



Marketing Strategies to Cut Through Digital Clutter

By: Steve Randazzo | August 7, 2019 | 9

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Because they're plugged in all the time, today's consumers are bombarded with digital clutter—a stream of never-ending marketing messages across dozens of devices and platforms.

Understandably, we process most of this as useless noise.

Audiences likely consider each message for less

than a second before deciding to toss it away.

In reality, digital clutter is just another example of good old-fashioned information overload.

Think of it this way.

If you travel over a highway overpass, you see everything from noisy tractor-trailers to flashy sports cars flying by.

But how many of those vehicles do you remember the next day?

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You might like something on Instagram or Twitter, but after seeing hundreds of those posts every day, your brain is just skimming through them.

There's barely any emotional connection with most of those posts.

When Content Falls Through the Cracks

According to the "[Meaningful Brands](#)" study, 58% of consumers find brand content is "poor, irrelevant, or fails to deliver."

Ouch.

There's an unfortunate reason why clickbait soared into popularity.

You have to disrupt people to get their attention.

The brain wants dopamine-fueling experiences—something enjoyable and entertaining.

Something most brands don't provide.

And when they do, they usually aren't long-lasting or catchy enough to get people to act on the message and purchase a product.

This is because brands fail to explain the product's actual impact on people's lives.

Since the Great Recession, which caused marketers to lose much of their budgets, companies have been running to social media because it's cheap and seemingly effective.

But social media campaigns are just like those cars on the highway.

They pass by at 70 miles per hour, and we don't pay attention to most of them unless we're given a good reason.

Sometimes simple, straightforward messages that consumers can process quickly provide the best way to cut through all the digital clutter.

How Real-World Experiences Slice Through Digital Clutter

Although some might say the decline of brick-and-mortar stores could indicate consumers don't care about physical experiences, the facts tell a different story.

[Consumers are evolving](#), and they spend more on entertainment and recreation than they did two decades ago.

Because they can buy virtually anything online, customers are finding in-store experiences that much more memorable.

Baskin-Robbins, for example, enlisted 70 stores in the Southern California area to execute its “31-Cent Scoop Night” campaign to benefit the children’s hospital in San Diego.

The campaign was later adopted across all the U.S. franchise locations.

Although Baskin-Robbins is a national brand, the physical campaign helped the chain get back to its roots, engage with the community, and capture that old-school neighborhood ice-cream shop feel.

Experiences are Memorable, Digital Clutter—Not So Much

When you go to a concert, you take in the band, the people in the stands, and everything else within that environment.

I can still remember a show I went to when I was 18 because my friends and I had an incredible time jamming to our favorite bands.

Yet I can’t recall tweets I saw yesterday.

Concerts aren’t the only kind of memorable event, though.

There’s a reason sports games, concerts, fairs, and festivals sell out—and why we all want to see our children walk across a stage and receive their diplomas.

Humans crave experiences, and we feel a high when we have a really great one.

We categorize that memory, and it remains fresh in our minds for many years and even decades afterward.

Becoming More Than Just a Brand

Although you can watch a live event on TV or stream it on YouTube, it’s never the same.

If digital initiatives could drive a reliable return on investment, concerts, and sporting events might disappear.

But they can’t—and that’s why brands need to take advantage of their ability to create immersive experiences.

The 2018 Edelman Earned Brand study found that consumers want to support brands that align with their beliefs and provide immersive experiences.

Two-thirds of people across the globe buy products and services based on trust with earned media.

Forward-thinking brands are investing in experiences that allow customers to interact rather than passively watch.

Apparel brand Bonobos kept this in mind by creating nontraditional physical retail stores that allowed customers to touch the products that previously were only for sale online.

However, the brand kept the operations of its store true to its e-commerce roots.

They fostered the experiences consumers wanted and used that to build their brand.

Three Ways Brands Can Cut Through Digital Clutter

Know Your Audience

First, go where your audience lives, works, plays, and shops.

Audiences are open to marketing messages in unconventional places.

This includes parks, fairs, and even other businesses.

If you meet them in real life, consumers can opt-in.

Those who do are more open to your message and interacting with you.

Increasingly, brands base campaigns on statistical insights and metrics.

Hard data produces facts, guaranteeing solid ROI.

When you know your target audiences, you can do some sleuthing to figure out what drives members.

Use that to create content that resonates with them on an individual level.

Be focused on their frame of mind, too.

Don't try to sell cable services at a grocery store.

Consumers are there to shop for food.

This might sound obvious, but you should also know your product inside and out.

In three sentences, you should be able to easily describe the who, what, when, where, why, and how of your offering.

The Five Senses

Second, bring in all five senses. This is a great way to stand out from the rest of the digital clutter.

As humans, we're programmed to gradually stop responding to stimuli after regular exposure.

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To break through this obstacle, think about the five human senses.

If you can create experiences that evoke those senses, consumers are more likely to stop and take action.

This sensory marketing adds an extra psychological edge to your efforts.

Let's think about kettle corn for a minute.

Its pleasant smell triggers customers to grab a bag after they get a whiff of it at a mall or local fair.

Depending on what you're selling, consider which of the five senses aligns most with your branding.

If music works best to entice your audience, carefully review the tracks you'll play that you want customers to associate with your brand.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Finally, develop a corporate social responsibility program.

CSR isn't just a great way to give back.

It proves to your audience members that you care about more than turning a profit.

As a bonus, it helps you stand out from the rest of the digital clutter and stay on their radar.

For instance, Target and KaBOOM!, an organization that provides playground equipment to underserved communities, paired up for a program to encourage safe, rewarding play for kids in four major cities.

But Target did more than just fund the partnership.

It sent out store personnel to help build immersive experiences and engage with parents.

Families undoubtedly noticed and appreciated the role Target played in building a better community for their kids.

This was an excellent way to show Target's audience how much it cares about locals' well-being.

No matter what kind of CSR program you have in mind, be sure you're actually giving back instead of using it as a thinly veiled plug.

Consumers can easily sniff out inauthenticity, and you never want to be on the receiving end of that kind of criticism.

Bringing It All Together With Social Media

People crave authentic, meaningful connections more than ever, even if it means having to navigate through digital clutter.

And when your brand proves it cares enough to give that to them, they'll reward you with their undivided attention.

Does your company create experiences online and off? Share your stories in the comments.

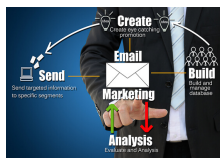
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About Steve Randazzo

Steve Randazzo is the founder and president of Pro Motion Inc., an experiential marketing agency located in Missouri. With more than 30 years of experience in the industry, Steve has longstanding relationships with big-name clients, including Dr Pepper Snapple Group, The Walt Disney Company, Hewlett-Packard, Duck Brand, Fiskars, Citgo, the NBA, and Tractor Supply Co.

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Steve Randazzo • 2 years ago

I always get more comments from a post on Spin Sucks than other platforms...thanks Gini!!

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Laura Petrolino Mod • 2 years ago

Sensory marketing is a topic I have investigated quite a bit because it's fascinating to me! I love that you included it in this round up. I think it's highly under appreciated by most communicators.

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Steve Randazzo > Laura Petrolino • 2 years ago

Thanks for the feedback Laura! When you can build in the senses it drives a connection. With the connection comes more engagement and understanding about your brand. The end goal is the emotional connection which can lead to the customer becoming a fanatic! The ultimate goal for any brand.

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Dawn Buford • 2 years ago

It's all about knowing your audience and working to connect with them. You have to focus on them and not the general population. Your audience then becomes your community and your community then becomes your ambassadors, spreading the love and helping you build your brand. People are always going to gravitate towards comfort and connections - things that remind them of something from childhood, or their hometown, or their best friend. Things they like. Unimportant things are forgotten.

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Steve Randazzo > Dawn Buford • 2 years ago

So true Dawn! It always starts with the "WHO"!

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Gini Dietrich Mod • 2 years ago

We often talk internally about how, back in the day, you'd walk into Sears and smell popcorn...for the very reason you describe. Same thing with wine served at Whole Foods—it get people (me) to stay longer and spend more money (me). Why every store in America doesn't do this is beyond me.

One of the challenges I see in the future is how we take virtual organizations and make them come alive like this online. We can't appeal to all five senses because we don't have actual locations—and the Bonobos or Amazon approach won't work, either. It's an interesting conundrum I spend a lot of time thinking about.

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or pickies...

Online retailers are building physical retail experiences where their customers can physically experience their products. The good brick and mortar stores are the ones who create a experience when you walk in. Bass Pro Shops, Apple Stores, Tractor Supply Co. - all good examples of good examples!

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martinwaxman • 2 years ago

Really enjoyed your post, Steve. Thanks for sharing your insights and examples on how to combine real-world and digital marketing that breaks through and captures our customer's attention!

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Steve Randazzo > martinwaxman • 2 years ago

Thanks Martin! Appreciate your comments. We all struggle everyday with figuring out how to stand out in this cluttered marketplace.

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