world? Our society is more inclusive than ever before, and as a result there could be the thought that we don’t need culturally focused initiatives. In response to that thinking, the industry pivoted from multiculturalism being a separate initiative to a total market strategy. However, many total market efforts missed the nuance and the relevancy that culture brings. Understand, it is not that culture is irrelevant but that the way culture has been incorporated into our unique identities has changed. People don’t want to be defined by race or ethnicity, but they do want to take bits of their heritage, traditions, and customs to represent who they are as individuals, and that is the nuanced difference. We must pay close attention to this concept as advertisers.

How has cultural fluency in marketing evolved in the new era of technology and globalization?

We have evolved from this idea of multicultural marketing to cultural fluency. In recognition of the fact that there are a lot of changes happening globally in the realm of population shifts and because Spark Foundry is increasingly a global organization, international divisions of our company feel multiculturalism is a “US concept” that doesn’t apply to them. We are broadening the conversation when we speak of cultural fluency as inclusive — covering race, ethnicity, religion, age, ability, and gender. In doing so we are then able to recognize communities of people across the globe that come to the table with a different lens and perspective. Understanding these alternative views often illuminates a fresh way to look at voids in people’s lives that brands can fill.

That’s why we have pivoted from multiculturalism to cultural fluency, which allows us to address the needs of our clients no matter where they are. And you can transfer principles grounded in US multicultural marketing to situations anywhere in the world. For example, Sweden is grappling with a large influx of immigrants coming into the country where previously it was very homogeneous. If we understand that as population shifts and people come into new environments they bring divergent influences — their own preferences for goods and services — it’s easier to see how concepts honed in the US with multicultural audiences can be applied more broadly.

Technology allows us to both understand and deliver against audience needs in ever more individual, personalized, specific, and responsive ways. Being a data-led organization, we optimize and model against behaviors that drive impact and growth, while strengthening connections between people and brands.

How do you stay up to date with the ever-evolving changes in marketing and cultural fluency?

We have a process called Heat Wave Mapping. We look at four areas to stay on top of how people are evolving and changing over time. We are able to input primary, secondary, big, and soft data sets as well as incorporate research studies or include proprietary data tools that illuminate various aspects of what’s going on. We are able to do that by leveraging to keep our brands relevant. Tracking meaningful moments makes it possible for us to best understand what the right time, place, and the right situation is to connect with people authentically. Our vigilance concerning cultural connectivity ensures we incorporate aspects of experiences that shaped people’s lives and their identity into our strategies and approaches. To do so we take a deep dive into the heritage, traditions, and customs that people grew up with and how they shape their view of the world and their relationship with brands. Ultimately, we use that process to track how people’s needs are evolving and changing over time.

Interviewed by Brittany Landry

By encouraging marketers to embrace an “inside-out” perspective, Esther “E.T.” Franklin has helped iconic brands — and the advertising industry at large — understand the cultural identities and media consumption habits of local and global audiences. Drawing on extensive industry experience across a range of agencies, audiences, and geographies, Esther offers a unique perspective in any situation. Through her spirit of decisive collaboration, future-focused orientation, and innately creative, curious, open-minded, strategic nature, Esther has led several successful corporate “start-up” initiatives.

Today, she develops and drives the strategic vision for Spark Foundry and its clients as EVP, Managing Director Strategy and Cultural Fluency. Esther leads her team in the design of the strategic underpinning of growth-delivering, forward-leaning communications approaches that deepen the relationships between people and brands.
Brands recognize that consumers are extremely savvy when it comes to marketing and advertising. Long gone are the days where brands could determine product production, message, and how it would be pushed out to the world. People want to know that the brands they bring into their world have a point of view. Additionally, they want brands to not only acknowledge their contributions, but to reflect who they are authentically and to “get” what matters and is meaningful to them and their communities. Beyond that, I think the most successful brands now have realized and facilitated consumer participation in the process through many creative forms. Brands do such things as making their content more “snackable” so that it is more easily shareable; they embrace consumer feedback and response to efforts that are advertised; they often invite consumers into the co-creation process, so they feel that they have a better pulse on what consumers want and are going to be willing to embrace. I think brands are doing a better job at understanding and building with currency in mind; value for both sides, consumers and brands. When I talk about currency, I mean that if a brand is going to put forth a proposition – whether it is a product, service, or experience – what is the value exchange? What am I providing? What value is it providing to consumers – reciprocity is key. These questions must be resolved so that marketers have a healthy two-way exchange for the best results.

One key takeaway that I would have for future IMCers is to stay “woke” and to stay curious. It is about having an insatiable amount of curiosity because the world is evolving and so is the industry. You have to be comfortable with knowing that you will never know all the answers to everything, but you also have to be curious enough to want to pursue the answers to many things.

How do you aspire to continue to make a change?

My vision still is not realized: that when you look at a campaign, partake of a service, or participate in a brand experience regardless of industry or sector, what you see is what is truly represented in the world. We haven’t gotten there yet. We are seeing more and more of the world as it truly is reflected in marketing and advertising, but there is still a distance to go. So, until that gets done, and I don’t think that will be done in my lifetime, I know that there is always more exciting work to do while having fun at the same time.

Applying IMC Fundamentals to Non-Profit Marketing

Can you briefly describe your primary duties and responsibilities at BBBSMC and perhaps walk us through a typical day?

Our marketing team is a team of one at the moment, so I effectively manage all of our internal and external communications. On a day-to-day basis, I am responsible for our social media accounts, providing content for our websites, and developing stories and headlines for our monthly newsletters. But most importantly, I work very closely with our Fund Development team to develop fundraising campaigns and deliver the most effective and appropriate messages to achieve such purpose. I am also tasked with the strategic role of managing our overall budget as well as BBBSMC’s marketing direction. For instance, we just underwent an important rebrand where we have refreshed our website’s outlook and developed a totally new brand repositioning.

Please describe the marketing and communications team’s structure at BBBSMC. To whom do you report to? Does anyone report to you? If so, who?

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I report to the CEO and work very closely with the Fund Development team for fundraising and special events. The Marketing and Fund Development teams work together to ensure that our marketing communications are aligned to deliver consistent messages in the same tone and manner. In a greater sense, I would say that working at a non-profit requires one to have a deeper working knowledge of different departments compared to working at an agency or for-profit organization. This is because if you are not aligned on the same mission and the same end goals, it is impossible to deliver the intended results. The Fund Development team focuses on fundraising while the Marketing team focuses on sharing stories. It takes a lot of time and great effort for teams to work cohesively together on a project.

What is your biggest challenge at BBBSMC and how are you resolving it?

Interview

Kristine Brown
Marketing and Communications Manager @ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago

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What is your biggest challenge at BBBSMC and how are you resolving it?
Kristine Brown is the Manager of the Marketing and Communications Department at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metropolitan Chicago (BBBSMC). Kristine is responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of the non-profit’s integrated marketing strategies, both internal- and external-facing. She has led a major rebranding effort focused on volunteer recruitment and engagement, which forms the basis of and central strategy for BBBSMC’s new website, digital presence, and storytelling advertising campaigns. Prior to joining BBBSMC, Kristine served in account management and copywriter positions at major marketing and advertising agencies, including Upshot and Integrated Marketing Solutions. Kristine is a 2015 graduate of Medill’s IMC master’s program.

From an internal stand point, it is getting people to understand that marketing at a non-profit has to work like marketing at a for-profit. At a non-profit, typically you have a group of volunteers who report to who approve all your expenditures and take a close look at the P&L. What we need to do here is to convince them that spending money on marketing makes sense. It’s a lot harder for non-profits as people want to see ROI and value on their donations. They want to know whether their donations are directly supporting a match. However, in marketing, we are spending money on advertising and media space. The only way for us to truly grow is for us to be able to market ourselves, and to drive recruit engagement by putting ourselves out there. We have to make a case for that, and it’s often a challenging case to make.

Each chapter faces different challenges. We have two groups of targets: one being the “kids” and their parents. Chicago has our social problem, and we have a lot of neighborhoods that are very segmented, and they do not get the type of assistants that other cities do. Our second demographic are volunteers. In terms of matching volunteers, it’s unique in the fact that Chicago is a more crowded city with other non-profits, so that contributes to the competition factor. We also face a challenging factor of matching volunteers to the “kids” from different neighborhoods. Our greatest needs are on the south and west sides of the city. However, most of our volunteers are on the north side. Hence, we are really trying hard to tailor our marketing strategy such that our volunteers may come from the neighborhoods where our kids are. From a marketing standpoint, it means we have to continue devoting lots of recruiting efforts in these neighborhoods, delving into community partnerships, and finding out how potential volunteers are best reached, etc.

Do you see BBBSMC as being in direct/indirect competition with any other non-profits based in Chicago? Do you view these non-profits as being fundamentally different, whether in terms of their values, marketing efforts, financial position, etc.?

The non-profit world is very interesting. We are all competitors because we are competing for people’s time and money. However, on the flip side, we all have different areas of expertise. We have found here at Big Brothers Big Sisters that if we own that differentiator and come into partnership with other non-profits, we would do a better job at serving our community than if we were to try to do all of it. BBBSMC is very mission-centric.

We own what we are good at and we don’t stray away from that. If we find that the children we serve need something else, we will not hesitate to direct them to the right organizations. It’s important for us to do that as it also helps us spread the good word out there at various neighborhoods.

One interesting thing about us is that since there are a lot of other non-profits in Chicago, the public may not be able to identify us from others. We did a research study in Chicago and found that almost everyone mixed our mission statement with that of Boys & Girls Clubs. That was a huge learning experience for us, and so we made sure that coming out of the research study we required greater focus on our differentiator and our understanding of the community’s needs. We realized our biggest challenge was not to raise awareness because almost everyone has heard of us, and they know we exist. Our main challenge is how to be relevant and make people understand what we do.

Why do you view Millennials as a key target segment? How do you set this target in the first place?

Based on volunteer inquiry, we knew going into the research study who our targets and low-hanging fruits are. Our volunteers have to be 21. Out sweet spot is between 27 and 34. There is psychological reasoning behind this supporting the research results. When people are in their early 20s, they are just starting their career and there will be a lot of changes. As people enter their mid-20s, they are a lot more flexible and have time to commit to our program. We see a drop off when they begin to start a family of their own. It picks up back again when people reach their 50s and 60s as they have the time and disposable income after their kids are off to college. Those are always the sweet spots and we make sure that they are still our targets in our research.

How would you describe BBBSMC in terms of its unique brand as a non-profit?

Two things stood out to us that we realized from our research we needed to communicate as our differentiation: First, the major difference is that in a lot of organizations, you may get low touch points. Volunteers may go in, tutor, and volunteer for an hour a week. Our difference is our one-to-one mentoring program, offered on a consistent basis. We require our matches to volunteer for at least a year, and we found that our matches last four years on average. That’s amazing, as the volunteers are choosing to do that on their own. What research has found is that if an adult stays in a positive relationship with a child for 15 months, there will be positive outcomes in the areas that we measure. We measure three areas: education achievement, avoidance of risky behaviors (e.g., use of drugs and alcohol), and socio-emotional constancy (their relationships with peers and how they get along with adult and authority figures).

As a result, that consistency with the same figure is absolutely critical. Second, what I think is truly unique about BBBSMC is that we are not just a tutoring organization. We don’t just focus on educational achievement. Matches will go out and try new restaurants. They will do things that they do in their spare time. Having a positive voice keeps these kids on the right track and help develop their character holistically. Our commitment in changing the kids’ lives for the better forever is definitely our value proposition.

To what extent does your brand dictate the overall marketing strategy and related efforts (i.e., limits as to what you can or cannot do)?

As far as how we developed our campaign, we looked at all our competitors in the market, their respective targets, and what their messages were about. We found that all of them focused on the kids. We spent a lot of time thinking hard about who our targets and customers are. It’s interesting to see that a lot of NGOs don’t think about who are your customers at the end of the day, what are you trying to do, and how are you going to move them? We are trying to get more volunteers to reach more children. We therefore decided to run a campaign to focus completely on the “Big.” It is not external facing currently, as we are still raising capital at this stage. However, I am getting it ready internally to ensure all our materials have a consistent tone, message, look, and feel before we go out to do any external advertising. The media and advertising will be out in the market for six months. This is set as our five-year campaign and serves as part of our strategic growth plan.

How do you view advancement in social media marketing nowadays? For instance, in your view, do digital platforms help to meaningfully tap into the Millennial market?

Peer-to-peer fundraising has been a big medium for us. We rely on our employees and volunteers to be the ambassadors of our organization to get our word out there. A lot of non-profits traditionally rely on individual donors, but it doesn’t mean you need individual donors to come in and donate in high capacity amounts. A viable strategy is to have numerous individual donors who donate in relatively small amounts. In our experience, a volume driven strategy is more sustainable.

No doubt the Millennial market is important. We have ventured into Facebook advertising. We are also thinking of using Google advertising this year to tap into the Millennial market.
The first thing I did when I woke up this morning was scroll through my social feed. And you did too probably. As the director of Social Media Sponsorship at Major League Baseball, I quickly thumb through my sport’s heavy social channels, checking for everything MLB’s multiple social accounts posted overnight to ensure our branded posts are up and running.

These days, the way our younger fanbase watches the game is most likely to be on-the-go, phone in hand, twitter app open, scrolling for updates in between innings. Much like the success of the game’s best pitchers and runners, the key ingredient to social is speed. We know our fans expect stats, highlights, and game updates on demand. The way that sports fans are viewing and interacting with the game is constantly evolving, and brands have responded by moving social media high up on their priority list. Our client RFPs are filled with requests for social integrations. What was once a “nice to have” is a “must include” in a digital package. Gone are the days that social was used solely as an “added value driver” to site content. We at MLB are now working around the clock to create bespoke content meant to live and breathe exclusively on social.

Social platforms have responded to the influx of sponsored content by mandating branded content restrictions. We, on the social sponsorship side, are tasked to work around these regulations and still create compelling content that feels organic to our audience. A recent example of our league’s attention on social media was the MLB FoodFest event. This past April 2018, one vendor from each ballpark served up a local specialty in one event space – the event was specifically designed for social. The masterminds behind the event knew that there were few things today’s fan could get behind more than a giant hot dog installation with a branded step-and-repeat, and were ready with an on-site boomerang photographer for seamless Instagram sharing. “Punny” neon signs and “gram-worthy” ballpark food filled social feeds for the weekend and crowned MLB as a true player in the experiential and social space. With growth comes new challenges – we know we have three seconds or less to make a fan stop on an Instagram video. Attention spans have become increasingly shorter, so the pressure is on to break through the clutter and reel in your audience quickly. There has been a meteoric rise in how important it is for brands to connect with fans on social over the past few years, which leads me to believe that the next social wave is on the horizon. Just when we’ve adapted to integrating brands into the core social platforms, a new one will inevitably emerge.

As we move forward into this uncharted territory, our primary goal remains to not only chase the taps and comments, but to make sure brand DNA is intact long past the scroll.
Scott Davis has over 25 years of brand, marketing strategy, and new product development experience. He is the author of Brand Asset Management, Building the Brand-Driven Business, and The Shift: The Transformation of Today’s Marketers into Tomorrow’s Growth Drivers. He is frequently cited in publications such as The Wall Street Journal, BusinessWeek, Forbes, Advertising Age, and Crain’s. Scott is an Adjunct Professor at Kellogg and a guest lecturer at NYU, Harvard, University of Chicago, and Columbia. Scott started his career at Procter & Gamble and Kuczmarski & Associates. He earned his MBA from the Kellogg School of Management and a BS in Marketing Management from the University of Illinois.

Relentlessly Relevant Brands Create Living Brand Experiences

Brands that are relentlessly relevant are those that enlarge the universe and engage customers in a living brand experience. That means constant, real-time engagement between customers and brand stewards, giving companies the ability to anticipate, adapt, and respond in the context of customers’ lives. It’s what allows brands to create offers that are hyper-personalized, to leverage data in a way that extends experiences and relationships within customers’ lives, and to combine human empathy with tech-enabled intelligence. As a result, every interaction delivers greater business impact.

Think of the way Disney keeps making visits to its properties more magical, by using technology to help guests unlock hotel rooms, make a playdate with Snow White, or even pay for a turkey leg. Or Spotify’s uncanny ability to follow you into an Uber, work with Tinder and Bumble to help you find better dates, and crank out playlists made up of songs you’ve never listened to but instantly love.

Customers are fiercely loyal to these experiences. When Samsung faced the massive recall of its Galaxy Note, pundits expected customers to defect in droves. The brand’s mobile phones have come back stronger than ever, precisely because people love the way they perform across devices, including smart watches, tablets, and, increasingly, virtual reality.
Six years after I graduated from Medill in 1983, a devastating turn of events suddenly set the course for the next three decades of my life. My mentor, fashion powerhouse Kezia Keeble, was diagnosed with breast cancer. In her final stages, with us at her bedside, she turned ownership of her New York-based international PR and events company, KCD, over to me and my business partner Julie Mannion. This was one of the most generous acts that could be made by an employer. Julie and I were no less affected by Kezia’s passing than any of our other employees, but Kezia had been our employee for 15-plus years, providing a solid group of loyal leaders who fully realized the agency’s core values. As the company continued to grow, Julie and I could not just rely on our previous successes, as there was now a real need for long-term, strategic planning. We were faced with a big question: How do we take our employees and agency into the future and take ourselves toward our retirement years?

This was not an easy question. I began a journey of professional self-discovery to determine what was next for my company. We were at the height of our growth, so the obvious answers came first: MERGE! SELL! Thus, I began a grueling, two-year mergers and acquisitions process. Contrary to what I had thought, there was no pot of gold at the end. We had three suitors, but each fell short of our vision for KCD. As two 29-year-olds, we couldn’t fathom sacrificing our core values. We needed another option.

I remembered my 29-year-old self. We wanted to give back to our employees like Kezia had given to us. In 2015, our company opted for a highly-regarded solution that is probably not as well-known as it should be – an Employee Stock Ownership Program (ESOP). This is a unique tax-qualified retirement benefit plan designed to motivate employees through equity or stock ownership funded by the company, rather than in publicly traded companies and mutual funds. An ESOP also provides a means for transfer of ownership, from owner management to an employee-owned culture, and it qualifies for tax advantages under the Internal Revenue Code and Department of Labor.

Transforming the Business with ESOP

The ESOP has prompted a major transformation of our business since its 2016 implementation. It is a complex financial and legal transaction, but well worth going through the grueling implementation process for the outcome it eventually brings:

- Our new employee-owners now pay more attention to potential new clients and the bottom-line, as they want to increase profitability.
- As there is no cost for employees to join (companies fund plans through tax benefits), the ESOP program is in high standing at our company;
- Our ESOP plan has proven to be a key recruiting tool – we offer ESOP after one-year at the company;
- The ESOP purchased our owner’s interest in the company, allowing us to recognize our long-term value from the company as we continue to grow.

Timed with the ESOP, we mounted a two-year strategic support plan to fuel our EBITDA growth. Julie and I both became co-chairmen of KCD and named nine partners in our 20th anniversary. With our EBITDA growth, we were able to fuel our EBITDA growth. Julie and I both become co-chairmen of KCD and named nine partners worldwide from our valued, tenured senior management team. After moving the agency to a larger headquarters in New York, we opened several revenue-generating showrooms in our offices worldwide and shifted the roles of our “publicists” to “talent and brand managers,” a strategic internal restructuring that was a direct response to the changing role of PR in fashion. KCD’s employees and our public relations services are now extending into the entertainment and technology verticals.

Forward-thinking is imperative in the fashion industry as it thrives off of the questions “what’s new?” and “what’s next?” While KCD always thinks ahead from a fashion standpoint, we were able to mirror this mentality within our own company walls. We are now first-movers in both external and internal directions, and as always, we continue to break new ground.

Studies by the National Center for Employee Ownership have shown that ESOP companies significantly outperform companies that do not offer these opportunities, and programs like this have a positive impact on the workplace. I can tell you first-hand that the morale at our office is at an all-time high. Whether you are a wide-eyed 29-year-old or a 50-some-year-old workhorse, the future is clear and bright. Kezia would have been proud.
Any Cheng is Head of Wi-Fi Product Marketing, Facebook Connectivity @ Facebook

When I joined Target in 2013, my responsibility was to hit one million dollars of revenue per day from users shopping on Target. Moreover, this marketing objective needed to be accomplished within 10 months, right before the next holiday season began.

At the time, I found out there was an iPad app that was outdated. There was no Android tablet app, and there was a desktop website that was not tablet-friendly but had lots of users. Thus, there were a few decisions I had to make: should I invest in the tablet app or website? Should I focus on iPad or Android? Should I spend time reducing the crash rate, updating existing functions, or adding new functions? If so, what kind of functions should I design? What kind of team structure should I build?

I decided to begin with business strategy. Target’s brand position is “Expect More, Pay Less.” In this business context, I started to search for the right product strategy. When I interview for new product managers, this is what we call the product sense test. Essentially, it is about knowing “what” to build.

A well-rounded product strategy lands in the perfect spot between three basic criteria: what consumers want, what your competitors don’t, and what your company is good at. I conducted three analyses to find the right strategy: consumer analysis, competitor analysis, and company analysis — and they all start with the IMC principle of listening to your customers.

Consumer Analysis

Persona is a representative example of your potential customer segmentation. It explains who your customers are and what they care about. Take an e-commerce company’s persona, for example. It can be a description of a typical user of the brand — what are his/her/interests, favorite devices, and shopping behaviors? I discovered that Target’s users are mostly young moms who use social media heavily and own iOS devices more than Androids.

We created five personas, but designed the product based only on two out of the five. We named them Avid Anna, who is fun, expressive, and enthusiastic; and Vetting Veronica, who is social, eclectic, and energetic (see Figure 1). We specifically listed another three personas so as to keep in mind who are NOT our users.

User Journey Mapping
Encompassed information on service touchpoints, friction, user insights, and user quotes. When designing marketing campaigns or products, the goal of the message or function is to remove the friction and accelerate the (potential) user to the next stage of the journey.

Research Firm, App Annie, Placed, Alexa, and Quantcast are all considerable resources to help on this analysis.

Inspiration
Better personalization

When designing apps for Veronica, I would prioritize efficiency and continuous push relevant content.

When designing websites for Veronica, I would deliver an information-rich experience.

Persona and User Journey Maps are good approaches to acknowledge current (potential) users. However, the fact is, consumers change over time. Therefore, looking at industry trends is critical to helping us understand what the customers are going to be like in the future. ComScore, eMarketers, Nielsen, and Forrester are some significant sources to understand market trends.

Competitor Analysis
The purpose of a competitor analysis is to understand what your competitors care about and what they excel at. I observed that Walmart is known for price, eBay plays competitive with variety, and Amazon is loved for its speed. My team and I also executed a gap analysis to record all features on our competitors’ websites and apps.

Company Analysis
The goal of company analysis is to find out the company’s strength. One of Target’s competitive advantages is the Home and Baby sections, especially when considering design-driven items.

A sound company analysis is composed of three parts: 1) how current users utilize the website/app; 2) how the users feel about the product and why; and 3) the product quality from a technical standpoint.
Conversational Marketing: Creating Compelling Customer Connections

Edited by Yuting Xue

Jonathan Copulsky teaches marketing in the Medill IMC program, as well as at Kellogg. Jonathan previously served as a senior client partner and CMO at Deloitte, as well as Chief Marketing and Sales Officer at CCH Incorporated. He writes and speaks frequently on marketing strategy and is the author of the critically acclaimed book, Brand Resilience. Jonathan is a member of the Spiegel Research Center Advisory Board and the Editorial Board of Applied Marketing Analytics.

Nicholas Sotolongo is a digital analyst who focuses on measuring the impact of marketing investments and technology. Nicholas recently received his MS from the Medill Integrated Marketing Communications program at Northwestern University, where he was a research fellow at the Spiegel Digital and Database Research Center. In his work, Nicholas combines creative communications experience with data analytics to drive actionable insights for organizations.

The Tech Giants have Spoken: It’s Time to Start Talking to our Machines

Backed by the likes of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, and Samsung, conversational interfaces – platforms that enable people to direct devices and programs through natural dialogue – have grown rapidly since Apple introduced its virtual assistant, Siri, in 2011. There are now 3.5 billion active devices with virtual assistants, a number predicted to increase to 7.5 billion by 2021 (Ovum, 2017).

Consider these recent developments:

- Led by products tied to Amazon’s voice assistant, Alexa, smart-speakers have penetrated 10 percent of all broadband US homes, tripling in the past year (NPD, 2017).
- Facebook features over 100,000 bots on its messaging platform, helping with diverse tasks ranging from finding the right Gift to signing up for insurance (Facebook, 2017).

The purpose was not to drive the iPad app: 1) severe crash issues; 2) out of date user experience; and 3) the purpose was not to drive eCommerce.

We identified three key issues for analyses to help understand this.

Our Findings

We identified three key issues for the iPad app: 1) severe crash issues; 2) out of date user experience; and 3) the purpose was not to drive eCommerce.

Our product was launched right before the holiday season. The revenue tripled and users wrote four stars reviews.

Meanwhile, we received satisfying media coverage as well. As a result, we won 11 awards and were featured on the Apple store and Facebook’s annual conference, F8. Making hard decisions – prioritizing things that only make 100 percent sense for your persona and company strength – is the IMC way of moving up in Silicon Valley!
Conversational interfaces help people complete tasks through natural language processing and AI

Chatbots and Virtual Assistants
At the heart of these efforts is the conversational interface (CI), a connection between the user and a device that simulates talking with a “real” person through voice or text. Today’s conversational interface landscape is rapidly expanding, offering consumers a dizzying array of devices to talk to. For marketers, conversational interfaces present two clear customer-facing opportunities: chatbots and virtual assistant skills (see Figure 1).

Chatbots are programs on messaging applications like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp that complete tasks for users through natural conversation, allowing users to interact via text or by choosing from a list of items. For example, Domino’s Pizza offers a chatbot on Facebook Messenger that allows people to order a pizza by talking with it.

Virtual assistants are personalized digital concierges that assist users by responding to their voices (Jacobs, 2017). They can engage various applications on behalf of a user and exist both on mobile and home devices. Assistants like Amazon’s Alexa and Google Assistant offer integrations for brands (also known as “skills”), which allow them to program their own personalized experience for the user.

Identifying the Conversational “Job to Be Done” for the Customer
For marketers to utilize[CIs to reach and engage their customers, they must first identify the conversational “job(s) to be done,” a concept championed by Clayton Christensen, based on understanding customer needs by looking at what they wish to accomplish (Christensen et al., 2016). People are driven by five underlying motivations to use conversational interfaces: knowledge, connection, consumption, action, and service. These motivations map to jobs that brands can do for their customers and marketing goals within a purchase funnel (see Figure 2).

Expedia enables users to search for hotels by chatting on Facebook Messenger, effectively replicating a conversation consumers might once have had with a travel agent, focused on dates, budgets, and availability. Best Buy offers an Alexa skill to recommend products to users, while retail brands like H&M have built chatbots to serve as stylists for shoppers.

Marketing’s Role Centers On Brand Experience and Discovery
The emergence of conversational marketing coincides with the rise of the age of the customer. To succeed, marketers must adhere more than ever to customer-centricity, taking an outside-in approach to designing their activities. Marketers must manage the brand experience offered by the conversational agent, where previously terms like brand, voice, and tone now become very tangible. Beyond assisting in designing the experience CIs deliver, aiding discovery will be a key part of conversational marketing, with campaigns designed to generate engagement with a brand’s Alexa skill or chatbot, similar to getting a customer to download a brand’s app. As Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple battle to make the devices and assistants everyone will talk to, conversational interfaces will continue to expand in reach and usage. However, their ultimate success is up to customers, who must recognize the value created by this new way of interacting with machines. While virtual assistants and chatbots are still nascent, brands that are first to market will gain invaluable experience, data, and customer bases, much as was the case with the early days of social media. Marketers cannot risk being left out of the conversation.

Sources:

Figure 1: Device, platform, medium, and marketing opportunity for conversational interfaces.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Device</th>
<th>Mobile</th>
<th>Fixed Location (e.g., Home, Office)</th>
<th>Car</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platform of engagement</td>
<td>Messaging apps</td>
<td>Virtual assistants</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FB Messenger</td>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td>iMessage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Jobs that can be accomplished with conversational interfaces.

- Help me find
- Help me interact
- Help me purchase
- Help me schedule features or content
- Help me resolve my problem
- Voice search: Expedia
- Uber: Mutant Ninja Turtles chatbot
- Amazon Music: Geneva
- Google Trend: 20% of all queries are made by voice

Figure 6: Awareness, Consideration, Purchase, and Engagement.
Programmatic advertising is the cornerstone for companies such as Oath, Google, and Facebook to grow and drive revenue. The strategy uses advanced algorithms and trusted data to automatically place relevant ads that drive sales for advertisers while creating a positive user experience. From a marketer’s perspective, it provides a means for designing and running a marketing campaign with less guess work.

A Demand-Side Platform (DSP) provides a particular venue for programmatic advertising. It is the middleman between an advertiser and one or more open impression exchanges. An open exchange is an open marketplace where buyers can bid either manually or programmatically to purchase ad impressions. In this context, an impression is an opportunity to show an ad creative (e.g., banner ad, text ad, or pre-roll video commercial) to internet users. The price of an impression purchased through a DSP is determined in an auction held by an ad exchange. Hence, it is dictated by the supply of similar impressions and the demand from competing advertisers.

The goal of a DSP is to optimally manage an advertiser’s marketing budget. For some advertisers, the goal is to drive branding and reach, while for others it is to maximize the number of clicks or sales.

Business Model

To appreciate how a DSP can serve marketers, it is important to understand the underlying business model. It is based on the principle “winner takes all,” which is not totally accurate but is directionally true. In particular, since a high percentage of all impressions are sold on open exchanges, competing DSPs (representing advertisers competing for ad impressions) have access to roughly the same internet users. Larger volumes of rich user data, on the other hand, is obtained by data deals, mergers and acquisitions, and by managing larger advertising budgets. Finally, larger advertising budgets are incentivized, as explained earlier, by generating better performance than competing DSPs.

Oath Ad Platforms’ DSP, powered by leading ad optimization engine AdLearn, is a good example of the above business model put to work. Oath brings together trusted data from a variety of sources, which enables better optimization, and AdLearn implements state-of-the-art AI and machine learning with the simple goal of serving the right ad to the right user at the right time and place.

The Future Role of a Marketer

If the role of a marketer is to manage online ad campaigns, then the most efficient way to do that job has changed. Before DSPs, the job likely involved lots of planning, manual A/B testing, and plenty of guessing on where to spend ad budgets and what audience to target. With an access to programmatic advertising in general, and DSPs in particular, it is far more appropriate to perform the job as follows: 1. Find a trustworthy DSP. This is critical since there are many DSPs with a questionable reputation. 2. Carefully define the campaign objective and the relative importance of multiple objectives. Note, if marketers want to maximize the total number of conversions, then they should aim to minimize the effective cost per conversion. Since impressions are priced differently, according to their market price, it does not make sense as an objective to maximize the conversion rate. 3. Monitor and evaluate the ROI to reconfirm campaign objectives are met and that the DSP is trustworthy.

Most importantly, know that success is a combination of technology and human assessment. Algorithms process data and identify complex patterns and predictors of clicks and conversations. However, these algorithms need human input on what to optimize and good judgment on how to evaluate the results.

1 A DSP provider may sign a data deal with a third-party entity to access audience data that makes it easier to determine what users will respond favorable to ads from a certain advertiser.

2 Mergers & Acquisitions in the ad space typically result in a larger pool of rich data that improves the prospects of audience targeting and campaign optimization.

3 Oath Inc. is a fully owned subsidiary of Verizon Communications and consists of Internet icons AOL and Yahoo, which were acquired by Verizon Communications in 2015 and 2017, respectively.
Rethinking Capital Accumulation For Long-Term Growth
Edited by Yue Liu

Tony Poidomani is a Lecturer in the NU Medill Integrated Marketing Communications graduate program teaching financial accounting in the full-time, online, and part-time classes. Tony is currently the Chief Financial Officer of the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, which is dedicated to the connection, education, advancement, and dissemination of research. Previously, Tony held senior financial roles in Fortune 500 companies including Hospira, True Value Hardware, Quaker Oats, and McMaster-Carr. He teaches an executive MBA class at Lake Forest Graduate School of Management and received the Distinguished Faculty Award in 2007. Tony is a Certified Public Accountant and has an MBA from Loyola University, Chicago.

Today the word capital is everywhere. When we were young we instructed to start a sentence with a “capital” letter. We learned that a capital defined the more important city in a country or region. Capital demonstrated importance. In business contexts today, capital is the fuel and the engine of an economy. Capital is accumulated as financial sources, or money for something. Capital was an accumulated stock of such production of more wealth and return with value “is a battle cry for capitalism.

A dictionary reference views capital in the following ways:
- Wealth, whether in money or property, owned or employed in business by an individual, firm, or corporation
- An accumulated stock of such wealth
- Any form of wealth employed or capable of being employed in the production of more wealth
- Any source of profit, advantage, power, etc.
- An asset or assets (usually in combination)

Capital is in motion. The journey is purposeful. From financial source generation, capital seeks value. Value in this context is the fair return or equivalent in goods, services, or money for something exchanged. It is a business maxim, a creed, and a responsibility of decision making. “Use the capital and return with value” is a battle cry of capitalism.

So why has the word capital deviated from the physical to become omnipresent in business terminology today? Could it be possible that capital has a parallel important role in the search for value?

Capital resources are released into the business from sources derived from excess profits, borrowings from debt, and investor infusion for stock ownership. As resources, financial capital is deployed in long term investments such as a new Coca-Cola manufacturing plant, expanding cloud technology at Proctor & Gamble, or increasing the truck fleet at Amazon. In the short term, “working capital” ensures that there is funding to meet short term expenditures. In each instance, these assets become part of the balance sheet focused on future economic benefit.

To measure value, short term capital is optimized through lower borrowing costs. For long term investments, value is measured in terms of a return on investment calculation. The investments that create specific revenue generation, cost optimization, or excess cash flow creation are determined to deliver a high return on investment or value.

However, in areas such as human, social, and knowledge capital, the classification as assets on the balance sheet is not an option. Capital resources in these important, nonphysical areas are treated as expenses in the current income statement. The financial accounting treatment draws on a contradiction to the word “capital” that connotes an accumulation of resources for future economic benefit.

Human capital is improved with capital commitments to improving employee performance through continuing education, healthy living programs, and teaching and coaching decision-making processes. The result is additional output growth in productivity and critical thinking to deliver dynamic solutions to a changing marketplace.

In social capital, a commitment to extending the cultural aspects of community, relationships, social networks, and mutually beneficial reciprocity builds on personal and professional strengths. The result again is additional output growth.

According to the OECD report “New Sources of Growth: Knowledge-Based Capital,” an identification of assets that create future benefit for a company are not just “physical.” Drawing on three classifications, the OECD Report forms a mechanism of created output growth in the areas of computerized information, innovative property, and economic competencies. These focused categories have focused value capture. A better understanding of consumer needs from database capture, new engineering product designs, and improved consumer trust through brand building are the result of knowledge-based capital in motion.

The balance sheet is the foundation of the capital structure of an organization. As such, significant strategic planning and execution is involved to ensure that capital is deployed for value in both short and long-term deployments. Balance sheet management is a priority to shareholders. Value is delivered through profits, which creates capital appreciation in the share price and an opportunity for dividend payments or stock buybacks.

Management of current assets, liability management, and long-term investing become a prism to ensure that capital results in value through decision making. This approach exposes short-term decision making of the operations of the business, the income statement, to maximize profits. The goal of profit maximization thrives efforts to accumulate nonphysical asset capabilities in the areas such as human, social, and knowledge capital as fuel to productive growth. This occurs since investments in these nonphysical areas results in expenses and in turn reduces profit.

There is a disincentive to spend on marketing-based capital as the financial decision making of $100M versus $80M would always default to the short-term profit impact of spending $20M less.

A better understanding of consumer sentiment, needs, and communication of quality as an attribute will cap a resource deployment to a level of short-term profit maximization. An investment in an employee’s skill growth will be evaluated in the short-term from a productivity and output perspective, versus an acquired improvement in decision-making and business processes for long-term value to the organization. Return on investment calculation for these types of capital deployments on nonphysical assets must be rethought to achieve the benefits of short- and long-term decision-making value responsibilities.

It is incumbent of all professionals to understand capital, its desire to accumulate, its commitment to seek value, and its sometimes elusive ways to avoid its long-term blossoming in the spirit of short-term interest. Putting accounting record keeping in the context of reporting compliance of both the balance sheet and the income statement with the commitment to that capital results in value for long-term value can move the dialogue of decision making in boardrooms, factory floors, and office interactions.

So be responsible with capital. Seek to accumulate capital for the right resources. Deploy the capital in physical and nonphysical opportunities. Keep value as your treasure map and measure diligently in each journey.
Laura Coy joined William Blair in 2016 in a newly created role to elevate William Blair’s philanthropic culture and create opportunities to engage employees and clients as leaders in their global communities. Laura also leads the William Blair Community Partners program, which provides breakthrough funding to empower under-resourced youths.

Laura is a champion of building relationships and public-private partnerships. Drawing upon her experiences in the non-profit sector at organizations such as the Alzheimer’s Association, American Red Cross of Greater Chicago, and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, she initiates programs and networks that deliver both business and social value. In 2008, she began her career in corporate philanthropy at Grainger, where she ultimately served as the Senior Manager of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

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Laura Coy
Director of Philanthropy
Strategy
@ William Blair

P hilanthropy means the love of humanity. Since the early 1800s, individuals, foundations and corporations have allocated resources to help solve social problems. Monumental investments from philanthropists, such as George Peabody and Andrew Carnegie, introduced a tradition that acquired wealth could be given away to help others. Then came leaders like John D. Rockefeller and the Ford Foundation, which were not just charitable, but that began investing in modern medicine, scientific research, and international development to start addressing social issues at their root cause – so entire populations could do well and grow, and so that less-prosperous countries could increase productivity. These approaches have been widely adopted, even today, through enterprises like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and modern-day corporate philanthropy.

So what has changed over the past 200 years?
Philanthropy has become more intentional and mainstream. Instead of donating extra resources, individuals and businesses are providing central resources, unleashing talent, technology, and financial support to help solve and advance social issues and opportunities. At William Blair, a premier global boutique with expertise in investment banking, investment management, and private wealth management, our Veterans’ Resource Group initiated a partnership with Bunker Labs, a non-profit organization helping veterans across the country start and grow their businesses. Our leaders help veterans with financial modeling and provide mentoring, coaching, and support through office hours. Beyond our philanthropic support, this is a perfect alignment of resources to help veteran entrepreneurs.

In addition to just knowing that they work for a good company, employees want to be engaged in the workplace. Being a good corporate citizen is about empowering talent to engage, which ultimately helps with recruiting, engaging, and developing leaders. The William Blair & Company Foundation’s mission is to inspire the next generation of philanthropists. We do this by providing volunteer, matching, and board development programs in all of the offices where we live and work. Our signature Community Partners program is also inspired by employees. Every two years, employees nominate non-profits in their community that are embarking on catalytic growth. An employee committee reviews the grants and ultimately selects organizations that meet the program criteria, which includes meaningful volunteer and engagement opportunities.

Businesses and employees are elevating their purpose. BlackRock CEO Larry Fink stated in his annual letter to CEOs in 2017 that, “without a sense of purpose, no company, either public or private, can achieve its full potential.” All in all, businesses have realized that you can do well by doing good. They have unlocked their talent and resources to solve social issues. They have elevated their purpose to attract talent and more successfully engage with stakeholders. So what’s next?

Solving social issues will go beyond philanthropic and human capital. Businesses will integrate Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards more systematically into their products and operations, and they will become more accountable for their goals. According to the Governance and Accountability Institute, in 2016, 82 percent of Standard & Poor’s companies issued Corporate Social Responsibility Reports, indicating a rise in transparency and accountability. That rise is relevant to consumers, too. Beyond philanthropy is purchasing power. A recent Cone Communication survey showed that 87 percent of consumers will purchase a product because a company advocated for an issue they cared about, and 76 percent will refuse to purchase a company’s products or services upon learning it supported an issue that conflicted with their own beliefs or opinions.

At William Blair, we look at investments. In a recent white paper, we provided an overview of the sustainable investment landscape, including investor adoption and implementation trends, as well as important sustainable investment themes from an industry perspective. We all have a role to play in solving the world’s most complex problems, but we have never been better positioned to make a difference.
As Marketing Algorithms Proliferate, Marketers’ Proficiency in Law and Technology Must Follow

Edited by Benjamin Mandel

Tom E. Hayden was an engineer on the fraud team at Facebook and built out the data infrastructure at GrubHub. He holds a BA in Telecommunications, Information Studies, and Media from Michigan State University, and a Master of Science in Information, Incentive Centered Design from the University of Michigan. Tom was also an NU graduate student in theoretical computer science.

Marketing technology is having a similar disruptive impact, forcing firms to re-think how marketing campaigns are developed, implemented, optimized, and scaled. Technology drives automation, thus improving productivity by shifting employees to more effective tasks, and enables scale previously unattainable.

It comes with a dark side, however. If your team does not carefully build and tune the technology, you could be at risk of algorithmic bias. Algorithms are nearly always trained on past behavior, a technique known as supervised learning. Algorithmic bias occurs when an algorithm discriminates against a segment of the population because it improperly over-weights the effect of past behavior.

Think of it like this: suppose you run a marketing campaign targeted towards young affluent men, and the campaign performs well. If you were to build an algorithm to predict who you should target next, it will likely tell you to target young affluent men... again, and again, and again. Even the best AI is simply binary code following a set of instructions. Whether you build the algorithm thoughtfully or not, it will do exactly what you tell it to.

In decision-making, people over-fit data all the time. In the early days at GrubHub, the marketing team regularly designed campaigns to target under-35 urban women because it was the common belief that this was the top customer demographic. Only partially true, it’s likely that GrubHub missed out on good opportunities to connect meaningfully with new customers, while targeting the same demographic over and over again.

Implementing the right technology will allow you to both expand your own team’s customer knowledge base and to implement automation designed to effectively run your campaigns. However, it requires a thorough understanding of the data and its sources, and it requires you to ask the right questions, perhaps even bringing a data scientist and attorney on board to help.

It’s important to ask questions such as: How does this algorithm work? What are some of the specifics we need to know about it? How is it built? What type and how much data usually perform best, and how much did we use? Does the model line up with my expectations? If not, why not?

But answers to these questions may or may not uncover the legal or regulatory issues that will potentially accompany your use of the data. Accurate data is not immune to bias, particularly when the data has been aggregated from several sources. Data gathered and shared among multiple sources can be particularly problematic, sometimes leading to unpredictable or even discriminatory outcomes. Who among us can forget the New York Times story about Target’s ability to accurately predict pregnancy?

In most fields today the best technological and legally compliant AI implementations are the ones where decisions are made by people, augmented by the use of artificial intelligence. As we have seen, decisions made without the application of human judgment can lead to unexpected or even disastrous results. And historically, the regulators do not hold the machines responsible when they generate conclusions that prove to be harmful. When the systems themselves and the conclusions they generate cannot be properly explained, the regulators will come looking for you.

Thus, with the adoption of technologies like machine learning and artificial intelligence, it is no longer enough for IMC practitioners to simply be “marketers.” They will need to integrate technology and law into their process and practices. Successful IMC professionals will need to understand how the technology tools being used in digital marketing communications actually work, especially when those tools are needed to provide better, deeper, and bias-free insights into consumer behavior. They will also need to understand the legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to the use of the data that feed and drive these new technologies.

A basic proficiency in technology and law is not on the radar screens of most IMCers. But it should be if you want your tech tools to provide the bias-free, legally compliant output necessary to grow your business.
Tom Doctoroff is one of the world’s foremost experts on culture-driven marketing, Chinese consumer behavior, and the Asian commercial landscape. Tom, a dynamic speaker, rose to become the CEO of J. Walter Thompson (JWT) Asia Pacific. His unique combination of pan-Asian work, where he spent almost two decades based in China, has made him an expert in the cross-border management of brand architecture and brand building.

Tom is an alumnus of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business. In 1989, he earned an MBA with concentrations in marketing and finance from Booth. He holds a BA in Psychology from Northwestern University.

Definitions First: Human and Cultural Truths
Human truths unify us. Maslov’s theory of a “hierarchy of needs” explains it well. The lower levels focus on physical needs and the middle levels focus on productive engagement with society. At the pyramid’s apex sit six “self-actualization” – that is, determination of moral standards independent of legislation or social convention. Cultural truths, on the other hand, differentiate groups of people – specifically the rules with which they are taught to engage with society – and are usually the foundation of successful local brands.

Tension One: Human Truth vs. Human Truth
Again, tensions arise between competing: a) human truths, b) cultural truths, or c) human and cultural truths.

A number of brands have built up consumer loyalty and market share by resolving tensions that arise between human truths. The Belgium ultra-thin condom brand Zazoo sold a hugely successful yet controversial ad that goes to the heart of an insight that holds true for virtually all adults. The 45-second film content showed an exasperated father trying to deal with a kid who is having a tantrum in a supermarket, ending with the beautifully simple tagline: “Use condoms.” The ad is effective – and remains memorable – because the product solves a worldwide problem: I want to have sex, but I don’t want to worry about the consequences.

These tensions exist in all categories. Unilever’s detergent brand OMO is noted in a basic insight: parents want their kids to enjoy childhood, but cleaning clothes is a hassle. A 30-second commercial for the China market shows a kid covering himself in dirt as he discovers how to tie his shoelace. The ad positions OMO as savior, allowing kids to play and explore but also reducing the parental burden of washing clothes. Through a product truth – stain removal power – dirt is transformed from bad to good. Once a brand uncovers such a strong insight, it is free to create other engagement experiences. One small example: OMO dimensionalized its “Dirt is good” brand purpose with the works of Singaporean sand artist Jooshen Tan.

He created unique “dirt sculptures” that depicted children’s dreams for their futures by hiding millions of Instagram views.

Tension Two: Cultural Truth vs. Cultural Truth
For decades Singaporean Confucian ambition was summarized with the “five Cs” – credit, cars, country club memberships, and condominiums. Explicit demonstrations of wealth have long been benchmarks of success. However, in recent years young Singaporeans have begun to question these standards. Attitudes are evolving. A more rounded definition of “multi-dimensional fulfillment” competes with conventional standards of success.

Brands are tapping into this tension. A recent survey by OCBC Bank found that fewer than four percent of Singaporeans actually wanted a country club membership and fewer than 12 percent desired a luxury car. The resulting messaging coined a more rounded set of “five Cs”: control, confidence, community, can-do spirit, and fulfilling career aspirations. The phrase “Strive for More” initiative included online videos of taxi drivers chatting about their personal views on wealth, a “Life is Rewarding” content hub, as well as an outdoor campaign that dramatized the tension in Singapore society. One billboard read: “To zig when others zag. To speak up for yourself when no one else dares. To budget your job when you’ve stopped enjoying it. To stand tall where others fall. Strive for more.”

In Thailand, a country that has never been colonized, locals are proved profoundly nationalistic. But a rich cultural identity is built on the Buddhist ideal of maintaining harmony. A common phrase – mai pen rai – means “never mind,” “you’ll be welcome,” or “don’t worry.” But Thais – the world’s most active per-capita consumers of social media – now want to reach out to the world to display cultural sophistication. When Vogue launched a Thai edition, engaging platforms underscored this tension. They showed Thais as international fashionistas while (literally) bowing to the importance of tradition. Ultra-stylish models assumed nang paa plai – the seated position for a traditional Thai woman – which involves bending the legs to one side – to great elders, bending head and body as (slightly tongue-in-cheek) gestures of respect.

Tension Three: Human Truth vs. Cultural Truth
The third tension is between human and cultural truths. This is when universal desire clashes with pressures from historical or geographic identity.

Nike first became an iconic brand in the United States because it resolved a tension between human and cultural truths in American society. The ultimate bottom-up society, America idolizes the mold-breakers, the dreamers, the rebels. Americans idealize success on their own terms. We take pride in disregarding convention. However, like every society, America is a rules-based society. Adherence to convention runs deep. Community pressure – not to mention social media bubbles – further squelch independent thinking. Therefore, the tension between progressive individualism and restrictive conformism runs deep, and not only in red states. Nike’s resolution is “Just do it.” Goods and services – running shoes, apparel, the Nike+ app, and communities – liberate individuals to break free of rule-bound convention. Basketball courts morph into altars of skill demonstration; soccer pitches become platforms of can-do spirit; and cultural truths in American society. However, like every society, America is a rules-based society. Adherence to convention runs deep. Community pressure – not to mention social media bubbles – further squelch independent thinking. Therefore, the tension between progressive individualism and restrictive conformism runs deep, and not only in red states. Nike’s resolution is “Just do it.” Goods and services – running shoes, apparel, the Nike+ app, and communities – liberate individuals to break free of rule-bound convention. Basket...
The Future of IMC: One-to-One Consumer-Marketer Interaction and Involvement

Edited by Hannah Toutouchchi

Don E. Schultz consults, lectures, and holds seminars on integrated marketing communication, marketing, branding, advertising, sales promotion, and communication management in Europe, South America, Asia/Pacific, the Middle East, Australia, and North America. He is the author/co-author of over 28 books and over 150 trade, academic, and professional articles. A featured columnist in Marketing News and Marketing Insights magazines, Schultz was the founding editor of the Journal of Direct Marketing, the associate editor of the Journal of Marketing Communications, and the International Journal of Integrated Marketing Communication. Schultz also serves on the editorial review board for a number of trade and scholarly publications. He lives in Chicago with his wife Heidi, who is also his business partner.

Since its inception in the 1980s, IMC has gone through numerous transitions and transformations. Initially, IMC focused on aligning the marketer's primary outbound communications alternatives, including advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, and so forth. As data capture and curation emerged, actions quickly moved to a customer-focused paradigm, using all forms of data, both quantitative and qualitative, to develop better understandings of consumers, consumer groups, markets, and the like. Today, IMC is increasingly developing systems and methodologies that will enable truly one-to-one, interactive, and instantaneous marketing communications systems. Those will enable marketers to better respond to customer needs and requirements individually.

This “(r)evolution,” like prior ones, is being created by technology. What began initially as methodologies to assist marketers in improving existing practices (such as segmentation, targeting, and positioning) have now improved and evolved so they may well render established traditional marketing approaches obsolete. When marketing moves to integrating customers, rather than products, markets, distribution systems data, and the like, many existing methodologies are radically changed.

There are several emerging technologies driving this new “marketing (r)evolution.” The most obvious are already embedded, and now evolving, for example, data capture and consolidation, encrypted credit cards, financial facial recognition, and the like. The most recognizable are the shift to electronic, personalized sales and selling systems such as Apple’s “Siri,” Google’s “Assistant,” Amazon’s “Alexa,” and others. All of these technologies are based on individual sensory recognition systems, either voice, visual, or other. As these algorithms emerge, they move away from traditional keypunch, consumer inputs, and “cookies,” to individual data capture. Individual data capture creates a one-to-one relationship between marketers and customers, where customers are instantly recognized and connected to existing, previously captured data sets filled with their aspirations, intentions, passions, and past consumption. This shift enables communication between brand and consumer that can be shared and valued by both parties. While these new technologies may appear to challenge traditional consumer questions about privacy and manipulation, consumers increasingly appear to be more willing to give up their concerns to obtain the benefits and convenience of these new applications.

These new, one-to-one technologies will likely supersede many, if not most, traditional marketing concepts. No longer will it be important for marketers to identify markets, segment them in some way, and select marketing communication techniques to best interact with those consumers. Product positioning becomes irrelevant as consumers will do that for themselves, and in effect, traditional promotional techniques lose some of their appeal. Those remnants of “mass marketing,” which practitioners convinced themselves consisted of “common benefits” delivered to “common consumers” through “common media,” will be exposed as simply marketers aggregating millions of consumers, assuming they had common wants and needs, to create economies-of-scale in production and distribution. Clearly, so-called “markets” or “industries” that sellers created were fiction – ones where consumers individually developed requirements were partially, but never, ever really totally satisfied by the commoditized products and services.

The future of IMC, as I see it, is one based on a new algorithm simplified to three key areas illustrated by what I like to call PAR (See Figure 1). PAR has seven basic elements (Patterns, Platforms, Agility, Action, Response, Relevance, and Relationships) as shown below.

The P in PAR represents consumer behavioral Patterns that emerge from the interactive data generated by electronic systems created by marketing sensors. Those come from the increasingly prevalent forms of voice, visual, and other forms of consumer-marketer interactions. For example, the ability of a retailer to identify customers in the area of a retail store, the capability of then tracking those same customers as they move about the store to identify their shopping patterns, and the like. The electronic combination of these behavioral patterns provides the base for the development of individually relevant consumer-driven Platforms, the one-to-one aspect of the new IMC.

The A represents both the marketer’s and the consumer’s marketing-enabled Agility: the marketing firm can read and react to real-time consumer behaviors and anticipate future needs; and consumers can rely on the marketer to provide relevant and beneficial solutions to their various concerns quickly and efficiently. This Agility is the foundation of true interactive connections between the buyer and seller; this rapid change capability also enables immediate actions that build ongoing relationships between the buyer and seller.

R represents the outcomes of these ongoing IMC-generated relationships. Those consist of Response, an interactive, two-way communication and relationship process that fills consumer needs and enables a reasonable marketer to profit. Inherent in the R of PAR is the increased Relevance of the IMC system for both parties. The holistic result of PAR ultimately reduces the consumer’s shopping efforts and allows the marketer to fine-tune the assortment of products and services being offered. The last R is the development of on-going consumer-marketer Relationships. Those are the true values of the new and evolving IMC: one-to-one approaches likely to be the next dominant marketing system of the 21st century.

Obviously, this one-to-one conversion of IMC assumes marketers will act responsibly in their application of PAR. Those that develop reciprocal, shared-value approaches beneficial to both parties. Without that, it will fail.

Technology is here. One-to-one marketing is emerging. IMC is being reinvented, once again.
Implementing, The IMC Way

Written by Monique DeZarn

Sara’s team builds and protects the firm’s reputation as the first-choice advisor to middle market leaders globally through strategic communications in the areas of internal, executive, public relations, public policy, thought leadership, and corporate social responsibility. Sara serves as a member of the firm’s combined leadership team, the IMC leadership team, and chairs RSM’s thought leadership steering committee. She is also a member of Page Up and participates in several committees for the Center for Audit Quality. Sara graduated from Medill’s IMC program in 2006.

Andrew oversees integration of the firm’s marketing, communications, and business development activities, including integrated marketing and communications strategy design and implementation, brand management, client relationship experiences, and marketing and sales integration and support. Andy serves as a member of the firm’s combined leadership team. He is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society, serves on the board of directors for First Tee of Greater Chicago, and as a member of Northwestern University’s Journal of Integrated Marketing Communications advisory board. Andy received a Bachelor of Arts in journalism from the University of South Carolina and a Master of Science in Integrated Marketing Communications from Northwestern University.

Medill IMC alumni Andy Bosman and Sara Webber Laczo have implemented the IMC approach in an industry that rarely uses marketing communications. At RSM, the fifth largest audit, tax, and consulting firm in the United States, the two have humanized financials and analytics using the IMC approach. Andy, Chief Marketing Officer, and Sara, Corporate Communications Leader, evolved their business from solutions-based (i.e., pure technical services) to issues-based marketing: foreseeing the challenges and issues a company might face, and effectively and holistically responding to it.
While at first blush the marriage of audit, tax, consulting, and IMC might seem a bit unusual, the detail with which they have managed to incorporate what they learned from their graduate program is astounding. What differentiates RSM from all of the large- and small-scale firms is the customer base that they serve, what Sara and Andy refer to as the “middle market.” While the middle market may seem less lucrative than that of larger clientele, the power that the middle market holds represents 40 percent of the country’s GDP, one-third of jobs, and encompasses roughly 200,000 businesses. It represents a largely untapped and ripe marketplace.

The first change that Andy and Sara implemented was a strategic internal structuring: hiring a well-rounded team that could adeptly address each and every concern from the clients. They hired a Bloomberg economist to share economic perspectives with global middle market executives, and began RSM’s monthly publication, The Real Economy, a unique recurring piece of content that approaches middle market issues with anticipatory advice and analysis. Following that, they introduced the RSM US Middle Market Business Index (MMBI) with strategic partners Harris Poll, Moody’s Analytics, and the US Chamber of Commerce. The research team performed and published client loyalty research to understand what was top of mind for the middle market – everything from changing buying patterns to regulatory change. They also established the RSM First-Choice Advisor Center to educate the company internally and created programs that allowed everyone in the company, regardless of position, to experience what was involved in delivering on RSM’s brand promise – the Power of Being Understood – in every client interaction.

Internal communications and structure have played a large role in guiding their business in the direction that supports growth, meets clients’ needs, and creates internal harmony. Andy and Sara stress that RSM prides itself on having a concise and clearly articulated strategy that starts with knowledge and vision from within. All employees are fully immersed in the company vision, purpose, and strategy through internal leadership initiatives. Consequently, employees who are the primary line of contact with clients, are able to function as brand ambassadors.

Andy and Sara are quick to point out that RSM’s evolution stemmed from its shift from solutions-based marketing to issues-based marketing. Solutions-based marketing implies that the clients know exactly what it is they need. Now with the integration of research, resources, and internal development, RSM puts the onus on themselves to educate clients on the latest happenings in the market and uses foresight when sharing insights and solutions that might not have been top-of-mind for the client, but would work best to achieve a client’s end goals. Artificial Intelligence, for example, is one such tool that clients may not request directly but fills a need that has been unmet for some time.

By staying true to a client-centric approach that lies at the core of integrated marketing communications, Andy and Sara have allowed RSM to deliver holistic service to an otherwise untapped marketplace.
Identifying New Product Ideas: Waiting for the Wisdom of the Crowd or Screening Ideas in Real Time

One of our key aims was to determine whether a firm benefits from waiting to obtain “crowd” data, which take time to accumulate, or whether it can just as easily make decisions in real time, based on “contributor” and “content” information. Two separate models are built to assess the added value of crowd feedback in idea selection: the first contains content and contributor experience (scenario 1), and the second additionally includes crowd feedback (scenario 2).

For scenario 1, the use of our model improved idea selection by between 8.7% and 11.7% over ranking by votes, between 23.8% and 21.1% over ranking by comments, and between 22.6% and 26.0% over random idea selection. Thus, idea selection on the basis of content coupled with contributor experience is superior to random idea selection or idea selection based on the number of votes but is marginally inferior to idea selection based on the number of comments. For scenario 2, the use of our model improved idea selection by between 31.7% and 61.0% over ranking by votes, between 42.8% and 52.1% over ranking by comments (AUC 5.637), and between 48.6% and 81.6% over random idea selection (AUC 5.5). In sum, using all 3Cs performs systematically better than using idea ranking heuristics over several algorithms. Across algorithms, AB and LDA were, respectively, the best- and worst-performing classifiers for both scenarios.

Discussion

Our results suggest that waiting for crowd data — and specifically, structured data, that is, the number of votes and comments that an idea receives per day — may be worthwhile: including this information improves idea selection between 17.7% and 48.1% over using content and contributor experience. The nonlinear models (AB, RF) substantially outperformed the linear models (LDA, LR) when crowd data is incorporated, suggesting that the former can capture nonlinearities and interactions not captured by the latter. This finding necessitates more research on the use of nonlinear methods in idea selection. Our results further indicate that ideas need to surpass an initial threshold of obtaining one crowd vote (comment); achieving this improves the odds of implementation substantially. These findings suggest that, after controlling for content and contributor experience, the decision criteria of both the crowd and the firm are likely to be well aligned.

When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented. When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented. When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented. When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented. When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented. When the manager does not have time to wait for the votes, then he or she can gain information from the idea’s content, which comprises unstructured textual data. To distinguish between novel and similar ideas, this study developed a measure for ideas’ relative distinctiveness as compared with previously submitted ideas. Both highly dissimilar (i.e., distinctive, new) and highly similar (i.e., more of the 3Cs), have a higher implementation probability. Moderately distinctive ideas, however, are not likely to be implemented.

Contributor experience was also predictive of idea implementation (42.5% over ranking by comments, and between 22.6% and 26.0% over random idea selection). In all cases, the performance of the model that included all of the 3Cs (content, contributor, crowd) was superior to that of the model that included only content and contributor experience. The improvement in terms of “Area Under the Receiver Operating Characteristic Curve” (AUC) was by 0.113 (117.9%), 0.186 (129.6%), 0.295 (148.1%), and 0.274 (143.8%) in linear discriminant analysis (LDA), linear regression (LR), stochastic adaptive boosting (AB), and random forests (RF), respectively. The Delong test confirms that these increases are significant across all classifiers (p < .001). In scenario 1, the models can predict idea implementation accurately with an AUC ranging between .613 (AB) and .630 (RF). After including crowd feedback (scenario 2), this probability increases to between 74.3% (LDA) and 90.8% (AB).
The Dynamics of Consumer Engagement with Mobile Technology

Edited by Dongmin Ren

Approaches and tools for managing customer interactions have evolved rapidly over the last two decades. Among these emerging technologies, branded mobile applications and mobile optimized websites (“mobile apps”) used on smartphones and tablets are changing the ways in which customers interact with brands.

Previous research on mobile marketing, however, has focused on a one-way relationship between mobile use and outcomes such as purchase. We posit that the relationship is more complicated and multidimensional. The dynamic inter-relationship between customer mobile engagement, purchase, and consumption behaviors can be conceptually mapped as an interactive triangular relationship (see Figure 1). Using a mobile app certainly exposes customers to a brand and thereby increases the likelihood of purchase and use of the service, but the relationship could go the other way as well: a customer who uses a service and derives value from it may seek out the app and use it. Therefore, the main objective of our study is to examine how consumer engagement behaviors (CEB) with a mobile app and purchase/consumption behaviors influence each other over time. To achieve this objective, we utilize a dataset sourced from LoyaltyOne in Canada. Each member enrolled in the program is provided a membership card that can be swiped at various sponsors.

LoyaltyOne also developed a branded mobile app, which allows customers to undertake specific consumer engagement behaviors, including logging in to check their point balances, browse potential reward items, keep track of their purchase histories and progress toward the attainment of particular rewards, find sponsors nearby, and check-in at sponsors. Consumers can share their check-in information on specific social networking sites (e.g., Facebook), helping to inform their family and friends where they shop or to keep a record of specific locations they have visited.

To incorporate the three different behaviors into our model, we first compute two measures of consumer engagement behaviors, namely the frequency and recency of customers’ usage of the app. We also calculate the total number of points accumulated each week by a customer as a measure of purchase behavior and the total number of points redeemed each week by a customer as a measure of consumption behavior. We then employ a vector autoregressive (VAR) model to account for the dynamic nature of interactions between the variables studied.

Overall, our findings suggest that the emerging brand touch point of mobile apps provides a powerful tool for fostering customer engagement behaviors that influence marketplace outcomes such as purchase behavior. Specifically, based on our findings, engaging customers with mobile apps represents not only a viable revenue generating opportunity, but also a way to reduce advertising and promotion costs. Savings accrue because the firm does not buy advertising media and instead utilizes its branded app to control the medium, grow its audience, and co-create and distribute content. Nor must the firm reduce its margins through promotional tactics.

Hence, despite the upfront investment required for the development of the mobile app, our findings show that the introduction of branded mobile apps is an effective tactic that fosters the development of desirable consumer engagement behaviors and other ensuing behaviors, including point accumulation and redemption, thus contributing to the development of customer brand loyalty and lifetime value. As such, the introduction of branded mobile apps represents a “game changer” for marketing communications.
Automated Text Analysis for Consumer Research

Summarized by Sherry Xie

With the rise of social network sites that allow consumers to make comments and exchange ideas, we have seen an explosion of consumer-generated text data in the form of reviews, blogs, messages, etc. In this context, automated text analysis, which utilizes computers to detect and analyze language patterns underlying the messy swamp of user-produced text, offers marketers as well as researchers a deeper insight into consumer thoughts, behavior, psychology, decision-making processes, and culture.

There are six main stages in designing and executing an automated text analysis:

Stage 1: Developing a Research Question
Before conducting an automated text analysis, we should first make sure that the research question is suitable for text analysis. There are three research contexts that would be considered inappropriate for text analysis: 1) research that needs precise control to compare groups, introduce manipulations, or rule out alternative hypotheses (Cook, Campbell, and Day; 1979); 2) research that concerns behavioral or uncontrolled data (i.e., response time); 3) research that investigates subtle and indirect expressions or complex theoretical explanations.

Stage 2: Construct Identification
After making sure the text analysis is suitable for the research question, we can then identify the construct. Linguistically, language consists of three elements – semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic. The examination of each element can provide marketers with unique information about consumer thoughts, interaction, and culture. Attention can be measured through semantics (i.e., word frequency in a text can be used to measure attention). Processing can be examined through syntax (i.e., the frequency of conjunction words like “and” can be used to indicate the depth of processing in reviews). Interpersonal dynamics can be studied through pragmatics (i.e., the analyses of pronouns and demonstratives can detect the degree of intimacy, authority, or self-consciousness). And group level characteristics can be analyzed through semantics (i.e., group attention, differences among groups, and the collective structure can all be measured).

Stage 3: Data Collection
After identifying the research question and constructs, the next step is data collection. There are three steps: 1) identify data sources, including designing a sampling strategy that eliminates selection biases and considers the sample size; 2) prepare data, including spell-check, data cleaning, and necessary processing of languages other than English; 3) unite and store the data, including creating an organized file structure through coding, or using a program and database management system.

Stage 4: Choose an Operationalization Approach and Execute
Stage 5: Interpretation and Analysis
The next step is to analyze and interpret the results. There are three ways to apply text analysis finding to research design: 1) comparison between groups; 2) correlation between textual elements; and 3) prediction of variables outside the text.

Stage 6: Validation
As the data of automated text analysis is originally produced consumer texts, the external validity and ecological validity can thus be guaranteed (Mogilner et al. 2011). Apart from that, construct validity, concurrent validity, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and predictive validity should be addressed using different techniques.

This research was adapted and summarized from an original paper by Ashlee Humphreys, and Jen-Hui Rebecca Wang published in Journal of Consumer Research (2017).

Sources:
B2B Content Marketing For Professional Services: In-Person Versus Digital Contacts

Background and Hypotheses

Content is usually provided for free by a service provider, who invites account employees to engage with the content. Typically, such content is not around the service provider's offerings but is designed by the service provider to help account employees to build relationships with them. For example, the service provider can share industry news along with information to help account employees identify opportunities and challenges in their own industries. In fact, both business-to-business (B2B) marketing practitioners and researchers emphasize that content marketing (CM) requires a business culture change from "selling" to "helping." In particular, B2B practitioners state that "great content adds value by helping the audience to do something better, or by solving a specific problem or pain they have in their professional life." Offering content to customers can thus be thought of as a customer engagement initiative, an opportunity for the customer to engage with the service provider via the content. Customer engagement can be defined as "the intensity of an individual's participation in and connection with an organization's offerings and/or organizational activities, which either the customer or the organization initiate." When an account employee engages with CM activities, he or she may derive intrinsic or extrinsic value from the content. Account employees might derive intrinsic, hedonic value from a CM activity simply because they enjoy it. Moreover, their desire for knowledge may be satisfied by the content, from which the account employees derive epistemic value. Likewise, account employees may be said to derive functional value, economic value, or learning value from the content because it provides relevant information on the problem they are solving and/or helps them enhance their efficiency at work. The more valued the content, the more engaged account employees are, and the more likely they are to trust the service provider and share positive word of mouth about the service provider within the account. Ultimately, the account may choose to engage more likely to purchase the service provider's offerings because the buying center is more likely to have account employees who trust the service provider and are affected by positive word of mouth for the service provider.

B2B CM activities may also increase the degree to which relational norms appear, especially in the relationships between the service provider and existing customers. In particular, when account employees engage more with CM activities, they may be more likely to perceive the existence of the norms of information exchange or assistance, because CM activities provide information beyond a pre-specified contract and help account employees in idea generation or problem analysis. The stronger these relational norms are, the more likely that, compared with its competitors, the service provider can gain the account's attention and obtain more purchases from the account.

Thus, with B2B CM, the service provider hopes to affect the buying center and purchase decision process. The service provider may not know whether any particular account employee on its contact list is involved in any particular purchase decision. However, some account employees will at times be involved in purchase decisions or affect colleagues who are related to the purchase process. Therefore, by engaging account employees through CM activities, the service provider hopes to elicit more sales leads and/or win opportunities from that account. Therefore, we hypothesize that a B2B service provider obtains more sales opportunities from accounts that engage more with its CM activities (See Figure 1 for the model framework of this study).

Discussion and Conclusions

We found that the more an account engages with the service provider's digital events, such as webcasts or digital content on its websites, the more sales leads and won opportunities come from the account. Thus, we demonstrate that engagement with digital CM activities is instrumental in advancing business outcomes. This implies that marketing can play a complementary role to the sales force's orientation to personal selling by emphasizing digital CM.

We further found that the association between engagement with digital events and the number of sales leads or won opportunities is even stronger when account employees with high job titles engage. Specifically, even though the engagement with digital events has a positive association with the number of sales leads, regardless of account employees’ job titles, it is only the engagement with digital events of employees with high job titles that has a positive association with the number of won opportunities. Cases must be taken in interpreting the lack of an effect on won opportunities for employees with low job titles. This effect is borderline significant, so sample size may be an issue. Moreover, it is the case that CM for employees with low job titles is related to sales leads, and sales leads are necessary for won opportunities. The conversion rate of sales leads to won opportunities is about 60% (and the rate remains around 59%-61% across accounts of different relationship lengths). The correlation of won opportunities to the number of sales leads in the previous period is 0.89. So, CM for employees with low job titles is linked to won opportunities in that it generates more leads that could be potentially converted to wins. Therefore, we caution against concluding that service providers should focus CM activities on employees with high job titles, or that CM targeted at employees with low job titles is wasted. Instead, we suggest additional research on this topic. For example, it could be the case that employees with low job titles are instrumental in the necessary step of getting the lead, but do not have the authority to award the contract. But leads from lower level employees could influence higher level employees in a way that results in leads from the company. Low level employees may be promoted, and brand associations about the service provided may persist over time. Further research is needed to understand how interactions in the buying process are affected by CM. Establishing relationships with all employees of the client organizations may well be a sound strategy as opposed to focusing mainly on employees with high job titles.

We did not find that an account's engagement with in-person events is associated with the number of sales leads or won opportunities from the account. Attending an in-person event would seem to require more involvement from an account employee than attending a digital event because the employee must physically travel to the event, requiring additional time and travel expenses. Through face-to-face contact, the firm’s representatives would also seem to have greater opportunities to deliver content and bond with the client.

Therefore, it might be surprising that engagement with in-person events did not have a significant positive effect on lead generation, and we suggest further research to explain this. One possibility is that the monetary and non-monetary costs associated with an in-person event may offset the value derived by the account employee attending the event. This argument could also explain the significant effect of engagement with digital events and digital content because it incurs minimal costs for account employees to engage with digital events or digital content.

This research was adapted and abridged from work by Chen Chen. Edward C. Malthouse, Bobby Calder, and Ebru Uzunoglu published in Industrial Marketing Management (2017).
How IMC Fundamentals Transform Careers

Written by Sijia Wang

Loretta Yang has eight years of experience working in data analytics teams at big media advertising agencies and serving Fortune 500 clients in the CPG, retail, and insurance industries. She is an experienced marketing analytics professional, a firm believer of the power of big data, an enthusiast of programmatic media and precision marketing, a proactive problem solver, and a passionate team leader.

With a strong interest in marketing and strength in analytics, Loretta made a switch from Journalism to IMC. She believes that consumer insights and marketing strategies are generated from evidence and facts. In eight years of work experience with data and analytics, Loretta enjoys playing with data and transforming it into meaningful stories.

Currently, Loretta helps clients with business growth through media planning and campaign execution at Facebook. Her clients range from small local burger joints to industry giants like Google and HP. Through providing customer data analysis and consumer insights, Loretta helps her clients improve media buy effectiveness and build marketing strategies on Facebook by finding their target audiences and delivering the right messages to them. As she puts it: “The philosophy of Facebook measurement is very consistent with IMC. Facebook is people-based, and all decisions are made based on data and analysis. My entire work is about IMC.”

The marketing industry is moving away from channel planning to audience planning. There is no single channel that is required for all consumer journeys. “Firstly, we need to consider who we want to talk to, what is the right message for them, and how can we reach them, then let the data tell you the answer.” Loretta believes that the future of marketing analytics will focus on mobile marketing. “Mobile is really changing everything.”

Marketers now have more control over different mobile devices, which also leads to changes in marketing and media strategy. With huge amounts of cross-device consumer behavioral data compared to eight years ago, consumer experience will continue to improve largely because content will be more personalized and relevant. However, identifying consumers is a major challenge for marketing analytics because consumer purchase behaviors across different devices and platforms, and it is hard to connect consumer behavior online and offline. For students who want to pursue careers in marketing analytics, Loretta suggests that industry exposure and business-driven mindset are important. She believes that the advantage of marketing analysts over data scientists lies with their ability to produce business insights: “Marketing analysts translate data into actionable insights and strategies. Data analytics tools are changing every year; you will learn new data analytics tools in work and practice models you learned from class.” It is important to internalize the information from the classroom and apply it in the real business world. Loretta suggests that IMCers should leverage the powerful Northwestern network and keep IMC principles in mind to gain more industry experiences. And by doing so, they will remain on the bleeding edge of marketing revolution.