



Mars and Tech partnerships: A Launchpad for brand success

BRANDS OF THE FUTURE

GARY ARORA, GLOBAL LEAD, LAUNCHPAD, MARS 07 FEB 2018

New technologies are reshaping industries and changing how people discover and interact with brands.

In this article, Gary Arora explains how Mars' Launchpad initiative is helping the company harness the power of this tech, partner with innovative startups, and evolve the way it reaches, engages and converts consumers.

At Mars, we've been stepping up our efforts in digital significantly, with quite a few early successes, like our Cannes-winning 'Hungerithm' campaign, which changed the price of Snickers in real time depending on the mood of the internet.

In a bid to make these successes a habit, we sat down in 2016 and asked ourselves a few questions: How do we create more Hungerithms? How do we bring some of our iconic brands into the digital world? How do we take great work occurring in pockets and provide structure to scale?

Our solution was to create Launchpad, a global programme to deliver marketing and sales innovation through partnerships with startups and other technology companies. Our goal is to help our brands harness and leverage the power of technology, to stay relevant and best placed to reach, engage and convert consumers in a fast-changing, digitally-influenced, world.

Launchpad works by asking Mars associates from the markets to submit a business challenge or identify an opportunity for business growth leveraging data and technology. The challenges and ideas we are looking to solve come from associates at the front line of the business – those witnessing the changes in the marketplace first hand in their daily business.

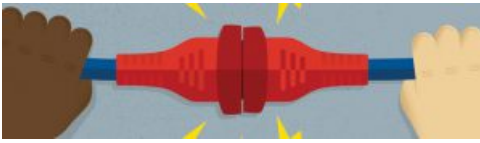
Three times a year, we pick briefs endorsed by our Chief Marketing Officers and Chief Customer Officers, identify suitable start-ups to work with, and execute live pilots. From there on, we review each of the pilots, scale those that have been successful and learn from those that weren't.

Our first call for ideas went out in April 2017, and we have been pleasantly surprised with the quantity and quality of briefs submitted from around the world. In fact, we've received more than twice the number we expected.

Currently, we are running multiple simultaneous pilots in areas of performance marketing, new conversation platforms, social and big data analytics.

MediaCom, our media agency partners, who helped design and build the programme, support us in this process. MediaCom's participation ensures we stay fresh in our approach. Because they work in many sectors beyond FMCG, they add an important,

broader perspective to our selection process, as well as an understanding of how to best apply technology to our challenges.



Did you know... more than 80% of large companies consider interactions with startups to be as important as other partners.

Source: Imaginatik / Masschallenge. The State of Corporate / Startup Collaboration 2016 (2016)

Staying agile and learning on the fly with Launchpad

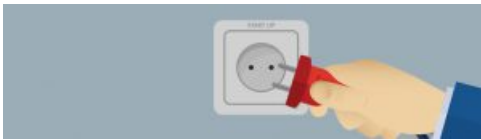
Launchpad is helping Mars take advantage of the new routes to markets and new routes to consumer engagement that are being developed almost every day. The programme is also a key pillar of our overall digital transformation strategy.

In today's world, there is so much change that even a company as big as Mars can't find the smartest solutions as quickly as we need them. That's another good thing about Launchpad: it lets us bring the outside in. By working with start-ups, we are letting our Associates benefit from the strength of our existing culture, alongside outside expertise.

To increase our chances of success, we are working with rigour, breaking down opinions into facts and putting hypotheses to the test within small pockets. But while we are aiming for success on every pilot, we are also realistic. We know not all new ideas work as expected and the key is for us to capture learnings and share across our brands and geographies.

And because Launchpad has its own funding and support structure within our business, it

gives us the freedom to take risks. The most important thing is that we are constantly analysing and assessing our performance, to ensure we improve our innovation playbook for next time.



Did you know... 52% of accelerators are at least part-funded by a corporation.
Source: Gust. Global Accelerator Report 2016 (2016)

So what does that look like in practice?

Digital has revolutionised the consumer path to purchase; it's dramatically impacted the behaviours of our consumers as well as retailers. And because this space is ever-changing, there's no right or wrong answer. With Launchpad, it's about discovering what's possible, connecting the dots, and turning hypotheses into facts and knowledge rapidly and inexpensively.

Some of the challenges which should sound familiar to all of us are:

1) **The store of the future will be different.** There is heavy impact of digital inside and outside physical retail stores. Stores will move to no-checkout, there will be far more experiential stores, and e-commerce will continue to become a bigger percentage of retail sales. We need to ensure our brands stay relevant and present in this changing ecosystem.

2) **The Internet of Things will change how our brands appear to consumers.** By 2020 there will be 24 billion connected devices, so we need to know how our brands can still be

selected in a world of algorithms driven by new technologies such as voice.

3) **Big data is only going to get bigger.** Every day we get more data about consumers and our brands but we need to find better ways to understand, process and apply it.

4) **Digital conversations are increasingly powerful.** Every dollar spent by consumers will be influenced by digital by 2020. Our brands need to ensure they are in the right conversations on the right channels, even as the landscape changes dramatically.

Did you know.. 68% of the top 100 companies from the Forbes Global 500 are already engaging with startups.

Source: 500 Startups. How do the World's Biggest Companies Deal with the Startup Revolution? (2016)

What happens next?

Who knows? That's the beauty of Launchpad...we keep learning new things every day. And there certainly isn't a shortage of challenges we can tackle through it.

But at the same time, Launchpad is helping us raise our own digital IQ in the organisation, discover what's possible with new and different ways of working, and learn from others and with others. And that's an exciting process in itself.

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