

“When the winds of
change are blowing,
some people are
building shelters,
others are building
windmills.”

Chinese Proverb

BACKGROUND

In an increasingly complex, technology enhanced, communication environment where, creative ideas have to work across multiple formats and devices, extant structures and models are beginning to be challenged.

Everything is pointing towards a more open, technology sophisticated, collaborative, multidisciplinary team approach to creating brand communication programmes.

This paper is designed to help better understand the fundamental shifts in human communication behaviour that are taking place and how this necessitates us adjusting our internal structures and disciplines to embrace these new phenomena and more importantly how we must adopt a “different mindset” to solving communication problems.

THE CHANGING COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT

Like everywhere else Ireland is not immune to the encroaching era of increasingly empowered people and the impact that this is having on the world of communication.

A world where passive consumption has given way to active participation and where engagement and experience matter much more than spurious brand promises and where, what friends and peers say, is much more powerful than the best efforts of any form of advertising.

Ireland has wholeheartedly embraced Web 2.0 and social media and as broadband penetration increases the usage will accelerate.

This is not a fad. It is a fundamental shift in the way Irish People communicate where dialogue, as a communication model, is beginning to subsume the old monologue model and where social media, for many people in Ireland, has become a daily part of their social existence, integral to life’s routine.

We are at the marketing communication tipping point.

Some 23% of Irish adults use social networking sites, double what it was a year ago. There are now 1 million people on Facebook, 800k on Bebo, 10k+, and growing, on Twitter and mobile phone penetration is 115%. YouTube outperforms all the networking sites with 1.3m visitors. All in a country with a population the size of Birmingham.

Clearly here, in Ireland, people’s behaviour is changing and will continue to change and as Clay Shirky says:

“A revolution doesn’t happen when
a society adopts new tools.
It happens when society adopts
new behaviours.”

But, in reality, whilst the role of technology has undoubtedly had a considerable impact on how we communicate, technology, per se, has not made us more “social”, as a basic human trait, but has facilitated greater “socialisation”. It has made us all potential media producers where influence is the universal multiplier.

Furthermore people no longer readily move from one linear touch-point to the next. Instead they snack on digital content delivered through a dizzying array of devices, increasingly in a state of “constant partial attention”. Again Mr Shirky refers to this as “the largest increase in expressive capability in human history.”

However, the danger here is that we simply regard social media as being new marketing channels, without recognising and embracing the more “socially empowered” world people now inhabit. As Forrester Research pointed out, though “social media playtime is over”.

But what exactly do we mean by Social Media? Wikipedia defines it as being:

“...an umbrella term that defines various consumer activities that integrate technology, social interaction and the construction of words, pictures, video and audio”.

Above all, **Social Media is about conversations.**

However it is our contention that it is not about the media dimension, it is all about the SOCIAL dimension and it becomes imperative to enhance our capability to navigate our way around it, because communication power will lie with those who are best equipped to make the social linkages.

SOCIAL is in people’s DNA.

As a consequence, over time, we believe the word Social must become synonymous with our core business ethos manifested in a 360 Social Thinking mindset. The socialisation of brand communication.

In marketing terms markets will no longer be mass: the markets will be about individuals because as McKinsey have pointed out – “two-thirds of the economy will be influenced by personal recommendations”.

It will be a market-place epitomised by personalisation, engagement, customisation, sharing, transparency and participation where the communication imperative will be about igniting meaningful conversations and “recommendation networks”.

Therefore we must stop thinking campaigns and start committing ourselves to creating conversations and communities of loyal fans, where loyalty and trust will be the key dynamics.

“Brands are not defined by
campaigns anymore, but by the
people ecosystem we nurture to
support them”.

CMO Hewlett Packard

Therefore this isn’t just about using new communication tools but is more about changing our perspective as to how we interact and engage with people (“the audience formally known as consumers”) and in doing so transform our brand relationships with them.

CURRENT OPERATING MODEL

Ogilvy Ireland is currently structured across three broad platforms or a better description might be silos.

The three silos Ogilvy and Mather Advertising, Ogilvy One and Wilson Hartnell PR are currently stand alone entities, with very little interaction and collaboration, but do co-exist under the one roof, all feeding in to one bottom line.

Whilst the organisation has the potential to deliver 360 Degree Brand Stewardship solutions, as a generalisation, the concept, up till now, has been difficult to implement internally, and its relevance has come under severe adverse scrutiny in the external environment, where with the exception of sophisticated clients, 360 Branding can be a bit of a luxury to smaller, less sophisticated, companies in the Irish market-place.

But digital has changed the rules of brand communication – old boundaries have collapsed and communication is becoming seamless – convergence is becoming the norm.

This new digitally converged world has created two scarce but inter-related commodities:

Attention

Relentless communication onslaught makes it much harder than ever to get and keep people's attention. Communication that cannot rise above the clutter will fail.

Engagement

Passive mass communication techniques must give way to placing more emphasis on downstream experiential/interactive activities that empower people to create their own distinctive emotional construct of the brand experience.

In this new world of convergence a non-linear communication model is becoming more appropriate. A holistic model where a matrix of different channels is used to communicate unique, self-contained brand messages that together build into a bigger more complex brand narrative/ideal.

“People build brands as birds
build nests, from scraps and
straws we chance upon”

Bullmore

Whilst all this has been going on the recession has forced clients to re-assess the deployment of their marketing monies with much greater emphasis beginning to be placed on metrics and the all important Return on Marketing Investment.

All of this, is re-defining marketing communication in Ireland and impacts across all disciplines making 360 Social Thinking and implementation even more of a priority that must become embedded into all our operational disciplines and creative resources.

In this new world, lines are an anathema. There should be no above or below, no on or off and certainly, internally, demarcation lines are, increasingly, less relevant and all but redundant.

As an organisation, therefore, we must aspire to delivering multi-faceted creative content (in the broadest sense) across all communication disciplines and across the entire spectrum of channels, without the encumbrance of blinkered silo thinking.

However, this will be a path, along which, we will have to educate and nurture our clients, because, in all likelihood, we may also have to convert their prevailing mindset in order for them to embrace this new communication paradigm.

At the same time, this obviously begs the question as to whether the current Group organisational set-up is best placed to deliver this aspiration given its current silo-centred physical make-up and more importantly the inherent discipline focussed mindset. How could this be addressed? One possible direction could be:

A NEW 360 SOCIAL THINKING OPERATING MODEL

In such a structure, the operating units, namely, Ogilvy & Mather Advertising, Ogilvy One and Wilson Hartnell PR would continue to present an “independent”, stand alone, expertise led, face to the outside world but, internally, the silos would work on a more collaborative basis.

With much greater collaboration there would be much better cross-fertilisation of skills and expertise that better represent the new dynamics of the external communication landscape where demarcation lines are anachronistic.

The encouraging factor here, is that where we have had 360 collaboration, and there are one or two examples, the outcome has been extremely beneficial to both ourselves and more importantly to our clients.

However, to support the client-facing functions, including WHPR, there would be a core “engine room” which would become the fulcrum and genesis of all 360 Social Thinking. This core “engine room” would comprise 4 key components:

- creative content (across all disciplines)
- media (Neo capabilities)
- production (expanded Redworks)
- knowledge (research, planning, metrics)

To prevent a relapse into silo thinking it is imperative that we provide a common ethos and cultivate a culture that everyone can relate to. But more importantly we must create a “mental process” that becomes the amplifier and accelerator of 360 Social Thinking. A new mindset is imperative if we are to jolt people out of the behavioural comfort zones of their silos.

360 SOCIAL THINKING "PROCESS"

This is an up-dated interpretation of the Why, What, How, Where and When of marketing communication, designed to meet the needs of the new "social" world we inhabit:

- Social Intelligence = Why
- Social Ignition = What
- Social Currency = How
- Social Velocity = Where and When



Social Combustion

This is the central core objective of what, ultimately, we are trying to achieve. We are seeking to create social momentum and advocacy around a brand's core essence/ideal, whilst recognising, all the time, that we can no longer simply communicate and market at people to achieve this.

Therefore we must shape future messaging around people's receptivity and behavioural patterns unfettered by discipline constraints.

The digital agenda has afforded us the opportunity to re-imagine people connections and re-invent brand interfaces.

We have to create opportunities for people to engage with the brand, creating their own bespoke brand experience and we can only do this if we fully comprehend how people interact with content and media, in a changing communication landscape where culture and technology are converging.

We must, through brand communication, access the valuable and untapped social forces of peer advocacy, peer collaboration, peer content, peer communities.

Whilst advertising will continue to be a powerful communication vehicle, on its own, it will not be enough. We must build real brand experiences beyond brand promises; experiences that establish a concrete and direct connection between the consumer and the brand.

At the same time, we must lubricate conversation and value its accelerator mechanism, by creating a "Social Dynamic", a centrepiece in a dialogue which Jyri Engestrom describes as "the reason people connect".

In other words people don't just talk. People aggregate around a common denominator – a personal interest. Therefore they tend to talk around objects, subjects, purposes, passions etc.

As a consequence, contagious Social Dynamics will become increasingly important in a communication environment driven by dialogue.

To address these external social values we will have to, internally, drive deeper collaboration between creative, technology, media, people interaction and analytics.

Social Intelligence

"Data is the new oil".

Knowledge and understanding have to be the cornerstone of everything we do, where research, insight, planning and measurement are the bedrock of our thinking. Social Intelligence "operates" as a news nerve centre capturing, digesting and distributing cultural and social value "stories" as they emerge.

The recession, if nothing else, has made clients/marketers hungrier for proof that their increasingly scarce marketing monies are working and as a consequence analytics and metrics are becoming integral to our future offering.

However, the trick will be the smart fusion of science and art i.e. data effectiveness and creative inspiration. With greater scrutiny being placed on marketing effectiveness the pressure points will increasingly be "differentiation" and "measurability" in an increasingly volatile communication landscape.

But given this complexity it is inevitable that established research and measurement conventions will become more challenged than ever.

As people's media consumption continues to fragment and proliferate and marketers include more digital and disparate communication channels in their marketing programmes, it will become more important than ever to develop new media mix models that recognise the intricacies of channel interaction in a complex and increasingly personalised communication landscape.

Therefore the Return on People Involvement could well be the key metric in the future as more and more marketing monies are dedicated towards those initiatives that have the greatest impact on human interaction. The digitalisation of relevancy and personalisation means that, in the future, marketing communication initiatives will be increasingly data-powered. Analysis breeds advantage and as a consequence we must embrace the world of data literacy and competence in order to optimise the planning, execution and monitoring of communication programmes.

Data is the new oil, but it can also be our inspiration.

Social Ignition

Social Intelligence fuels Social Ignition, which is all about creating strategies that enable us to connect and interact with people by grasping the foundations of social media and the cultural changes, indeed, the challenges that have emerged as a result of this social phenomenon where people increasingly subscribe to their peers and attribute less attention and trust to traditional methods of brand messaging.

“We are not seats or eyeballs or
end-users or or consumers.
We are human beings – and our
reach extends your grasp.
Deal with it.”

Clue Train Manifesto

In the past where we used to “command” and “control” we now must learn to “cultivate and “nurture”. To attract people in this new communication landscape the magnetism will be provided by greater transparency, openness and personalisation in order to generate trust which will become the holy grail of marketing.

Trust leads to influence which in turn leads to incremental revenue streams because influence is the key dynamic in driving how people think, behave and eventually spend. Therefore only by understanding who the influencers are and, the influence mechanisms that are the driving forces, can Social Ignition be achieved. Only by understanding and harnessing strategically the impact of influence by social forces will brands transform their relationships with people. Psychologists call this infectious spread “social contagion”.

Consequently our focus must shift from individuals to the connections between them by taking advantage of the fact that people are forming and participating in any number of social networks through shared social objects, beliefs, customs, norms that impact their own and other’s behaviour.,

Consequently, the dynamics of social influence must underpin our strategic framework:

- attention
- engagement
- interaction
- participation
- advocacy

But this framework is no longer a linear relationship facilitated by one-dimensional linear communication.

“The marketing funnel is a broken metaphor that overlooks the complexity social media introduce into the buying process. As consumers’ trust in traditional media diminishes, marketers need a new approach – it’s not such a linear process anymore.”

People now have more choice so they decide where their attention and engagement are going to be “spent” and clearly this encourages media multiplexity as this provides greater access to knowledge and information resources.

In such an environment brands’ strategic directions must focus on providing people with information and content that fit people’s individual agendas and not the brand’s. People will become involved and engage in communication when it provides something useful, being entertaining, provoking thoughts or reinforcing ego and status i.e. treating them as people not consumers, targets, segments etc. It’s human and personal stuff that matters not marketing stuff.

This is the world of the polyphonic brand – it is fluid, dynamic and above all multi-dimensional in its message output, but anchored by one core brand platform/ideal that is the glue that holds all strategic initiatives together. It is the world of collaborative marketing/communication where value is co-created through participation and dialogue influenced and facilitated by the brand.

Social Currency

Social Ignition will not occur without the sparks of Social Currency. Social Currency is generated through unique, valuable, relevant, compelling, useful, usable, credible and emotional content with a social dimension delivered on a consistent basis

By giving the brand a social mission, above and beyond that of a mere commercial stance, the brand can try and make people think more about the world about them and in doing so can provide the brand with greater status and more meaningful social credentials in people’s lives.

As a general rule of thumb the structure of Social Currency content will fall into four broad categories:

- information
- education
- utility
- entertainment.

The ultimate objective of Social Currency is to add value and sense to people's lives and in doing so the brand becomes an enabler, an inspiration and an influencer. However, content isn't necessarily king. Conversation is king – where content is just something to talk about.

In this new social world the brands whose followers/fans tell the best stories will be the big winners. As Brian Solis states: "Content is the new democracy and we the people are ensuring that our voices are heard."

To achieve traction brand stories must be both social and interesting and must be told across many platforms, creating, in turn, a multi-faceted dimension to the brand's persona. Each brand touch-point must tell part of the story so that the overall campaign is amplified by WOM.

Powerful brand stories can be ubiquitous. A book can have many chapters with each individual chapter adding a new dimension to the overall story.

But it is the sum of the chapters that represent the core essence of what the story is all about. So too, with a brand. There must be one single-minded core socially orientated platform/ideal out of which a number of tailored messages/ideas can evolve and distributed across a variety of communication channels, each channel with its pre-set role in terms of building and driving the story for

Therefore, the future of brand communication will not just lie with a diverse range of content but in its creative expression across multiple platforms i.e. not one big conflagration but the deployment of a number of incendiary devices.

The "conversation fire-starters."

Social Velocity

We must give our fire-starters a box of "conversation matches" that makes it possible for them to ignite meaningful conversations around the brand.

Social Velocity is realised when the brand achieves critical mass through the creation of brand conversations that are transparent, authentic, vibrant, compelling, but, above all people driven. As Procter and Gamble: "The brand is no longer what we tell the consumer – it is what consumers tell each other it is."

Therefore, where the brand platform drives brand content, brand content drives conversations, conversations drive people, it is people with shared purposes, who drive influence and advocacy.

In terms of lighting the fuse(s) that propagate conversations the brand must understand that real conversations are conducted by ordinary people, not demographic segments, who write and speak in their own voices. The human voice and human language and not the "message speak" of brands.

For brands to understand this and speak with a more human voice then they have to understand and share people's needs, concerns and willingness to exchange knowledge about things that interest them which will be less about promoting brand values and more about creating deliberate and appreciated mutual social values.

“You can make more friends in
two months by being interested in
other people, than in two years, by
making people interested in you.”

Dale Carnegie

Therefore, in curating conversations the brand must understand that the conversation takes place between equals and not an "audience".

That it is about listening, learning, improving understanding and not about making "announcements". That the conversation is "live" and is constantly moving and changing.

In the future brand loyalty will evolve out of social relationships built around conversations with real people.

“Companies that don’t realise their markets are now networked person-to-person, getting smarter as a result and deeply joined in conversation, are missing their best opportunity.”

Clue Train Manifesto

360 SOCIAL THINKING – THE COMPLETE PICTURE

360 Socio-Eco System

"When the winds of change are blowing, some people are building shelters, other are building windmills."
Chinese proverb

"You see, it's supposed to be a dialogue, not a monologue!"



"Fish where the fishes are."

"Today we must commit our budgets to have the greatest impact on human interaction."

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