

Attacking traditional media is not the way to sell digital marketing

 By [Melody Maker](#)

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For years, digital agencies and publishers have tried to sell the value of their medium by attacking traditional media such as television, print and outdoor. These old-fashioned channels are outdated, we are told; they are irrelevant and taking their last breaths of life in a market that is shifting over to digital platforms.

However, this approach is doing our young and growing medium more harm than good because it focuses the debate on all the wrong issues. Worse than that, it makes digital agencies sound like snake-oil salespeople peddling a novelty elixir to our customers. Take one dose of digital magic today and watch your sales shoot through the roof, all too many digital marketers promise.

Put your focus where it belongs

Hyperbolic claims about the power of digital media and premature proclamations about the death of traditional media will not inspire confidence among those marketers who are not yet earmarking a substantial portion of their budgets for digital. To win these marketers over, digital agencies and publishers should rather be focusing on their own strengths rather than on the perceived weaknesses of traditional media.

What should be important is what digital delivers, when it is the right fit for a campaign or a brand, and how it can be used together with traditional media to make a client's budget deliver a better return on investment. It is a mainstream, mature channel and it is time that it starts behaving like one.

What does this mean in practice? A starting point is that digital can offer opportunities for clients to connect with their audiences and build relationships with them to achieve their business goals, which usually are to sell products and services to as many customers as possible. What makes it different from the other more traditional channels is that it can be used to get customers to tell stories for brands because of its interactive nature.

Agile digital

Another benefit of digital is that it is so measurable and allows marketers to track their online campaign performance with a great deal of accuracy. Marketers can trace customers from click-through to conversion, getting a window into the campaign's return on investment. The beauty of the nature of digital is its agility allowing brands to optimise and update campaigns on the fly as data becomes available on its performance.

But none of these discrete benefits should be used to try and position online as a superior channel to the rest, since print, broadcast or outdoor still have many advantages of their own, for example offering reach into markets that online does not yet permeate or the customer's undivided attention during a drive home in peak-hour traffic.

See the synergies - and then exploit them

Rather than seeing these media channels as competitors to be ruthlessly denigrated, savvy digital marketers should be thinking about how their toolsets can work alongside traditional channels to the best benefit of the client. More often than not the most successful marketing campaigns are those which are truly integrated across all channels, which when executed properly generally produce great results.

Consistent messages across channels can reinforce each other, since most customers today are omnivores that consume information across fragmented print, online, mobile and broadcast outlets.

For example, a sound online reputation management and social media strategy can help marketers understand what their customers think of a TV campaign, or a successful radio ad may send someone searching for the product online.

Marketers and agencies that think about digital and traditional channels in a binary manner will not maximise the benefit of either for the brands for which they work.

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