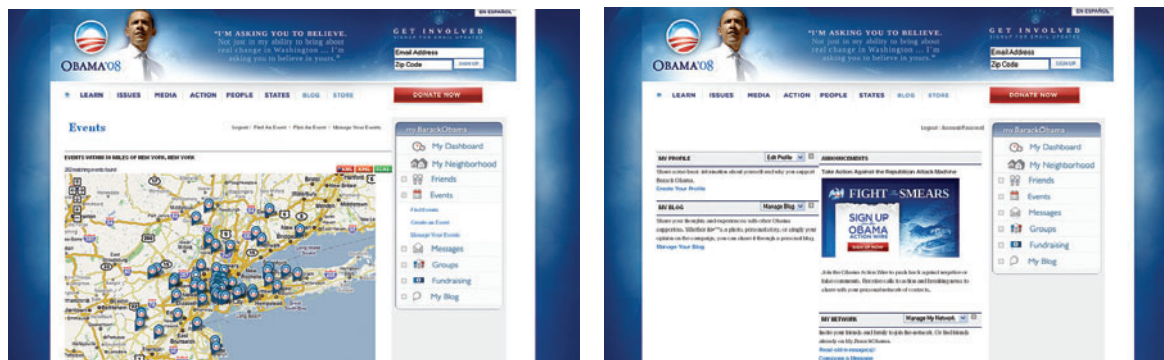


Advertising Age

CRAIN'S INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF MARKETING

ADAGE.COM



EFFECTIVE LINK: Barack Obama and Facebook co-founder Chris Hughes worked together to engage younger voters online.

THE NEED FOR PARTNERSHIP AT A TIME OF FRAGMENTATION

As unique audiences escalate, the pressure's on for collaboration

By **JOHN GARMENT**

MEDIA HAS PROBABLY changed more in the last decade than since the dawn of time; that much is clear. What may be less apparent is that the exponential growth of media channels, platforms and audience segments has made brand marketing much too complex to approach without the collective strengths of communications partners.

In the face of fragmentation, relevant communications may require different marketing teams or specialty agencies, each uniquely familiar with its respective audience; each interpreting strategy within the context of its audience; and each developing an appropriate brand narrative, to wrap the core idea around the culture, interests, sensitivities and media habits of its audience.

This requires a well-organized set of partnerships with the collective experience to extend a brand idea across a spectrum of disciplines, audiences and media channels. And identifying the best way to strategically align all respective talent will require new ways of thinking about business integration, new ways to approach brand management and new ways to collaborate with marketing partners.

The number of unique audience segments will continue to escalate along with the alignment of new-media pipelines and vertical content. Communications will need to build brand relationships among various consumer groups, each absorbed in their own personal media networks, each expecting content and messaging to align with their common interests, preferences and lifestyles. Consumers look at vertical content as a respite from the frightening onslaught of irrelevant commercialism.

"Truly, Madly, Deeply Engaged," a recent OMD/Yahoo study on global media trends, drew a conclusion about the youth market that may be equally true for all segments: "As advertising channels become more personal,

receptivity to seeing or hearing advertising through that channel decreases." This poses a serious challenge for marketers to develop communications that better align with the media channel and audience and to deliver their messages in a ways that are as personal and engaging as the content itself. Marketing programs will need to communicate with an authenticity that generates trust and in a voice that emanates from a real familiarity with each target audience.

Political campaigns, for example, employ many strategists, each honing "brand" communications to resonate with the issues, values and social culture germane to a particular constituency. In a great collaborative effort, Barack Obama partnered with Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook, to develop a web presence and better employ the social networking that helped engage younger voters and clinch the Democratic nomination. The campaign also had a very well-organized grassroots effort with first-hand knowledge of the political climate and voting protocol in each state and the expertise to resonate with local communities. The collective skills of these local partners helped the "Obama brand" connect with its audience and raise capital in record proportions.

On a different scale, Toyota's advertising agency went out and assembled a partnership from America's heartland so that communications for the Tundra pickup would reflect the vernacular of this local community. The agency recognized the special characteristics of this audience and found a partner who could make a genuine connection.

At the same time that companies are developing the partnerships to address narrower audience segments and media channels, their purview continues to grow more global. International business opportunities are growing, and a global brand needs an aligned network of marketing partnerships

and agencies that can engage distinct audiences in local markets.

And a solid competency in communications technologies also will be key. Media planning is therefore being driven by increasingly complex analytics, making technology an important yardstick of marketing competency.

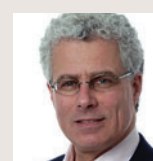
Going forward, companies need to select their marketing partnerships to take advantage of the evolving marketing landscape and to address a smaller, more fragmented marketing universe in a bigger, more global marketing economy.

The internet, social networking and related media technologies have introduced many new media channels that permit audiences to group according to their vertical interests and to share and react to information in real time. Marketers need to harness the same technologies to combine resources and form marketing partnerships that can develop engaging conversations with these very specific audiences and realign quickly to maintain the conversation as the target, media or subject changes.

This approach to marketing becomes ever more valuable as audience profiles narrow.

In the end, a brand will be defined by the resonance of its voice, the saliency of its position and the sense of community it can maintain among each of its many vertical audience groups.

JOHN GARMENT ...



is director-global knowledge management at DDB Worldwide, heading development and circulation of DDB intellectual capital and contributes to global marketing and new-business development.