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Digital? Get back to basics first

By Gregory Birge

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Online campaigns are ubiquitous these days. Online job portals, blog shops and even government agencies have hopped onto the bandwagon. More and more brands are trying to catch up to online marketing channels. Please note the plural form: channels -- from banners on search engine portals like Yahoo!, social media like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, paid reviews by bloggers, paid search on Google Adwords or Yahoo SEM, word-of-mouth, organic search to in-house email list (email blast) -- they are no longer executed singularly but can be implemented in 101 combinations.

Remember those days when you attempted to get a new color and then realized no matter how much blue, red, yellow or green you put, it just turned brownish, all the time? Same thing here. A successful campaign does not come in a standard package of Facebook page, blog, video or banner. Here comes the million-dollar question: How do companies know which mix will create the best result for them?

With the different permutations of online marketing channels, the challenge of measuring the success of online campaigns accurately arises. According to the [MIA Project Audience and Traffic Measurement global survey](#) the majority of agencies, advertisers and media owners using internet audience measurement are not satisfied with the metrics and information available. The measurement inconsistency across countries and regions is considered to be one of the main issues facing measurement in digital marketing.

Although the metrics used in digital marketing are hazy in standardization, it provides a statistical overview at a relatively low cost as compared to traditional media channels. While most of us are still confused between hits, impressions, visits and unique visitors, we are still using the same old school ways of measurement, success, investment, return on investment and return on marketing investment to drive efficiencies and budget. Online campaigns are still categorized under above-the-line planning and budget and not accounted accordingly to the online aspect.

One rule though: Visuals are misleading (sorry guys)

Yes, we like it. Yes, it is nice. But is it efficient? A pretty website does not equate to an efficient one; a beautiful campaign is not an effective campaign. It is important to know how to determine the price associated with the development of it. Traditional agencies price based on rate cards, which means the cost of the staff, and is not linked to campaign product/result. Metrics like cost-per-click (CPC), cost-per-impressions (CPM) or cost-per-action (CPA), etc. are used but they are not as accurate as perceived. Discrepancies between the reports of web publishers and third parties such as Nielsen Online and comScore have been an on-going issue.

Amidst all these complications, the objective of the real deal is obscured. What really matters most out of all these measurements are actually campaigns' efficiency, sales turnout and/or customer retention.

Second rule: Technologies do not matter

Client companies are only interested in **how** technologies can help to achieve their goals and objectives; customers just want their needs and desires to be fulfilled. Whether it is a state-of-art web analytics program or simply an adaptation from a white-label application platform, the choice of web tools is never a deciding factor for brands and consumers. In other words, a visually enticing website remains attractive and not effective unless it is accompanied by traffic generation, data capture, follow-ups or engagement.

The core idea of 'Back to Basics' is all about measurement and efficiency. Brands should be aware of this -- "Based on my requirements, how much budget should I allocate to increase my sales accordingly?"

The good thing is there are already several interesting initiatives in the market to help marketers and brands better understand these elements:

- DGCT Singapore proposes to measure audience demographics watching a screen. They can even push media planning over the internet and control the efficiency of a dedicated campaign
- Eyeka is able to create proper UGC and engage almost immediately thousands of creative enthusiasts around the world with one brief
- Agathos Solutions is able to properly track online level of brand index and has a proper semantic search on FAQ

However, these solutions are useful and implementable when properly aligned into a briefing and deliver upon metric and satisfaction. Despite the availability of all these great elements, nothing much has changed.

- A simple edM sent to a database without tracking of clicks, a call to action and sales, is a waste of money. Unfortunately, some brands still prefer to spam instead of measuring, under the impression that they have saved S\$500
- Some companies guarantee a 4 percent click rate (opening) on the edM they send. This is just translated into: I am going to spam the world with your blessing!
- We still receive non-targeted emails with the wrong spelling or wrong targeting

WHY?

Tim Berners-Lee has highlighted this [before](#), that website snooping should be avoided. With the controversial nature of the issue of privacy/intrusion/stalking, it is important to know when to draw the line. Yet, this is not the reason why companies are not utilizing the enhanced tools. Brands or marketers are aware of what available, but everyone prefers their comfort zone. We do not want to risk convincing our bosses about something new in case of anything unforeseen that might endanger our rice bowl. We just stick to doing what we know.

Budget approved for ATL, we do ATL, budget approved for event, we do an event. How many people join the event? Where are they from? Which database is

most efficient? Do we have follow-ups based on their profile and past actions? Not necessary... Without a suitable tracking system in place, no data is available for analysis and the effort and budget spent will merely be one-way, with no direct returns.

Digital and online + social networking websites + mobile + all other technologies will definitely increase performance, but we need to go back to basics first. Be aware of the goals to be achieved and begin with the end in mind.

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