The Marketers’ Roundtable is a showcase of executive perspectives on IMC. Here four marketing and communications executives elaborate on how their companies are implementing the key principles of integrated marketing communications and how they have created a “relationship edge” with their customers.

**Catherine Captain**  
Vice President of Marketing  
MSNBC.com

What are the best methods (or strategies or tactics) that you implement to stay abreast of your customers’ behaviors, demands and desires?  
“I have to say that working in the digital space is incredibly gratifying on this front. When I was at a newspaper, we used to agonize over whether or not red headlines sold more copies on the newsstand – a nearly impossible question. Today, online, we can instantly see what’s working and what’s not. A marketer’s dream! Consumers vote with every click of their mouse. Behavior and patterns are clearly observed. That said, we’ve committed significant resources in order to establish processes and organization around all that data and, importantly, towards understanding the motivating psychology behind the behaviors. It’s not just having the data, but knowing what to do with it, making it actionable throughout the organization, and marrying it with qualitative findings to paint the whole picture.”

How do you see these relationships with your customers changing in the future?  
“I predict that our relationship with consumers will become much more direct. With the rise of participatory journalism and instant feedback mechanisms, there is no question about that. The concept of ‘audience’ as an amorphous, nameless, faceless mass will become less useful.”

**Dan Gahlon**  
Staff Vice President, Public Relations and Corporate Communications  
3M

How does your company use integrated marketing communications strategies (traditional and non-traditional) to develop a “relationship edge” with customers?  
“We work hard to spend a lot of time in the listen mode with customers, using both quantitative and qualitative tools. There is no substitute for face-to-face interaction with customers. We also recently built a facility at our St. Paul, Minn., headquarters specifically designed to tell our company innovation story to customers.”

What are the best methods (or strategies or tactics) that you implement to stay abreast of your customers’ behaviors, demands and desires?  
“We have built a customer insight center of excellence and have attracted top research talent to staff the center. The group supports our voice of customer work across the company.”
Mark Goldstein
Vice Chairman/Chief Marketing Officer
BBDO North America

What does integrated marketing communications mean to you and your company?
“At BBDO integrated marketing is about ideas, not process. It’s about having an idea that’s so huge it can be reduced to a text message. And then that text message can be interpreted and activated by anyone who comes in contact with it. We’re much more interested in forms than platforms. So we don’t parse out work based on traditional platforms (media, PR, events, etc.). We aggregate the right talent and then they execute against whatever form best suits their skills.”

What do you believe is your company’s “relationship edge”?
“If we have a relationship edge, it’s in being relentless reductionists for our clients. We reduce the complexity of their business to the essential truth, the thing that will transform their relationships with their own customers. We do it by bringing our clients ideas so huge they become the expression of the company’s mission. A good example is our work for GE. ‘Imagination at Work’ is more than a theme for GE; it’s what they do every day at work.”

Kevin Willer
Central Region Development Manager
Google

What are the best methods (or strategies or tactics) that you implement to stay abreast of your customers’ behaviors, demands and desires?
“Google is a very data driven company, and we employ a host of reports and analytical tools to help us understand exactly how our advertisers are using our products and where they are being successful with them. We find the best approach is to provide data directly to the advertisers and help them use that data to make their advertisements even more effective.”

How does your company use integrated marketing communications strategies (traditional and non-traditional) to develop a “relationship edge” with customers?
“Our relationship edge with our advertisers is based on our ability to deliver prospects who are actually looking for their services. Our cross-media buying platform for search, online display, video, audio, print, and TV, provides advertisers with one interface to plan their marketing campaign. We then provide analytics on the performance of these campaigns to give them insights on how to adjust for maximum effectiveness. With some media, we also provide an auction-based marketplace to bid on ad placements.”