

[» CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Autodesk

The McGraw-Hill Companies

BusinessWeek

keyword or company

Search

[Register](#) | [Sign In](#)

Current Issue

4 Free Issues

[Subscribe Now](#)

NussbaumOnDesign

Inside the business of innovation and design



Bruce Nussbaum

BLOGS

Auto Beat
Bangalore Tigers
Blogspotting
Brand New Day
Byte of the Apple
Economics Unbound
Fine On Media
GreenBiz
Hot Property
Investing Insights
Management IQ
New Tech in Asia
NEXT: Innovation Tools & Trends
NussbaumOnDesign
Tech Beat

Working Parents

BLOG RSS FEEDS

About RSS [RSS 2.0](#)
Auto Beat
Bangalore Tigers
Blogspotting
Brand New Day
Byte of the Apple
Deal Flow
Economics Unbound
Fine On Media
Hot Property
Investing Insights
New Tech in Asia
Nussbaum On Design
Tech Beat
Working Parents

PREMIUM CONTENT

[MBA Insider](#)

BW MAGAZINE

[Get Four Free Issues](#)

[Register](#)
[Subscribe](#)
[Customer Service](#)

ONLINE FEATURES

[Book Reviews](#)
[BW Video](#)
[Columnists](#)
[Interactive Gallery](#)

« [Design Thinking--What The Smartest People Are Saying.](#) | [Main](#) | [Stanford 2007 David H. Liu Memorial Lecture Series in Design.](#) »

September 21, 2007

Ad Agencies Stink At Their Jobs--Here Is What They Must Do.



Bruce Nussbaum

Ad agencies are supposed to connect their client's brands to their client's consumers and they are doing a pretty bad job at it today. The 20 and 30-somethings ad folks stick all their client brands into social networks THEY and their friends like to hang out in and the middle aged ad people stuff their clients brands into their kids' social networks. Yes, I know, this is an exaggeration--but not much of one.

The fact is that the entire ad agency model has to be remade and ad agency people need to really learn about social media--and print for that matter. Blindly moving everyone into the most popular social networking sites may be safe today but it hurts clients whose brands are not connecting with the corporation's true customers.

There is a very serious discussion underway on restructuring ad agencies to get it right in the digital age. [Over at the new blog Experience Matters from Critical Mass, David Armano has a series of suggestions.](#) They are a start. But a terrific start.

Armano argues that traditional ad agencies produce a product--a page, a 30-second spot, a thing that they then sell--but digital is a lifestyle. David suggests that a set of "digabilities" are needed to be successful in a digital ad world. Here they are in brief. Go to Experience Matters for the full discussion.

1. Digability
Is digital in your DNA? Is it a core part of your marketing thinking—or merely another “channel”?
2. Experienceability
Customers are people and people demand great experiences. In the digital age, talk is cheap—experiences rule.
3. Accessibility
No longer content to devour the messages you've broadcast to them over the past 40 years, consumers have become participants. Today's power consumer wants to have a say in what your brand is.

RECENT POSTS

[It's Time To Call One Laptop Per Child A Failure,](#)

[Can Halo 3 Save Xbox from Nintendo's Wii? The Difference Between Incremental and Paradigm-Busting Innovation.](#)

[Chrysler Needs Smart Designers, Not Just Efficiency Experts.](#)

[Stanford 2007 David H. Liu Memorial Lecture Series in Design.](#)

[Ad Agencies Stink At Their Jobs--Here Is What They Must Do.](#)

- [Newsletters](#)
- [Past Covers](#)
- [Philanthropy](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- TECHNOLOGY**
- [Product Reviews](#)
- [Startups](#)
- [Special Reports](#)
- [Tech Stats](#)
- [Wildstrom: Tech Maven](#)
- SMALLBIZ**
- [Smart Answers](#)
- [Success Stories](#)
- [Today's Tip](#)
- [Trailblazing Companies](#)
- INVESTING**
- [Annual Reports](#)
- [BW 50](#)
- [S&P Picks & Pans](#)
- [Stock Screeners](#)
- [Free S&P Stock Report](#)
- SCOREBOARDS**
- [Mutual Funds](#)
- [Info Tech 100](#)
- [S&P 500/BW 50](#)
- B-SCHOOLS**
- [MBA Profiles](#)
- [MBA Rankings](#)
- [Who's Hiring Grads](#)

- BW EXTRAS**
- [BW Digital](#)
- [BW Online Alerts](#)
- [Handheld Edition](#)
- [RSS Feeds](#)
- [Reprints/Permissions](#)
- [Conferences](#)
- [Investor Workshops](#)

BUSINESS DIRECTORY
Find local experts in:

- Accounting
- Advertising & Market
- Air Charter
- Annuities
- Antivirus / Antispam
- Apartment Loans
- Architects

4. Flexibility
Individuals, brands and business must adapt, evolve and demonstrate a nimble flexibility. Flexibility rules in the form of never-ending beta releases, experimentation and innovation.
5. Portability
Widgets, gadgets and mobile. They all have one thing in common—they bring content and connectivity to you, on your terms where and when you want it. The user experience is mobile.
6. Talkability
In the digital age customers get to talk back. Customers demand to have a say, and want to hear back from the brands they empower. If you want to get customers talking about you—talk with them and help facilitate how they can better talk to each other.
7. Listenability
There are more ways than ever to hear the customer out, listen to what they are saying—and discover the patterns. In the digital age listening becomes more important than talking.
8. Usability
In the digital age we witness an abundance of complexity and a scarcity of simplicity. Usability becomes a key differentiator as consumers cry out for the conversion of complex to simple.
9. Shareability
Brands who figure out how to crack the code of how much to share will establish the “exchange rates” within their industries. Open source turns into open for business as new opportunities emerge.
10. Sustainability
In an ever-changing digital landscape, new products services and experiences will continue to emerge. But few will be sustainable. Sustainability translates into customers knowing that you will be around tomorrow translates to commitment and ultimately loyalty.
11. Desirability
When useful and usable isn't enough—desirable speaks to our emotions.

This is a great first start, all from David. What would you add or subtract to his list?

06:48 PM

[advertising](#)

Trackback Pings

TrackBack URL for this entry:
<http://blogs.businessweek.com/mt/mt-tb.cgi/7755.1464413365>

Comments

So Bruce, are you and David Armano dating?

Posted by: Jim at September 21, 2007 09:47 PM

I'd add something that SHOULD be fairly obvious, but is clear that most ad agencies are completely missing - understanding your target audience.

Each and every one of the tips that David suggests (I think they are all fantastic) can be deepened exponentially if their foundation were an intimate understanding of the people they are trying to connect to.



Great innovation and design companies like IDEO get it. We should ALL "get it".

Posted by: [Steve Cunningham](#) at September 21, 2007 10:44 PM

my response here:

<http://gongszeto.squarespace.com/journal/2007/9/22/a-response-to-bruce-nussbaum-and-david-armano.html>

Posted by: [Gong Szeto](#) at September 22, 2007 05:36 AM

Jim,

For the record, no we're not dating. Meeting of minds perhaps.

So what do you think of what Armano is saying?

Bruce

Posted by: [bruce nussbaum](#) at September 22, 2007 04:28 PM

Jim,

Nice contribution. Next...

Gong, I already left a comment on your blog so I won't repeat myself here. Suffice it to say that not everyone will care for my writing style, my visuals or my beliefs. That's OK, because I'm not changing for anyone except maybe my wife.

Steve, you actually bring up a critical point that I can't believe I overlooked even though I talk about it a lot. Starting with an intimate understanding of people (duh). It's so basic but few of us do it well. I'm going to revise this based on that comment.

Posted by: [David Armano](#) at September 23, 2007 01:00 AM

Post a comment

Name:

Email Address:

URL:

Comments:

[Must Do. \(5\)](#)

[china design](#)

[institute of design](#)

