MEDIACOM

4 learning points from Web Summit 2017

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It's been called "Glastonbury for geeks" and "The best tech conference on the planet", but the Lisbon Web Summit is much more than that.

Launched in 2009 as an event focused on internet technology, the Lisbon Web Summit has become a place to discuss all things digital. It now attracts more than 60,000 decision makers, founders and visionaries from around the world, and 1,200 brands.

For marketers, it's also an amazing opportunity to engage with startups in their earliest stages and learn from the leaders of digital transformation. This year, the festival identified four learning points marketers should think about in 2018 and beyond.

1. Content creation has become a professional business (but it's not just about the 'classic media' players)

Content, who creates it and where it fits into the communication is a hot topic. Key speakers at Web Summit debated everything from the role of influencers to how to monetise quality content and its relevance for marketing plans in 2018.

John Hegarty, Co-Founder & Creative Director of BBH & Whalar, shared his belief that the 'Basics of brand building' haven't changed; it's still about "persuasion" he said. Using influencers in your content marketing will help you do the job right.

The general consensus was that marketers have to "go back to storytelling", not creating ads or just blindly following trends and buzz words. Susan Credle, Global Chief Creative Officer of FCB Global, was just one presenter who supported this notion.

Content marketing and influencers are changing the way brands tell stories and they require teams to adopt a "systems thinking" approach. As Bob Greenberg, Chairman & CEO at R/GA said, brands need to develop their "understanding of the platforms".

Marketers have to "go back to storytelling"

A number of influencers also shared their points of view and underlined the rules on how to act professionally in the Social Content Universe. Instagram stars Murad and Nataly Osmann, for instance, presented their approach for dealing with brand partnerships.

The travel influencers consider themselves actors who provide a 'full-service' offering for brands. They don't engage in brand partnerships then sit back waiting for briefs; they actively go about "creating, discussing and analysing" specific opportunities and connections to help they brands they work with. This process helps optimise content creation.

Traditional publishers also spoke at the conference. Many focussed on their plans to provide and monetise quality content in the future. Fred Santarpia, Chief Digital Officer at Condé Nast, for example, spoke about establishing editorial teams focussed on producing content that converts.

2. Social media is not a platform, it's a broadcasting system (with new rules of engagement)

One of the standout speakers was astronaut, Mike Massimino (who inspired the movie *Gravity*). In 2009, Massimino was the first man to send a Tweet from outer space. His message was simple – "Launch was awesome" – but soon became the most talked about thing at his son's high school. Inevitably, his son encouraged him to keep the conversation going: "Dad, send more stupid Tweets like that."

Massimino's story underlines the power of social as a broadcasting tool: it's the best place to tell stories and share news in real time – to large, engaged audiences. Many of the speakers recognised this social media's current core role.

Joe Punder, President of public affairs campaigns consultants Definers Public Affairs, spoke about how he sees classic publishers and news platforms changing dramatically in response. Traditionally, these publishers provide people with information and guidance. Now, social platforms have taken over that job. Publishers and news sites have become "brands" competing in a vast cluster.

Cenk Uygur, CEO & Host at online news show The Young Turks, went a step further by declaring social as the "true power". According to Uygur, social is supporting the "democratisation of media" and will be increasingly be used to run and broadcast content.

3. Digitisation is a full-time job (for brands and customers)

Going digital is top of every marketer's to-do list. At Web Summit, two global brands spoke lucidly about how they are working digital into every stage of their value chains.

Hilton Hotels CMO Geraldine Caplin spoke about the importance of understanding and connecting customer values to every stage of the brand experience. For Hilton, mobile is an essential way of connecting directly with consumers and providing best-in-class customer service. The Hilton app lets users choose which room they want to stay in when booking, and even use their smartphone as their room key.

This 'Phygital' strategy makes customers more loyal and emotionally connected to the brand. It's helping customers become marketers too; Hilton is constantly learning from the data the app collects to add new features and improve its services.

Automotive brand Daimler presented its master plan to tackle the challenges of the future. 'Daimler's Digital Revolution', as Sabine Scheunert, the brand's Chief Digital Officer,

described it, is focussed on big data. Using data, the has company developed five cornerstones in its new Digital Framework: Speed; Customer Interaction; Data Driven Insight; Digital Engineering & Production; and Empowered Employees.

A 'Phygital' strategy makes customers more loyal and emotionally connected to a brand

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4. The future is now for Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Robotics, E-Mobility

Many companies and speakers are keen to prove that new technology is already available, operational and ready for a mass market.

At Web Summit, IBM provided a "gameable" vision for VR. In 'Star Trek: Bridge Crew', a new VR video game, players can control the Starship Aegis using voice commands. IBM Watson, IBM's AI platform works with a program called Conversation to interpret the commands.

Elsewhere, Android developers ARCore presented Digital OOH billboards with real-time AR features that put real people into the scene. Another speaker, Steve Raymond, CEO of hologram developers 8i, promoted the idea that AR and VR technology is already at a stage where it can change human behaviour and interactions. As an example, he cited human holograms which already can be installed and implemented into daily

communication.

Finally, several major automotive brands presented another vision of the future: E-Mobility. This is the general term for the development of ultra-low emission electric vehicles and technologies. Daimler and BMW both spoke about the opportunities to discover the world of e-driving and technology. Swedish start-up [Uniti](#) also presented a premium electric city designed for better life. It will only be available online.

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