

Cannes Lions 2018: The year brands found purpose for innovation

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Disruption. Transformation. Innovation. 'Acting like a start-up'.

These are just a few of the buzzwords flying around at Cannes Lions 2018. This year, we've seen more and more brands such as Walmart, Renault and Diageo show willingness to embrace smaller, faster, experimentation in order to grow their business – often partnering with companies from outside their orbit to deliver the 'new'.

At MediaCom, we believe the ability to effectively harness technological change is one of the key differentiators of brands that grow in the modern era versus those that stall or decline. However, few companies I speak to recognize why these new opportunities are relevant to their business or understand how to scale them into their day-to-day marketing practices.

Take 'voice', for example. Most brands are aware that voice-based hardware sales are growing and that consumers are using 'voice' navigation as a utility or navigational aid for content consumption. But too many are just reskinning old experiences – like reworking their website or mobile apps – to address this new medium.

That might tick a box, but it doesn't address the impact non-screen browsing has [on discovery, purchase journeys and product portfolio management](#). Typically, innovation manifests as a one off 'test' and not a roadmap for the future – and often does not result in an outcome which informs the priority brands should place on voice in the first place.

Over the past two years, the [MediaCom Blink team has been working to help shape and manage tech-focused innovation agendas](#) with our clients designed to solve critical business challenges, navigate emerging technologies, and help drive growth for the future. This is not just about embracing the 'new', but rather the different; we develop pilots that tackle challenges from different perspectives with both meaning and measurement.

At Cannes, Mars Chief Marketing & Customer Officer, Andrew Clarke spoke about the [Launchpad project – a dedicated innovation programme, developed in partnership with MediaCom](#), that is helping Mars solve critical business challenges.

Our role is to introduce Mars to tech companies and start-ups that will help solve their critical business challenges. We also assess the success of these approaches and define roadmaps to roll out new technology globally across all their markets.

Right now, we are running global pilots across several clients that look at:

- Developing new data points for leading purchase indicators that can't be bought through traditional media buys (increasing in-market reach and increasing messaging effectiveness).
- Using machine learning to pre-screen creative/social content that will elicit the highest sharing and/or likelihood of purchase (saving budget and maximising media value).

- Finding new routes to ‘digital’ transaction; not just an approach to e-commerce but ones that use new technologies to shorten the gap between intent and purchase and drive incremental sales.

Grounding innovation projects in these kinds of measures give us several advantages over more traditional methods. Not only can measure if a test ‘worked’, but we can also help a client work out how to scale an idea and integrate it into future activities and partnerships. We are finding new ways to find savings in costs or time and increase revenue.

Steve Jobs once said, “Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower”.

At Cannes Lions 2018, the brands who were shortlisted for ‘innovation’ didn’t do so because they were ‘first’ to use certain technologies, but because they worked out how to apply it intelligently to solve major challenges and transform businesses.

Of course, working with new technology comes with a degree of risk. After all, investing your time and money into unproven external partners may or not pay off. But, ultimately, by applying a business-focused lens to innovation, brands can save thousands of dollars in wasted development costs and man hours, control the risk of failure, and build long-term partnerships that will make the biggest impact on their business and help them grow in the future.

I look forward to seeing more of this before we gather back in Cannes in 2019.

[Read the original article posted June 21, 2018 on Agency Voices and follow Liam on LinkedIn for more great content.](#)

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