



DIGITAL ANALYSIS, OPINIONS

Darren Woolley | Mar 27, 2020

During the COVID-19 crisis, time to be more about transformation and less about technology

Using new technology with little thought behind it can produce cringeworthy results, as evident in some virtual pitch meetings through video conferencing.



Please do not get me wrong. I am a technophile. I love technology for what it allows me to do and experience and enjoy. But I am continually amused and annoyed at how often, especially in marketing and advertising, technology is purchased and procured without either considering the real benefit or doing the work to achieve the desired outcome.

Collaboration technology is all the rage at the moment, due to remote working practices to ensure social distancing. Take the current situation, where with the increased use of collaboration platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, everyone is posting screen grabs of a multitude of faces from today's Zoom meeting. One agency head was bragging to me that since they have implemented work from home, they have a daily all-agency Zoom meeting every lunchtime. Why? They have a daily quiz to maintain staff morale. Just like a one hour, daily, all staff meeting for 140 people. Wonder what code on the timesheet that gets?

Just because technology allows you to do something it does not mean you should. Think about what it is you want to achieve and how the technology can be best deployed to achieve that task.

But it is not all just remote chit-chatting. Marketing automation is driving me crazy. At a time when international flights are virtually non-existent and domestic flights are going the same way, I am still getting my points update from the various airline loyalty programs to maximise or redeem my points. Thanks, but no thanks. While the holiday destination resorts are bombarding me with offers to book 7-nights and get 40%. But at the moment, if I go, I'll need 14-nights of quarantine, does that mean I get 80% off? Please turn off your automated marketing because you are really cheesing us off.

Automation technology is not set and forget. Remember that while this technology can make life easier and more productive for you, there are customers at the end of that process. You should be using this to engage them, not piss them off.

Back to the agency world, and we recently completed a round of meetings in a pitch process we are managing, largely by remote video conferencing, again due to the requirement of social distancing to help flatten the infection curve. But the problem is the agencies (and even the clients) are using these platforms with as little thought as they would use sending an email or making a phone call. Neal Moore, a friend and colleague at Moore's Law would have cringed to see the way the agencies set up their Zoom conferences. From whole rooms full of people, with most of the frame filled with ceiling and back wall, to individual screens looking up people's noses or framed so we can see the kitchen in the background, or the creative director who probably had forgotten he was still on screen (this is why there is a video off button) and the agency that left the whole meeting in presenter mode so that their team was reduced to tiny postage stamps.

If you are using technology, make sure you understand how best to use it. It is not enough to simply turn up and turn it on. Think about how the technology works, not just for you but for the user on the other side you are trying to engage and influence.

Marketing technology transformation is not just a to-do check-list. Too often marketing and advertising technology (known as AdTech and MarTech) is procured and deployed not because it is needed but because it is somehow mandated as part of the transformation process. A very excited CMO contacted me to say they had just signed a deal for one of the more popular marketing technology platforms. He was calling to see if we had any recommendation on how he could structure his team to make it work. Before you laugh, we recently finished a MarTech audit with a major client, who has almost every platform known. Tick, tick tick. But when we asked the marketing team how the technology improved their performance? Fail.

The marketer with the most technology is not the winner. The one who uses the technology they have to deliver exception results wins. The biggest mistake you can make is suffering FOMO when it comes to MarTech, because you play straight into the hands of the salespeople. And don't skip on the training and implementation.

The biggest challenge for marketers is understanding that technology transformation starts with strategy (purpose), focuses on capabilities (people) and transforms ways of working (process) to deliver the outcome desired (performance). And not with the technology itself.

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Darren Woolley is the founder and CEO of marketing consultancy TrinityP3.



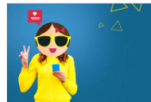
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