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September 11, 2007

Does Your Ad Agency Know Anything Real About Social Media?



Bruce Nussbaum

I have found it disturbing how little ad agency people know about social media. Old folks in ad agencies think they should put all their corporate clients (OK, nearly all) into hot social networks that their children inhabit, such as FaceBook, Second Life, etc. Like buy IBM computers or Microsoft software in the past, it is a safe move.

But to do it endlessly and automatically is stupid. And it reflects a deep lack of awareness by the ad agency people on who their clients really are and where they need to be place, both online and in print.

If you're a corporate manager, David Armano over at Logic+Emotion has a set of questions you might want to ask of your ad agencies that ferret out a more sophisticated view toward social media. There's no quaranty that positive answers on all ten will get you what you want but at least you'll get a **digital native, not a digital immigrant**, who knows the media deeply.

David's ten questions to ad execs are:

1. Do you read blogs. Which ones?
2. Do you have a personal blog? What's it about?
3. Do you participate in at least one social network? Which one?
4. Have you ever uploaded a video online? What did you use to do it?
5. What's your favorite search engine. Why?
6. Have you ever used an online classified service like craigslist?
7. Besides making phone calls—how else do you use your mobile phone?
8. Have you ever registered a domain name?
9. Do you use social bookmarks or tagging?
10. Do you use a feed reader of some sort? Which one? Why?

"Yes" answers will indicate an ad agency person who at least understands digital media, participates in it and feels at home in it. If you're lucky you might even get one who understands print as well and knows where to put clients (hint, if you're in the b-2-b business

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Comments

Hi Bruce.

Thanks for spreading this this to a broader audience. Couple of things to note about what I'm saying here. Though you've positioned this under Ad agencies, actually this applies to ANY agency executive. Design firms, PR, Marketing etc. Especially design, since designers are the ones who claim to have the most intuition. But my experience has been that they aren't investigating as much as they could be.

Also, it's worth noting that technically you and I are Digital Immigrants meaning that we knew life before digital—but the point is that we have immigrated. You could say we've acculturated by doing some of the things on this list.

That's the point. Many execs haven't yet acculturated themselves in (2.0) yet are defining the strategies. And that's a situation that needs to change.

Welcome back to high intensity blogging. Your posts have been very good.

Posted by: [David Armano](#) at September 11, 2007 10:54 PM

So an agency person has to actually be part of a user group themselves in order to have perspective on it?

I question that broad presumption.

Posted by: [Steve Portigal](#) at September 12, 2007 07:02 AM

I don't think it's being part of the group as much as having a "little" first hand experience. I mean come on—this is common sense stuff. How can you make strategic recommendations about the internet of you don't use the internet? Don't use it at all. That's the point I'm stressing in this. Some execs have zero personal experience in "2.0" stuff.

Also, many execs never stress qualitative research—things like ethnography and observation. Instead they rely solely on Jupiter, Forrester etc. Which is not bad, but in addition to stats—both qualitative and a little participation help provide a more informed perspective. No?

Posted by: [David Armano](#) at September 12, 2007 02:15 PM

Steve, would you buy real estate in Alaska from someone who's never left Manhattan?

Posted by: [Frymaster Speck](#) at September 12, 2007 04:53 PM

David,

You're making an important point. Depending on our age, curiosity, passion, jobs and other variables, we are all digital immigrants, digital natives and digital dopes. Experience counts in life, we all know that. The more you are in the flow of something, the more deeply you understand it. Participation is key to comprehension and empathy. I think this is true of being part of any social network, any "world" or any techno-context.

My mom still leaves me voice mails that are structured like letters--with a formal introduction (hi, this is your mother), a long, detailed message, and a formal ending. Perfect. She's a VM immigrant, leaving her accent behind.

Bruce

Posted by: Bruce Nussbaum at September 12, 2007 05:06 PM

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