

Keeping brands afloat in a fluid world

Today's communications environment is in constant flux. The flow of information and the sheer profusion of channels enhanced by the rise of the Internet and social media make it increasingly challenging for marketers to direct and control their messaging.

Consequently, how should CMOs and agencies or consultants manage a brand's expression in such a fluid landscape? What can a business do to maintain the integrity, consistency and effectiveness of its communications? How can it navigate this new world of constant chatter, feedback and opinion?

Infinia offers some helpful insights and observations on this fluid environment, and the flexible thinking necessary to remain competitive.

1. Be clear. Be committed. The overriding issues of communicating in a cacophony are content and distribution. Clarify and sharpen both. Articulate precisely who you are, and what you want to say and focus on to whom and where you want to say it. More channels, more media, more stuff yields less impact, while clear messages to clearly defined targets equal clear value. This maxim informs points #2 and #3.

2. Pick wisely. Participate wholly. When you can't control the flow, choose where you want to be very carefully. Examine which existing media and channels are valuable additions to your brand culture, and lose those that aren't. Conversely, explore those new areas – be they social media, blogs or other tools – that can add value. Move beyond the idea of maximum reach to maximal influence by identifying the most resonant and relevant touch-points where your business (and brand) should communicate, and concentrate your resources appropriately.

3. Reuse. Repurpose "Liquid content" encapsulates how brand messaging must fuse with media that can be deployed in a number of different ways. Looking to create materials that can be reused and repurposed not only extends the potency and impact of the respective expression, but it also amortizes the cost of production. Event videos can become presentation intros or webcasts, while sales sheets can evolve into collateral – creating value and variety built around a consistent brand message.

4. Let your people spread the word. Get your colleagues aligned and on message. The most effective brand channel is always the human one, whether live, online or in print. No matter how tight, tailored and focused the brand platform, it's hard to extend its reach and influence if the message makers and communicators remain centralized and few in numbers. With customers and other stakeholders demanding increasing access to people and information, it makes sense to access the exponentially increasing ability of employees to shape opinions and impressions of a company.

5. Embrace structure. Nurture spirit. The above idea is consonant with an increasingly prevalent emphasis that we've noticed on the subject of brand "spirit." The traditional processes and management tools of the "logo and brand identity cops" are still relevant to some degree, but going forward, communications may be less about hard and fast rules and more about a common feeling, mindset and context within which people can work. The approach is similar to a gaming scenario where players are given a core set of rules or playbook, with which they can creatively deploy, adapt and progress.

6. More fact. Less gut. Instinct is still very important, but today, there's a greater need to "prove" or justify actions based on intelligence. A natural consequence of these uncertain times, and the massive changes in many markets, is that many organizations are questioning their very understanding of what is driving demand, and what will truly, lastingly define and differentiate them. The need to gauge the respective accuracy and cultural relevance of communications means that interest for actionable research and improved ways to track the effectiveness of the investment is at an all-time high. The more dynamic and insightful your intelligence, the better you'll connect.

7. Second tier. First advantage. Nimbleness is everything. As industry leaders vanish or become distracted by regulatory, reputational and balance sheet issues, their ability to dominate a conversation/category has waned. There has never been a better time for second-tier players in all sectors to be opportunistic in existing or new markets.

8. B2B = B2C? B2B communications managers are now facing more complex marketing environments, more sophisticated and demanding audiences, and a whirl of non-traditional media and channels – all the characteristics of the battle for the consumer dollar. In short, business clients have finally become consumers, too – bringing opinions, scrutiny and transparency to the supplier relationship and its related communications – and the B2B marketers may not be up to the challenge of capturing hearts and minds in this newly competitive world. Succeeding here means adopting (often reluctantly) the directives of the experienced B2C communications campaigners, who are deft in the art of combining multiple strategies and tactics to win this new war.

In this ever-shifting communications environment, one constant is the presence of opportunity. Infinia helps businesses identify and capitalize on those opportunities by bringing clarity of purpose and perspective to strategy, creativity and design that enables lasting and powerful connections between brands and audiences.

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The logo for Infinia, featuring the word "infinia" in a lowercase, black, handwritten-style script font.