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I'm hoping that we're at a stage where we agree what integration means. We create a communications idea that we then execute through the various media channels, delivering a consistent impression for the person at the other end. We've all been happily blending the art of big creative ideas with the science of response for quite a while.

There's a spectrum of different methodologies that can create an integrated campaign. There's the more visual approach, where the same icon or device is used across the board (for example, Orange's animal tariffs, Direct Line's red telephone). There's the more philosophical approach, where a thought is flexed to use the properties of a particular medium to best advantage (such as Adidas' various All Blacks executions or our very own "brand action" campaign for The National Trust, "time well spent"). And, of course, there's everything in between and more. But the same principle applies. Find the core communication idea and drive it home via appropriate channels.

You will no doubt have read how our industry is in peril; that "the media" is dying due to broken advertising revenue models and that people are increasingly adept at screening out communications psychologically and physically (try the Adblock Plus Firefox add-on). Nielsen research shows that posted consumer opinions are equally as influential as brand websites. So, if the *Cluetrain* generation has moved from "deference to reference" (a phrase shamelessly stolen from the consultancy Opinion Leader) and no longer listens to or believes communication messages, then where does integration go next?

Let's start with the fact that things aren't that broken, at least not yet. Creative communication ideas still work (well, at least, MBA's do; I don't know for sure about yours). That said, we do need to address the marketing-cynical culture we find ourselves in.

Naturally, we want our work to be talked about, interesting, persuasive and effective; good ideas will always form the heart of creating that. However, we need to look at how these ideas are brought to life. We must become less reliant on paid-for media channels and instead work out how we can influence the conversation in a more human and interesting way. Let's just say that no-one is going to re-Tweet a strapline.

Whichever way the future unfolds, the transmedia narrative will be a part of it. The term was coined by Henry Jenkins in his book *Convergence Culture* to describe storytelling across numerous media, where each channel adds a distinctive contribution to an ultimately richer Gestalt. The most keenly referenced example of this is *The Matrix*, where a more complete comprehension can be achieved through taking in not only the movies, but also the comics, animated shorts and much internet tomfoolery.

*Star Wars* is another example – there is much to read, play and listen to that adds a richer texture to the movies. It's worth noting that much of the story is developed from conversations among



# INTEGRATION FOR THE TWITTERING CLASSES

Advertisers must get to grips with consumers' appetite for participation as the influence of paid-for messages becomes skewed in the digital age

fan communities. We're social creatures and love sharing this kind of stuff with likeminded people.

The transmedia narrative augments our existing model of integration as the individual channels complement each other, building a narrative that is bigger, more complex and much richer than can be achieved by current methodologies. The integration is left much more to the brain of the sentient person at the other end.

Those who just see the core of the narrative get it and are quite happy, but those who experience the bigger story are enriched as a result. If it is interesting enough, the story will blossom in ways you can't control and this is where the power comes from – letting other people propagate and develop the story.

Using this concept in marketing is not a new idea. The cult of Apple is built on a transmedia narrative of the founders and product development. Yes, marketing communications form a part of it with "1984", "think different" and so on, but really it's about their keynote speeches (witness the hype around the Apple co-founder

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Steve Jobs' recent return to the stage after illness). Apple is built on conversations between geeks in Starbucks.

Marketing using a transmedia narrative can be seen in recent Sony campaigns; a similar approach has been used across "balls", "paint", "foam", "rabbits" and so on.

The "zoetrope" ad for Motionflow is a pertinent example. The making of the ad was turned into an event, with the back-story being played out across various internet sites. Interviews with Kaka were put on YouTube, images from the shoot were put on Flickr, and it was all consolidated via a dedicated blog. On its own, the ad would have been pretty cool. With this rich supporting story, it was fascinating.

The backchannel (where many smaller conversations occur in parallel with the main conversation – think conferences with Twitter hashtags) is an important element of the transmedia narrative. Take the TV series *Mad Men*, for example. Enthralled viewers created Twitter accounts for the characters and began creating their own stories. User-generated character development! The show's creators

myopically clamped down on this horrendous abuse of copyright until they saw the effect on ratings.

Isn't this another version of 360-degree or media-neutral planning? Well, no, because those both start from an "us-to-them" communication model. The transmedia narrative treats people as sentient and social human beings, recognising their power in this connected world. It starts with building an interesting story that will engage people and develop community rather than trying to find the best way to interrupt. It creates things for people to participate in rather than simply telling them what to think.

The transmedia narrative is integration for the Twittering classes. It's a methodology to navigate the cynical waters and deliver meaningful and effective work in a time when marketing has become somewhat of a dirty word. Yes, we need big ideas; yes, we need to use paid-for media channels; but we do need to be a lot more interesting and textured too.

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