Digital transformation begins with the basics

OPINION

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We all like the new shiny thing but sometimes doing today's work better is a far more effective solution. MediaCom Chief Operating Officer Toby Jenner says it's time to put forensic analysis before digital transformation.

Digital transformation. Sounds great, doesn't it. Big, shiny and, well, transformative.

Many companies embark on such schemes and for many, they disappoint. In fact, Forbes recently estimated that 85% of digital transformation projects would fail to deliver the expected impact.

Maybe it's no surprise that many of these projects fail to hit the mark. They are often far-reaching, yes they include marketing but also stretch far beyond into the very heart of an organisation to ensure they future-proof all aspects of the business.

Such 'digital transformation' projects are typically led by consultants such as Accenture and BCG, cost millions and can take years to complete and fully impact an organisation.

The median tenure for CEOs at large-cap (S&P 500) companies is just five years, according to a recent [Equilar](#) study. This is a relatively short timeframe to realise the full impact that company-wide digital transformation will deliver, given how long these projects take to implement.

This, therefore, presents a tough challenge for any CEO, to bridge the gap between signing off on the digital transformation plan and actually seeing any benefits and shareholder return. Agencies can play a vital role.

Our role is to immediately create continual and sustainable demand and connect our clients to that demand, to drive growth. So, while it's critical that businesses look top down through the lens of digital transformation, they also need to look bottom up to ensure they are not missing the more fundamental opportunities that data and technology can provide today.

The truth is that many CEOs and their leadership team should be using forensic analysis to increase productivity gains in their first two years, to give them the breathing space they need to deliver on their long-term transformational ambitions.

But where to start? In our experience, there is one simple question that brands need to ask: "what is the simplest area to address that will provide the largest return".

An audit of a brand's digital eco-system may not be sexy but it always provides clear and compelling opportunities. It is this focus on the forensic improvement of what is already being done / or should be being done, that can fill the transformation gap.

Let's take three key areas where most companies could improve dramatically through forensic analysis, making a real difference to their bottom line: SEO, feed-ready content and data fuelled creative.

SEO is one of the most complex channels through which customers interact with brands. Doing it well means ensuring that you have the right and relevant content showing up, it's on brand and your customers are having a good user experience with your brand.

Great SEO provides a positive feedback loop for all wider marketing activity and aligning on-page content to searcher intent, both brand and non-brand, is critical to business success.

However, as of July this year, [page speed](#) has become a ranking factor for Google searches on mobile. Brands that aren't utilising every opportunity to improve and delivering sub 3 second load times on both desktop and mobile are missing out. A one-second delay in page response potential results in a 7% reduction in conversions. So reducing page load times will boost sales and conversion rates significantly.

Secondly, Platform-Tailored Content or Feed-Ready Content as we call it at MediaCom, is another area where many brands could do better. Despite well-publicised calls for 'platform tailored' creative, we're still seeing a huge amount of work that is not. Around half (52%) of the ads served on Facebook contained no discernible brand cues and a quarter (24%) were not understandable without sound, even though this is a sound-off environment.

This is despite the fact that research from Millward Brown shows that custom creative for each platform increases ROI by 57%. If brands do not adapt their content to suit the environment or target audience on these platforms, they are reducing the effectiveness of their marketing investment and the sales potential of their brands.

Lastly, data. Data has always been central to how we target audiences, but with more of it available than ever before, we can ensure advertisers reach unique audience segments.

But while we now use the ability to segment customers into multiple different target audiences every day, they're still all receiving the same advertising message. Truly effective data usage demands multiple creative treatments to reflect the multiple audience segments.

Dynamic creative platforms now deliver, in real time, a better understanding of an audiences' digital 'signals' than ever before, enabling creative to be more personal and more tailored to the context in which they are receiving it. The failure to produce high quality, personalised 'brand level' messages is an expensive missed opportunity.

For one of our global clients, the introduction of dynamic creative has improved media performance by between 20-48% (depending on market) and boosted sales revenue attributed to media by 45%.

These are just three areas where we have delivered enormous success but there are a host of others where detailed forensic analysis could also deliver double-digit improvements in marketing performance.

It's the type of improvement that will help bridge the business performance gap, creating space and time for those big digital transformation projects to succeed.

Getting all of these right is essential. Because it's only when you're doing the brilliant basics well that your brand and business will truly be in a position to benefit from the big picture stuff.

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