

The Art of Socializing and Mobilizing

Best Practices and Talent Solutions
for Creative Leaders

The way customers consume information is evolving. With corporate leadership teams eager to jump into social-media and mobile-app design, it's imperative for creative leaders to reinforce the importance of strategy and planning before execution. In addition, creative teams will need to evolve to fulfill the goals of those new strategies, adapting core skills and potentially expanding into new areas. This white paper offers insight on how creatives can begin to innovate roles and teams and find the talent needed to meet the challenge of going social and mobile.

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The BOSS Group is, literally, where talent and opportunity meet. It's where creative, interactive, and marketing communications professionals come to find jobs, resources, and industry connections and where clients find the talent and expertise to help them succeed.

We're advocates for the creative professional—both employer and candidate. We have been providing human capital solutions exclusively within the creative niche for the past twenty years. The BOSS Group is a certified Women's Business Enterprise.

How We Consistently Deliver

Sourcing top-level talent requires a comprehensive strategy. The BOSS Group's multi-faceted approach ensures that we can introduce to you a variety of capable candidates not found through traditional recruiting methods. Our candidates undergo a rigorous screening and evaluation process. We use project-based computerized and written assessments to determine working competencies and real-world industry knowledge and skills. And finally, our ongoing commitment to remaining a boutique-staffing firm enables us to provide you with customized, hands-on service and the very best creative talent in the industry.

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Cella is a management consulting company specializing in optimizing operations at in-house creative organizations. We believe that in-house creative organizations are unique and that by tailoring our services for this specific audience we can provide more valuable support to Creative Executives and their teams.

Cella partners with Creative Executives to improve upon the organization's business goals of cost effectiveness, high efficiency, superior levels of customer service, high-quality work, brand consistency, and a values-based culture.

Typical Engagements

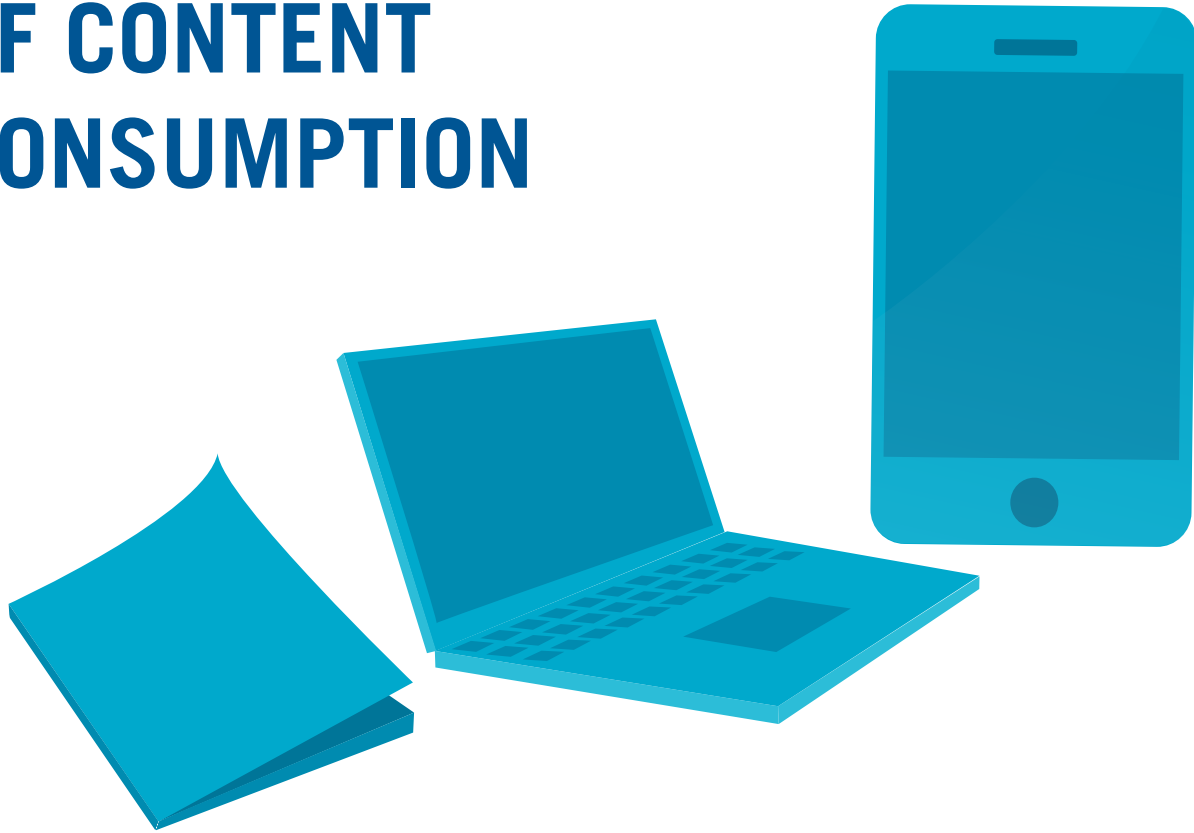
We've helped Creative Executives across multiple industries (higher education, pharmaceutical, financial, retail, consumer product goods, etc.) and business sizes with process improvement initiatives, mergers and acquisitions planning, reorganizations, metrics strategy development, technology selection and implementation, strategic priority planning, and benchmarking initiatives.

We find that many creative services teams do not have the time or staff to complete large initiatives that will provide long-term benefits to their company. Working with Cella allows Creative Executives to focus on their priorities, while Cella can step in to deliver results on business improvement projects in a timely manner to advance their department's success.

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THE EVOLUTION OF CONTENT CONSUMPTION



The way consumers gather information is continuing to shift. Print media is slowly dwindling, with twenty-five of the largest newspapers experiencing record declines.¹ According to Jeff Bezos—founder, president, chief executive officer, and chairman of the board of Amazon.com—book sales for the Kindle have tripled since the first half of 2009 and now outpace hardcover book sales.²

TiVo allows viewers to skip ads, and 90% of them do.³ In the past year, the number of Americans who reported watching a short video on their phone grew by 52%.⁴ Smart-phone sales are at an all-time high, and new products, like the iPad, are giving consumers a variety of ways to stay plugged in while being mobile. And many places—now including Starbucks⁵—offer free Wi-Fi, making staying connected online even easier.

90% of consumers trust peer recommendations while only 14% trust advertisements.

But how are those consumers staying connected to your business? Many are talking about your brand on blogs. Currently, there are more than 130 million blogs,⁶ and 34% of bloggers post opinions about products or brands.⁷ And those opinions influence the opinions of their peers, 90% of whom trust peer recommendations⁸ while only 14% trust advertisements.³

With this constant, on-the-go approach to online activities, consumers are becoming more distracted and less tied to their desktop computers. They may browse a site or blog on their phone while waiting at a bus stop, and whether that site or blog belongs to your business depends on the coding of your site and the type of smart phone the consumer owns.

Mobile applications, more commonly known as apps, give consumers yet another way to connect with your business. Instead of leafing through the pages of the New York Times over a cup of coffee, people are now reading the Times on their phone or iPad through an app while commuting to work on the bus or subway. If they forgot to place their bill payments in the mail one morning, they can access their accounts through apps or smart-phone browsers to pay their bills, completing in minutes what used to take a week or more, depending on the speed of mail delivery. Even gaming apps, some of the most popular among consumers, are being used to drive users to point-of-sale activities. Many apps also allow for additional advertising within the app itself, like Apple's iAds: small banner ads that, when tapped by a user, open a web page with additional product information.

The continuing growth and evolution of social media and mobile design is affecting more than how consumers obtain news and information about companies and brands; it is also affecting how companies provide that information. Wading into the depths of social and mobile media requires new strategies and approaches to promotion and brand management. It isn't as simple as moving a print deliverable into a mobile space, or increasing the font size on a web site so it's easier to read on a phone screen.

Effective social media and mobile design requires adapting your creative team or adding a few new roles as well as closely integrating creative with other departments, such as marketing, public relations, customer service, information technology (IT), and legal. Responding to consumers through social media takes more than writing good copy, for example, so teaming copywriters with customer service representatives can help ensure that communication is not only well written but also personal. And training or partnering with legal ensures that the personal communication also correctly represents the brand.

Designing a mobile app requires IT specialists to develop for a variety of platforms, each of which can affect visual design choices. Partnering IT and creative ensures the resulting app not only functions well but also takes advantage of each platform's unique visual design challenges and opportunities. Designing an interactive media element in Flash, for example, means users of the iPhone and iPad, among other mobile Apple devices, won't be able to view it. Knowing the resulting platform helps visual designers provide the best solution for the end product.

What your resulting team will look like is up to you (there's no one-size-fits-all formula), and to help you decide what creative talent to look or train for, and where to look, the following chapters will explore social media and mobile-app design in more depth, providing examples and case studies from other companies, both corporate and agency.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS NOT A FAD

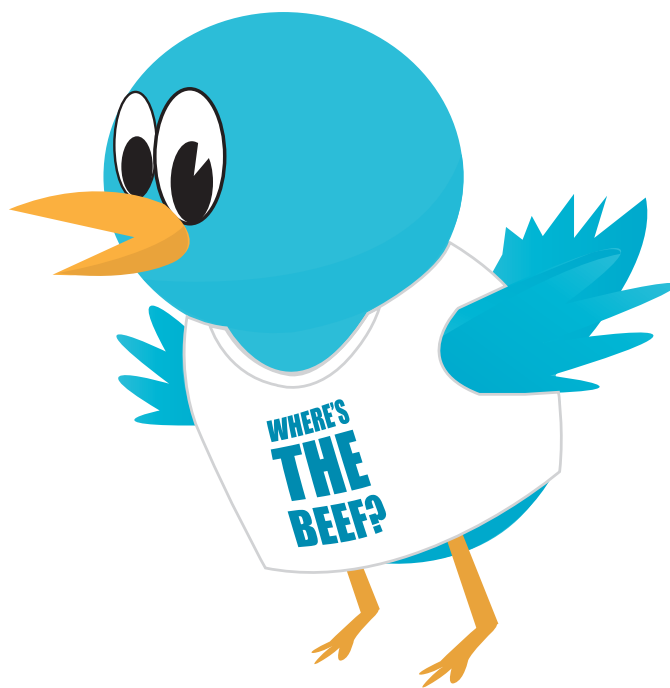
Social media is changing how businesses connect with their consumers, with other businesses, and even across internal departments. Breaking away from traditional top-down models of advertising—product-driven and monologue-like—social media provides another way to communicate with consumers, one that is customer-driven and open to dialogue. This new model requires a different kind of strategy, which in turn requires an evolved creative team to implement it. Since the definition and application of social media have proven so malleable and don't lend themselves to a one-size-fits-all formula, it can be tough for businesses to know where to begin when building or evolving a social-media-capable creative team. Understanding current trends in order to build an effective strategy is a good place to start.

The key to social media, be it on Facebook or Twitter or your corporate blog, is the word “social.” Many companies jump into the “media” part only, publishing Facebook fan pages and letting them stagnate or sending out the same branding messages through what they perceive as just another channel. They ignore the fact that “social” means interacting with others and declare social-media efforts failures when nobody responds to the one message they sent out ten months ago. Successful social-media efforts require listening and responding in addition to promoting. And it has to be ongoing.

Before jumping into the social–mobile space, begin with a strong foundation: strategy plus support. Until you have a plan to support ongoing strategy, you risk wasting resources on an effort that could stagnate, or, worse, alienate your consumers when they realize you aren't really listening to what they have to say.

START WITH STRATEGY

Deciding which, or how many, social-media avenues to pursue, as well as how you'd like them to interact with each other, will determine what talent and training to



seek for your creative team. The unspoken step before that decision is whether social media is the right strategy for your company.

In a series of interviews held with chief marketers and creative directors for this white paper, “start with strategy first” preceded any answer about which social-media outlet was best to target. Social media may not be for everyone, despite its growing popularity and stubborn refusal to be discounted as a fad. Determining an appropriate social-media strategy for your business will inform which areas of social media are best for you to pursue. The best way to determine that strategy is to begin listening to your consumers.

“I often read about marketers asking for advice about where to start and, they are told ‘just jump in,’” Tom Hoehne, director of interactive marketing and convergence media at Kodak, has said. “That is awful advice. Jump in is about step number 4. You need to listen first, get a sense of the kinds of conversations that are happening about your brand, products, category, etc., and observe the tone of these conversations. Who are the frequent contributors? Determine if you can add value to those conversations. If so, then jump in. But do so in a very transparent and real way.”⁹

Listening to your market will help form the basis of your strategy. Once you listen, you can determine what and how you want to communicate with your consumers, which will then determine the social-media outlets that will work best for your consumers and your business.

Social media is a terrific resource when used as a tool to find out current perceptions about a brand and to develop great marketing insights. Using sites such as Del.icio.us to learn what keywords and web sites consumers connect with a brand category or specific product, for example, may reveal new places or ways to advertise for your market.

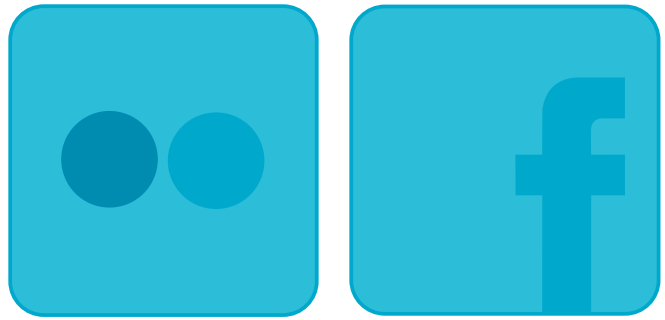
It can also create a personal connection between your brand and the consumer. “You can take advantage of that by giving them stuff that is just for them,” said David Coats, executive creative director of Kelliher Samets Volk, an integrated agency with offices in New York, Boston, and Burlington, Vermont. “If you give them that sensibility that you’re doing something special for them as a loyalist, social media can be a great way to reach out.”¹⁰

Some companies provide Twitter-only deals for their followers, such as airfare discounts on Virgin America, percentage-off deals on products, and giveaways that generate further brand recognition through retweets. With more than 75 million user accounts on Twitter,¹¹ the word of mouth generated by such loyalist deals can spread very quickly.

Social media has been used for brand recognition and support, promotion, and recruiting, and successful strategies ensure the effort is continuous. “The worst thing you can do with social media is, for example, put up a Facebook fan page for a brand and then don’t do anything with it,” said Coats. “There are a million Facebook fan pages for brands out there just because they thought they needed a Facebook fan page. They just died on the vine because there’s been nobody monitoring them, nobody updating them, nobody managing them, and you’ve got to have that person who is responsible for managing the content because social media isn’t a static thing.”

APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

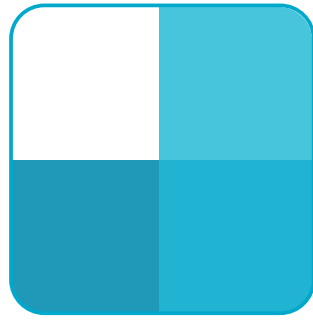
While Facebook does provide an entryway into a network that boasts 500 million global users,¹² it’s important to use it in a way that best reflects your brand. Cisco Systems, for example, has integrated all



its social-media outlets through Facebook, allowing users to explore relevant content without leaving a user interface that’s familiar. “There are a lot of different features on Facebook that allow you to customize and aggregate content from other social sites such as Twitter and Flickr,” Autumn Truong, social-media manager of corporate communications at Cisco Systems, has said. “Each tab we created represents a corporate social channel that feeds into our Facebook page. These include Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, our corporate blog, and our online newsroom. ... You don’t have to leave the Facebook environment to get access to the content across all those Cisco channels.”¹³ To pursue a similar strategy, designers and developers who are knowledgeable about Facebook’s user interface and can work within it would be crucial to seek or train. To help existing designers and developers learn more about the interface, starter templates can be found on the Internet for those who want to learn through experimentation and testing directly.

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Kodak created huge consumer involvement when they launched a new pocket video camera. Unimpressed with the camera’s brand name, however, consumers started joking online about the unimaginative name. Kodak was listening. In response, the company launched a naming contest for the camera’s successor, awarding 100



random participants one of the new cameras and sending those who chose the new name to the camera's launch in Las Vegas.

BestBuy is making customer service more mobile, real time, and collaborative via Twelpforce, their social profile on Twitter. Currently, it has over 28,000 followers and averages more than 60 solutions per day.¹⁴ This type of social-media presence requires dedicated resources to be the personal face of the brand and continuously interact with and respond to consumers.

Smaller companies have also used social media to generate loyal followers. Curtis Kimball, who owns a crème brûlée cart in San Francisco, uses Twitter to post the location of his cart and available flavors throughout the day. He has more than 12,500 followers.¹⁵ Similarly, Korean BBQ carts in Los Angeles use the same strategy, and one—Kogi—has nearly 70,000 followers.¹⁶ According to Coats, “Folks rabidly follow where those carts are going to pop up. They feel like they’re part of something exclusive, and when brands are able to give you that sense that you’re special, that you’re being let into the club, so to speak, that’s a great way to use social media promotionally.”

In mid-July, Old Spice launched an innovative social-media campaign that quickly went viral. A few weeks after releasing a new television commercial that was picked up by social-media feeds, the creative team holed up with the “Old Spice Guy” for two days to create 15- to 30-second video clips of “The Man Your Man Could Smell Like” responding on YouTube to questions received from Twitter, Yahoo, Facebook, and other social channels. According to Nielsen data provided by Old Spice, overall sales for Old Spice body-wash products are up 55 percent in the past three months and in the past month, with two new TV spots and the online response videos, up 107 percent.¹⁷

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Many of these examples rely on some common creative roles, while others have created roles unique to their strategy. Having someone continuously monitor what consumers are saying is one role that is vital for any social-media strategy. At Kodak, this is the newly created “chief listener” role. Sometimes this person is also the one who pushes messages to relevant departments within the company, or there can be a team of people responsible for getting the messages to the right people for a response. Then there are those who respond. From the examples above, the responders can be from customer service, copywriting, video production, user-interface design, visual design for custom backgrounds and other user-experience elements, and other fields.

Other roles companies have created include the following:

- Director to set strategy, oversee administrative needs, and generate internal and external interest
- Social media manager(s), or blogger(s), to generate content as the company's external persona and create interest around new business and events
- Community manager(s) to read and respond to posts and keep teams aware of consumer engagement
- Brand manager to ensure every event is infused with social media
- Development and usability specialists
- Metrics specialists

These are not the only roles involved, but they create a good starting structure upon which to build. As Coats has said, “There are roles for PR [public relations], customer service, creative visuals, and strategy as well as roles for media and broader digital strategists. Your digital strategy and your social-media strategy are going to work hand in glove.”¹⁰



It will also take time to build the community. “Initially, it [our challenge] was a dedicated resource,” said Cisco’s Truong. “It takes time to build and nurture your community. You don’t just log on one day and have 1,000 fans. You have to take the time to listen and engage with your community.”¹³

Social media is being used as a primary tool to find employees by 80% of companies, 95% of which specify LinkedIn.

Approaching social media requires more than having a person open a Twitter account for your company because they like to tweet. It takes cross-collaboration with many other departments. At Kodak, their social-media team is connected to support, corporate communication, branding, legal, and product marketing. Trying to separate creative from the mix could result in a discordant or confusing promotion attempt. “You can’t have media people and strategists sitting on different floors from the creative team and just working independently on this stuff,” said Coats. “You’ve got to be together on it from the ground up, and it’s more important now than ever to have smart social-media thinkers working from inception with the creative team and developing together throughout a constant campaign.”

SOCIAL-MEDIA ROLES WITHIN THE CREATIVE TEAM

Many of the creative roles needed for a successful social-media strategy already exist either within your team or with agency partners. For example, setting up a Facebook page could use the skills of web and user-experience developers, visual designers, copywriters, and PR. Learning the user interface of Facebook to design within and around it might require additional training for web developers. Copy should be written within the space constraints and appeal to the nature of a distracted audience, and design choices for layout, graphics, and typeface should be scalable.

Twitter allows users to create custom backgrounds and color schemes. Your visual designers would play a key role in those designs, working with web developers

to ensure graphics are seamless for all screen sizes. Content creators will find space even more constrained with responses limited to 140 characters, so learning to get the message across clearly in as few words as possible—while maintaining the voice of your brand—may require training and collaboration with PR and legal.

Video production for YouTube could utilize graphic designers or interactive-media designers for animations and branding bumpers while working closely with web developers for resolution constraints or interesting user-interface elements, such as clickable buttons within a video that push consumers to linked content, be it a web site or another video in a series. If your business does not already use scriptwriters, consider recruiting copywriters, branding, and PR talent to write any dialogue that may be needed.



If you discover a need to recruit additional talent to your creative teams, look first within the social-media realm itself. Creative directors interviewed for this white paper cite “passion for social media” as the first thing they look for when recruiting full-time or freelance creative social-media talent, and finding someone who uses social media frequently and effectively is a good way to determine that passion. Social media is being used as a primary tool to find employees by 80% of companies, 95% of which specifically use LinkedIn.¹⁸

While any social media strategy requires dedicated, ongoing support, you can temporarily bolster your creative team with freelancers to help with the initial ramp-up and rollout of social-media solutions and then slim down again to the core team as needed. This solution works well for creative needs that are inconsistent or for those with long-term budget constraints. For example, while social media content should not remain static, some visual design elements

will be. Consider bringing on visual designers for elements that need to be created once, such as backgrounds, icons, and logos.

Other skills may not necessarily come from creative backgrounds. “Some of the best strategist gurus come out of psychology backgrounds,” explained Coats. “They don’t come through traditional marketing circles or channels, necessarily. They can come from very unique backgrounds.” Other creative directors interviewed said philanthropy and being a “people person” are other traits they look for when recruiting for social-media strategies.



CASE IN POINT: NETPLUS

Robin Neifield, CEO for NetPlus, an agency that has developed campaigns for global

Fortune 500 companies, explained that transforming her creative team began with forming a groundwork for social media, which they viewed as maintaining relationships and continuing conversations. To determine which areas of social media NetPlus would pursue as a service provider, her team created a list of questions to help form a baseline social-media strategy for the company:

- How do you start the conversation?
- Who are the people you want to converse with?
- What is the ideal outcome of that conversation?
- How do you maintain it over time?
- How do you keep people’s interest?
- How do you widen the circle of people involved in that conversation?

Once they had their answers, NetPlus began to focus on integrating what they knew with the solid underpinnings of marketing strategy and with other digital pieces. This required engaging the current creative team and educating them on the different mind-set social media requires. “People who were designers or programmers or copywriters—the creative team—got to exercise different muscles and translated their native skill sets into a totally new world,” explained Neifield. “It was kind of a challenge for them because it was not about setting up a program for a campaign spike. This was more of a slow, constant build focused on the ability to shift and change and maneuver, which requires a different mind-set.”¹⁹

NetPlus carefully chose what to support for their clients so they would not launch something they could not maintain. “We focus 99.9% of our social-media efforts on behalf of our clients,” said Neifield. “Our own agency social-media efforts are minimal by design. We practice what we preach, but our strategic goals for the agency are more aligned with different marketing tactics. Like we do with our clients, we look at our own marketing goals and match the right programs to those goals.” For their own agency, they pursued a blog, Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The Twitter stream aggregates tweets from their executive team, but most of these pursuits are important to show prospective clients they have the capability to create and maintain these social-media outlets. Their presence on LinkedIn, however, is important for them when recruiting or sharing announcements, as the message is more likely to reach their professional contacts.

To handle social-media campaigns, NetPlus created a social-media department. It is housed within the creative group, reports directly to the creative director, and maintains a cross-disciplinary focus. Their social-media associates, managers, and directors are well versed in the research, listening, reporting, and analytics tools as well as implementation, which involves a variety of different talents. “They work with our research teams and our display-media teams so they have to be pretty immersed across the whole digital spectrum,” explained Neifield. “We have several dedicated social-media staff members, but the practice of social media is so highly integrated across departments that most of our non-dedicated staff, for example, strategists, designers, programmers, project managers, and client-service people, are involved on a daily basis with social programs for their clients.”

NetPlus originally seated social media with their head of technology, who was very involved with and at the forefront of what was happening in social media. It then became a partnership between the head of technology and the head of creative, and then further evolved to seeking social-media skills within the creative department.

Creating a social-media department has helped create closer collaboration between the creatives that need to be involved for a successful strategy, and it allows NetPlus to stay abreast of new trends, such as location

tracking, that may require additional training or talent for their team. This is just one approach to evolving a creative team to support social media.



CASE IN POINT: ALPHA COMPANY*

Alpha Company, an insurance company handling underwriting for large financial institutions, works on direct-to-consumer marketing and creates strategies for national banks and U.S. credit card companies. They have recently begun incorporating social media into all their marketing strategies. Scott Spidell, director of client marketing and communication, noted that this was a big shift from when he joined the company four years ago, when marketing efforts were largely focused on direct mail and telemarketing.

“Insurance companies tend to be very traditional minded, so to be focusing on platform development and social development is a huge departure for our company,” said Spidell. “We’ve actually reorganized to allow for an essential e-consultancy team and central innovations team, whose primary focus is web and social marketing.”²⁰

With fewer end customers opening direct mail and some moving completely away from telephone land lines, marketing at Alpha needed to adapt. The biggest changes were in overall strategy and web creative development. Adding e-consultancy as a primary role to the teams was one big step. The e-consultant team goes in to their partner company or business-to-consumer consultant teams to help them gear insurance and membership products toward social marketing. Subsequent steps focused on expanding the roles of the existing marketing team. For example, writers who focused mainly on script development for telemarketing needed to begin focusing on web-content development and creating more multichannel approaches. And all communications needed to become coherent and orchestrated.

The focus for evolving roles has been on Alpha’s original designers and writers so they can effectively encompass new marketing areas. The evolution has come from Spidell pushing them toward new educational goals and encouraging them to attend conferences and training. The company has used online training capabilities such as those available at eMarketing Association as well as their own educational department. In addition to providing online resources, Alpha also supplies

books and criterion materials and has created a 360-degree goal system to help designers expand their understanding of social media.

New roles at the company include an e-consultancy strategist and, most recently, an individual focused only on social media whose main function is to study social-marketing strategies and determine how they can be intertwined with current strategies. When hiring for new roles, Spidell looks for strong web- and social-marketing capabilities. Since the creative team at Alpha is viewed as an internal creative agency, a background in agency work highlights skills applicable to the team’s new marketing strategy. A design degree can be helpful, as well as specific skills in Flash or HTML5 for web designers, but the main focus is on finding individuals with good people skills who have a portfolio that demonstrates a level of interactive-media understanding.

Spidell’s focus has been on creating a competent internal creative agency that can be bolstered by external agency talent and expertise. “We started looking at traditional agencies as well as small boutique agencies to really infiltrate a lot of new creative concepts and ideas,” he explained. “Now we work as kind of a hybrid agency, where we internalize a lot of the production and some of the design work but externalize a lot of the high-end stuff.”

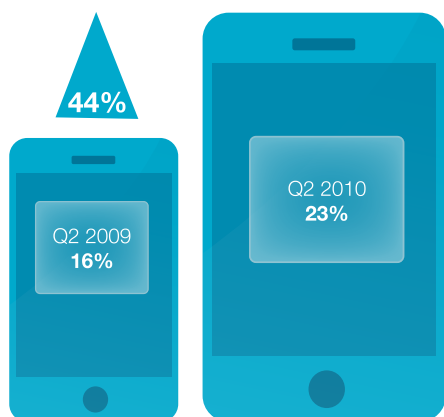
Another key collaboration at Alpha has been between creative and IT. Where previously creative would hand off visual comps to IT for development, now there’s more interaction and collaboration between the groups. This helps designers create solutions that don’t overshoot the technical rationale of what can be deployed. “Over the past three years, they’ve really focused on pulling the two groups together and being more consultative with each other, which I think has helped a lot,” said Spidell.

Alpha is still ramping up and exploring other interactive media avenues, such as mobile apps. They are currently developing a gaming app for a U.S. credit card company that will help drive consumers to point-of-sale activities based on their responses within the game. Bolstering social media with mobile capabilities allows businesses to further extend their reach to consumers.

*pseudonym

DESIGNING FOR ON-THE-GO CONSUMERS

A quickly evolving piece of the social-media trend is mobile connectivity. Smart-phone sales keep trending upward, and more people are accessing the web, playing games, and keeping their lives organized through a device that fits easily in their pocket. As of Q1 2010, Nielsen data shows that 23% of mobile consumers now have a smart phone, up from just 16% in Q2 2009.²¹ This trend not only affects how many consumers access traditional web sites through mobile means but also offers another way to reach consumers: mobile apps.



If your web site does not scale well for mobile platforms, your consumers are limited to accessing your site only when they are near a desktop computer. Ensuring consumers can access your site on the go requires designing for scalability and cross-platform capability. While some companies create separate, mobile versions of their web sites, others seek to build scalability into the main web site so consumers have one web experience whether it's on a desktop computer or a smart phone. As this white paper explores in greater detail below, trying to design for all browsers and all platforms is a huge undertaking, requiring talent that understands multiple coding languages as well as testers and debuggers for every platform variation.



Trying to appeal to the mobile masses can be technically and creatively challenging. However, increased smart-phone usage also opens the door to creating a more customized experience for your consumers through mobile apps. In addition to being another way to communicate with your consumers, it can be another revenue source. Each Apple app-store user spends an average of \$4.37/month on apps. In December 2009, 280 million apps were downloaded, generating more than \$250 million in revenue, of which 30% goes to Apple and 70% goes to developers.²²

For small companies, mobile apps could be used to diversify business. If you design software, for instance, you could start designing software for mobile platforms, which would allow you to address a different range of users. For larger companies, going mobile can enhance consumers' experience with existing products. For example, if you have a video surveillance system, there is an iPhone app for controlling these systems that costs \$899 and is in the top gross in the United States. The app bolsters the original system by allowing mobile access and control to cameras from a user's phone.

USER EXPERIENCE TRUMPS ALL

When designing a mobile app, user experience trumps all, says Alex Komarov, who recently launched his own design consultancy²³ and was previously a mobile/web design strategist at Empathy Lab, one of the most respected interactive agencies south of New York. With more than seven years' experience developing user-experience design strategies for interactive agencies and Fortune 500 companies, he has learned

that appealing to the consumer is what ultimately determines mobile success. Design decisions are driven by platform decisions, which are informed by copious research. Understanding the users, their goals and needs, and how they prefer to achieve those goals helps ensure the resulting app is applicable and genuinely desired by consumers.

Figuring out which platform to target does not depend on your developers' skills as much as it does on your consumers' preferences.

Making the leap into mobile-app design is a large investment; strategy, again, is key. Ensuring that you create an app your consumers find enjoyable and useful—and will use repeatedly—requires having a greater understanding of your consumers before you begin. If your consumer market does not predominantly use smart phones, for example, designing a mobile app would be a waste of time and resources. It is also much more difficult to redesign an app if your consumers do not like it. Instead of simply updating copy or a graphic on a web page, for example, mobile apps require reprogramming, which can require additional testing. Understanding the user experience your consumers desire is crucial, and it takes a heavy investment in research to determine what type of app—if any—your target market really wants.

If you publish research or reports, offering a mobile app would allow users to access a greater portion of that content on the go, and you, in turn, could learn more about which documents are most popular among your consumers, how long they spend reading, and how often they access a report. If you discover your primary consumers also love playing games, you could create a gaming app that coincides with a product launch, awarding coupon codes for high scores. Mobile apps allow you to create a highly specialized experience for your consumers; however, you may find that different approaches work better with different subsets of your

market. After all, consumers are diverse. Thus, your creative team must diversify in order to satisfy the many different configurations mobile apps can take.

The diversity doesn't end there. Between iPhones, Android phones, and Blackberries, there are several platforms for which mobile apps can be designed, and none of them lend themselves to cross-compatibility with their competitors. Figuring out which platform to target does not depend on your developers' skills as much as it does on your consumers' preferences. Each platform comes with its own design advantages and hurdles. If your app or web site uses Flash, you need to accept that people with iPhones, iPads, or other mobile Apple products won't be able to view your design. Each platform also offers a different user-interaction experience, with different navigation and screen-progression elements. This means an app designed for the iPhone cannot simply be installed on an Android phone and work; it will need to be adapted or even recreated from scratch.

"Usually, once an application is created for one mobile platform, it's easier to port it to another platform," explained Komarov, "but you still need to spend quite a bit of time porting it. In my company, we have a rule of thumb: it usually takes about half the time spent on an original project to adapt the design for another platform. For example, if you spend two months creating an iPhone app, porting it to the Android will take approximately one month, porting it to the iPad will take another month, and so on."²⁴

Some companies try to get around the platform dilemma by creating web-based apps, which are essentially web sites designed to look and operate like mobile apps. The advantage of this approach is your web app could work on any phone that can access the Internet. If the phone can open a web page, it can also open your web-based app. The disadvantage is you cannot take advantage of any elements unique to a particular smart phone, such as iPhone 4's second camera or the Android's voice navigator.

"Another disadvantage of the web-based approach is the app will look the same on every platform and, thus, will not be perfectly familiar or intuitive to users on various platforms," said Komarov.

Once you understand the business goals, user goals, and how (and in what environment) users prefer to achieve those goals, you can make an informed decision on whether a mobile app is an appropriate pursuit for your company. If it is, you will need the right creative talent for successful design and development.

The interactivity not only connects businesses with consumers more, but increasingly pairs creative departments with every other department involved in marketing, branding, promotion, and development.

TRANSLATABLE SKILL SETS

The process of web development lends itself well to mobile-app development, with many of the skills applicable from one to the other. What changes is the idea of specializing in one or two coding languages and developing for a few browser types and screen sizes. If a common mobile platform, which would make mobile-app development much easier for designers, never comes to fruition, then understanding Flash vs. HTML5, JavaScript vs. CSS3, and other such coding differences and how they affect overall application design are critical skills to seek and develop within creative communities. Testing will also need to expand beyond browser types to include a wider range of screen sizes and platform types.

Before development and testing can begin, there are several steps between initial market research and final programming. The research will be key to creating usage scenarios, which map out an understanding of what tasks users will be completing with an app, as well as how they prefer to complete those tasks, and will reflect what the flow of tasks will look like. The usage scenarios are then used to create the application architecture, and the application architecture is used to create interaction design, usually beginning with wire frames.

Once the interaction design is mapped out, visual design comes into play. Web and print designers can obtain the skills needed for mobile-app visual design. It requires an

understanding of the challenges of designing for mobile and the bigger picture of capturing consumers' attention while it is most distracted.

The screen space available for mobile design is much smaller than traditional print or web. Smart-phone screen sizes vary from 1" to more than 3.5",²⁵ and the existing user interface on any smart phone determines how quickly consumers can use or adapt to your app. For example, an iPhone user is used to looking for buttons and preferences in particular places. If your app deviates too much from the protocols a consumer uses every day, that person may grow frustrated trying to learn your app and thus stop using it.

Smaller screen space and touch screens also affect spacing of visual elements. A small button on a 3" screen is much harder to tap with a fingertip. Several small buttons placed too closely together means the user may press the wrong button because the size of a fingertip actually spans two or three buttons. Spacing and the size of elements are important to adjust for visual design in mobile apps.

Iconography also becomes very important. With thousands of apps available in app stores, creating an icon that's eye-catching and appealing is equivalent to designing great product packaging for the shelf. It needs to stand out to consumers as something attractive, recognizable, and relevant. The same goes for typeface selection.

"The resulting app needs to look aesthetically pleasing because users want not only to achieve their ultimate goal but also to have fun on the way there, so they don't want to use an ugly-looking app," said Komarov. "The phones themselves are shiny, sleek, and attractive, and users instantly assume that the software in the phone should look similarly attractive. If the phone itself is beautiful and the app is ugly, that creates a disconnect in the user's mind, making him uncomfortable. And, obviously, you don't want to make users subconsciously uncomfortable while they are looking at your app."

The last step is development, the actual programming to make the app functional. None of these steps is truly autonomous, though. For example, IT plays into platform and design choices, and creative plays into layout and scalability decisions. Social-media and mobile-app design require more big-picture thinking

and constant reminders about the end users' goals. This is why cross-collaboration in developing social-media and mobile-app strategies keeps emerging as a creative solution. The interactivity not only connects businesses with consumers more, but increasingly pairs creative departments with every other department involved in marketing, branding, promotion, and development.

MOBILE DESIGN ROLES WITHIN DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

Some of the key roles for successful mobile-app design include the following:

- Strategists, who communicate with the business
- Business analysts to ensure requirements are incorporated into the final app
- Information architect/interaction designer (can be one person or more), who can do research, diagramming, usage scenarios, and interaction designs
- Visual designers to make the resulting app visually appealing to consumers
- Developers to code the app
- Web adjusters and testers to ensure the app works as intended across the platforms, screen sizes, and browsers for which it is intended

Many of these roles likely already exist on your creative team for web and print development and can be evolved through training.

If you find the need to create new roles or bring in new talent, the backgrounds and skills to look for are similar to those for broader social-media design: people skills and a passion for using social media. A portfolio will provide more insight than bullet points on a résumé, but previous web development and design experience lends itself to a good transition to mobile-app design, and knowledge of coding languages relevant to whatever platforms you pursue would also be a great starting point. If your plan is to roll out one app to test the waters, consider bringing on freelance talent to help with the initial design and development and then scale back once the app has launched. However, ensure that you have the ongoing monitoring support needed within your core team if you pursue this option. It's also a good idea to keep in touch with any freelance developers you bring on temporarily as apps may need future bug fixes or updates to meet consumer requests.

Making the transition into more interactive-media and mobile-app design can be challenging even when your team already possesses the core skills required. Todd Miller, vice president of creative services at The Archer Group, has made the transition with his team. Having developed award-winning online campaigns for several global Fortune 500 companies, he has helped keep Archer ahead of the curve as the landscape of digital media continues to expand and shift.



CASE IN POINT: THE ARCHER GROUP

For Archer, it's about delivering a digital experience, whether it appears on the web, an Android phone, iPad, or some other device to be invented two years from now. "Clients come to us and say, 'Hey, we need a web site,'" said Miller, "which is true. You need a web site, but you need a site that validates in all these browsers and appears iPad friendly, iPhone friendly, Android friendly. It used to be that you were worrying about all the different browsers that your site was going to show up in, and now you're worrying about all the different browsers and a bunch of different devices. So there's a lot more that goes into the planning, building, thought, and overall user experience of digital media now."²⁶

Creating a mobile version of a site used to be a later add-on, but now it's become part of the digital package. Layouts need to be fluid and scalable so they appear well not only on a computer monitor but on an iPad that can be held vertically or horizontally, or on a smart phone that is one-quarter the size. Fonts also need to scale well for multiple formats and be readable at variable sizes.

The Archer Group places heavy emphasis on the end-user experience. For this, they have a large part of their team dedicated to research for clients and on desired user experiences. This research and the resulting architecture design are then passed to creative to build upon. "We also attack it knowing that not one size fits all," explained Miller. "One of our clients might need to have a really good, focused experience for finding a store. Other clients want their whole site to be mobile friendly. So there's a variety of ways to attack it, and that's where defining the overall goals and user experience up front is a huge part of helping our creative team create the best product that they can."

“My ideal designer now is showing me a web-site design, e-mail design, a mobile-app mockup, or is sending me a link to an app they created so I can download it and play with it myself.”

Existing roles have adapted, and most of the impact has been made on Archer's tech team, ensuring they have developers who know multiple programming languages and understand multiple mobile devices. For design, they focus on hiring web designers who understand user interface and the whole digital experience to ensure they have the skills for both web and mobile.

Miller focuses primarily on portfolios when seeking new designers. “This is where you get a sense of how much thought went into the styles, the hierarchy of the designs, and the overall aesthetic of what they did for a mobile device,” he explained. “My ideal designer now is showing me a web-site design, e-mail design, a mobile-app mockup, or is sending me a link to an app they created so I can download it and play with it myself. So I look for a diversity of things in their portfolio that point to this expertise rather than just seeing it in a résumé.”

They also seek researchers, designers, and developers who already use and have passion for interactive digital media. Backgrounds in analytics provide a good foundation for researchers, while a background in humanities, including degrees in psychology, proves to be a good foundation for anyone pursuing a user-experience-related role. For developers in particular, Archer looks for the ability to program in multiple coding languages since a variety are needed to create a full digital experience across web and mobile. They also encourage training in other platforms for current developers on their team. Graphic designers who also have an understanding of HTML or CSS or other programming languages lend themselves to the collaborative environment interactive-media design often requires.

The Archer Group also provides analytics services so clients know how effective a social-media strategy or mobile app has been. This is different from measuring click-through rates on a banner ad. “A lot of times in advertising you're looking for the link of interaction, and with the mobile app we're looking for more answers: Do they use the app more than once? Do they use it on a regular basis? Are they asking for bug fixes? Are they asking for new features and functionality?” said Miller. “Ideally you want to create a great app experience that someone's going to use on a regular basis. In a lot of ways it's almost like a product that you're creating for them. Many people define it as utility marketing. There are a lot more interactions than just the initial download and the initial use.”

CONCLUSION

Social media continues to grow quickly, and the flexibility of its definition and application can seem intimidating. That lack of rigidity, however, allows social media to be incorporated with your business in a way that best suits the environment. Whether through bolstering existing skills with a more holistic view of digital-media solutions, creating specific social-media roles or departments, or bringing in new talent to round out current design expertise, each approach relies on collaboration at its core.

Tying creative and IT together more closely is particularly important for mobile-app design. There can be a false perception that designing for mobile platforms is easier because there are smaller screens and fewer pixels to fill. In actuality, designing for mobility requires cramming the same amount of visual appeal and functionality previously created for desktop computers into a much smaller device. Decisions on where a button will be placed and how it will function become more critical and rely on creatives and techs collaborating more closely to create designs that deliver the best user experience possible for their consumers.

For both pursuits—social and mobile—there are key steps and decision points that will help you ascertain what creative talent you need:

- Determine your business strategy and how social or mobile media can support it, not the other way around
- Learn about and listen to your consumers to determine their desired user experience
- Get everyone involved in marketing, branding, promotion, and development to brainstorm about social and mobile strategies that will fulfill end-user goals
- Maintain cross-departmental collaboration throughout design, development, and implementation
- Keep listening to your consumers, your departmental partners, and your creative talent for new ideas; social and mobile design is a continuous effort, not a “one and done” campaign
- Be creative; there is no one-size-fits-all formula for social and mobile design, so you are free to shape solutions in whatever ways work best for your company environment

The good news is that much of the creative talent you need likely already exists within your creative department. With additional training in digital design and understanding the variety of new platforms affecting design decisions, your teams can build on what they already know to expand into the social-media and mobile-app realm. This new knowledge will also help them adapt to the innovative environment that houses interactive digital media, providing future challenges and preparing them with the holistic view going social requires.

As Kodak’s creative director has said, jumping into social and mobile media is not step one. Making the leap without a supporting strategy can lead to static campaigns that will disengage your consumers and result in wasted time and resources. Without continuous support, your company will fail to uphold its end of the conversation, which is at the heart of social and mobile efforts. Your consumers will figure out quickly if you aren’t listening. And they may blog about it to friends and family who trust their opinion more than your marketing. So avoid jumping in first and planning later. The result could be the opposite of what you intended.

Listen first.

Plan thoroughly.

Be creative.

Then jump in.

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