

Social media changing dynamics of advertising

Networking sites becoming essential marketing tool

By Joseph R. Perone
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After working for ad agencies in New York and New Jersey, Debra Taeschler founded her own firm 25 years ago in the basement of her East Hanover home.

Now president of GraficaGroup, based in Chester, she has developed advertising/marketing communications campaigns for clients including AT&T, PSE&G and Jackson Hewitt.

She was named the 2003 Distinguished Alumna of the Year by Rutgers University-Newark. She spoke to Your Business about trends in the advertising business.



Debra Taeschler is president of advertising agency GraficaGroup in Chester.

subscription online newsletters.

Q. Which commercials were most effective on Super Bowl Sunday and why?

A. All in all, the spots were lackluster. My criteria for judging the commercials was based upon the old, but true, "surprise and delight" directive of communications. The two ads that fell into this category were Letterman/Oprah/Leno. Now, that was a delightful surprise after the last few weeks of their comic bitter rivalry being played out on national TV. Google—their fresh, brand-specific approach was great storytelling. By only using text and music with minimal sound bites, they were able to engage me in a charming story that made me emotionally involved.

Q. How will the advertising landscape change this year?

A. In 2010, you're going to find more companies trying to get a better handle on social media and communicate more in an online forum, whether it's Facebook or YouTube, MySpace, Twitter or mobile text messaging. The difference between now and when the internet came in as a communications channel is there was a slow adoption curve. Now, in two years, social media has penetrated the population. (Actor) Ashton Kutcher has something like 1.4 million followers. Friends are passing information along to friends and their network of friends, and so on.

Q. Why is it important?

A. Consumers tend to believe a peer's recommendation more than a company's position. So, it's critical to be out there listening to those messages. We work with Horizon Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey, and we recommended they monitor what people are saying about their health care plans and other issues to gain insights that might help product development and even relieve some of the fears people may have on health care reform. Companies use it for product innovation, customer service and public relations. So, it is really changing the dynamics and becoming a fundamental marketing tool.

Q. How do companies misuse Twitter and other social networking forums?

A. Some companies are listening to what people are saying about them that

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day, but they don't respond and don't keep up with it consistently and on a timely basis. We see other companies using tools to monitor conversations, but they are not applying marketing intelligence on top of the reports provided and the implications to the business. It's so instantaneous that people expect an answer within 24 hours. It's a resource issue for companies, as well. You need people who understand what the business is about and can direct customers to the appropriate contact within the organization.

Q. What will happen to traditional media?

A. You are always going to have different communications channels. Whereas my kids would be getting their information only online, they rarely watch TV, there are other groups of people who have different preferences. But there are definitely times when TV, print and radio are most effective. They won't go away. It really comes down to preference and cost-effectiveness.

Q. What will happen to newspapers and magazines?

A. Just as when iTunes came into being, the music industry had to redefine its business model, and that's what newspapers and magazines are going through now. It's about the value of content.

There is no way you can get that kind of educated reporting and research on such a wide variety of topics, or local and regional information, in one singular location. The question is how is it served up? Do you just print newspapers for the people who want to read them and have

Q. Are traditional print ads still effective?

A. Media fragmentation is one of the biggest challenges in today's ad world. You have to use as much information as possible to intelligently decide which channels to use. If I want to reach kids, would I use newspapers? No. But Baby Boomers like me read newspapers and magazines.

Q. If you have a print ad, should you also have a video ad on the web to go with it?

A. Oh, yes. From the viewpoint of integrating campaigns in traditional media such as TV, print, radio, with digital media like your website, or Facebook page or e-mails.

If you look at the numbers at what people will take time to look at, video numbers are among the highest. Ashton Kutcher did an online video spot for Kellogg's about hunger and how it affects people in different areas because they can't afford to eat. And it was done in a hip, MTV style. It was a great social consciousness-raising three-minute video. And at the end, he talked about what Kellogg's was contributing to help — money. It was a different way of looking at creating brand awareness. It was not a hard sell.

Q. How are mobile phone texting ads being used?

A. One way, is offering people incentives, such as coupons, if they have double-opted in for receiving ads on their mobile phones. Jackson Hewitt, the tax preparation services company in Parsippany, for example, could text a coupon to customers that they could bring to a tax store to get a discount on filing their taxes.

You could also click on an application to find out where the nearest store is.

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