THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL
Introduction

The pace of change within digital marketing has continued to accelerate over the past year, and a marketer’s job has never been more complex. Meeting customers at key moments across publishers is a lot more complicated when you factor in things like budgets, integrations, org structure, R&D cycles, measurement, and more. And, by the time a marketer is able to work through and solve for these challenges, the window of opportunity to execute and reach key audiences is likely to have passed.

To help marketers make sense of all the noise and gain best practices to adapt in today’s landscape, we held a series of 8 panel discussions across the globe to foster peer discussion on “The Future of Digital.” Marketing leaders gathered to share their point of view on predictive intelligence, forecasting and budgets, publisher power, mobile-first strategies, audience segmentation, programmatic buying, and more.

We checked back in with several of our panelists to get their take on predictions for next year and see where they stand on interpreting the future of digital and the role of technology.

Read on to discover how you can better prepare for and tackle the future of digital with confidence.
The Forecast

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What are your predictions for digital marketing in 2016?

“Bryan Benavides

Abt Electronics was founded in 1936 as a small radio repair shop and has since grown to become the largest independent single-store appliance and electronics retailers in the country. That being said, there has been a lot of evolution and innovation throughout the recent years, and 2016 will bring even more for Abt and all of the digital marketing industry. Traditional retailers such as Abt are following their customer’s actions online and in-store. 2016 will close the gap even more in creating a ‘customer journey’ and providing data across multiple channels and devices.”

“Ryan Bonifacino

Digital marketing will continue to win dollars from traditional and opaque mediums as it becomes more measurable, accessible and scalable. As advertisers start to think beyond their digital footprint, digital marketing will also play a larger role in allowing the blend of total budgets to become more systematic regardless of programmatic activities.”
What are your predictions for digital marketing in 2016?

continued...

“Blagica Bottiglieri

2015 seemed to be the year of blocking ads. Consumers may place ad blockers on their devices and machines, but display ads will continue to have some sort of life. I see a larger opportunity for native advertising to pick up even more steam. In addition, sponsored posts across social platforms like Instagram and Snapchat will seem more of a norm, even for the not-so-popular social media influencing up and comer.

I’m paying closer attention to experts monetizing what they know to a niche audience. Consumers are comfortable paying for valuable knowledge, regardless of the size of organization. Larger players will be competing with up and coming businesses who are able to galvanize an audience for a close-to-nothing marketing spend.”

“Thomas Hoegh

For some time, the promise of cross-channel optimisation has been talked about, experimented with and in rudimentary form, done through spreadsheets by CFOs overlooking the CMO’s shoulder. Optimisation of search and social is already underway, but during 2016 we will see data from display, mobile and TV platforms starting to influence search and social campaigns as a premonition of full integration and optimisation of ALL channels in 2017.”
What are your predictions for digital marketing in 2016?

continued...

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Chris Owen

Quality over quantity will be a big theme. While much of the last few years’ discussion has been about the scale and CPM efficiency that various RTB/DSP/DMP solutions can provide, we are seeing the discussion turn more to the ‘Attention Economy’. And with that, better ways to measure quality, impact, and business results over just cost efficiency. The Attention Economy is already impacting pricing models, with publishers like the Financial Times introducing time-based pricing, and of course YouTube has been doing it for years with their TrueView ads. Add to that the increasing focus on viewability and the push for viewability standards, and digital marketers will put their emphasis back on when an ad is noticed, not just served.”

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Simon Trilsbach

Social media shows no sign of slowing down even as we draw closer towards the end of 2015. More businesses are beginning to shift more of their marketing budgets to digital media as opposed to traditional platforms. In the APAC region alone, digital budget is predicted to soar even higher in 2016. Marketers will continue to seek better ways to engage with their consumers through different social media platforms.

Social media, to a very large extent, has already gone beyond its primary socializing purpose, and is now a well-established avenue for streams of new information, latest news, and updates for users. With innovations such as Facebook’s Buy button and Pinterest’s Buyable Pins, social media platforms will fast become a virtual and convenient marketplace for both brand and customers.”
What are your predictions for digital marketing in 2016?

continued...

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Brian Utter

“A greater increase in audience-based buying across all channels—a focus on marketing towards people and not just keywords or pages. The ability to understand who a user is and what their interests are give marketers more signals to provide better and more relevant ads. A great example of audience-based buying is our recent launch of remarketing in paid search in Bing Ads, which allows advertisers to target users who have previously visited their site.

Being able to layer additional user data with keywords will not only improve performance for advertisers but give consumers a better experience by serving them more relevant ads. Keywords will always be around in search, but marketers will begin to utilize audience-based data to supplement their campaigns.”

Kenshoo’s Take

Looking at the trends and data we’ve seen and been tracking through the Kenshoo platform, mobile is poised to continue gaining ground in terms of both advertiser investments and consumer engagement. Mobile and cross-device measurement will continue to improve, and marketers will need to think about tying together not only online touchpoints across devices but also offline activity, all while creating a superior customer experience. The marketers and brands who will stand out are the ones who use data to drive decisions and apply those insights in real time, delivering personalized and relevant ads and programs.
What role can and should technology serve in keeping marketers agile?

“Technology will help in creating and managing data on our customers in order to determine when and how a retailer should market to them—whether it is via a targeted email or a dynamic retargeting banner. Data and technology will provide the right analytics to a retailer to make the right decisions.”

Bryan Benavides

“Technology allows for optionality, whether it be by micro-level testing on a campaign basis or macro-level on a channel basis. It allows the marketer to step one direction closer to neutral bias without impacting creativity.”

Ryan Bonifacino
What role can and should technology serve in keeping marketers agile? 

continued...

“Blagica Bottiglieri
Technology makes things work faster and better. In the interest of marketing, technology should be taking the endless bits of data and create a better way to give consumers what they need. The key word being need. Being on the social customer service side of things, I see the black hole of unhappy people increasing year over year. We are in the era of wicked smart technologies permeated from our devices, yet giving the end user better solutions for what they need isn't catching up to the technology. Technology is only as good as the humans who can decipher that technology and make real action steps from the technology. The best technology still needs human analysis.”

“Thomas Hoegh
Full transparency of performance, attribution, and return of investments is essential for marketers and commercially responsible business leaders. In the current market there is no excuse for opaque planning, execution and results. Technology doesn’t do the marketing job, but with clever use of technology the plans are executed better, optimised faster, and as a result, returns improve.”
What role can and should technology serve in keeping marketers agile?

continued...

“Chris Owen

Technology allows us to have a far better and faster understanding of our marketing effectiveness than ever before. This lets us stay agile and adjust quickly to how the marketplace is reacting to our marketing efforts. Our challenge as marketers is not getting lost in this sea of data, really understanding the strengths and limitations of data sets, and then being able to make decisions that may not be as black-and-white as the data. Knowing that there is a big difference between Objectives and KPI’s – with ‘Indicator’ being the most operative word in KPI – will allow marketers to stay true to their business objectives and understand the indicators of success, and not blindly chase a one-dimensional KPI.”

“Simon Trilsbach

Social media is a fantastic tool for marketers to help them stay agile and connected with their customers. The biggest advantage of leveraging social media platforms are their targeting functionalities. Traditional platforms such as print media are beginning to suffer from inefficiency for most marketers; this is because Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media advertising platforms today offer very effective targeting capabilities.

Though no one loves being drowned into a sea full of promotional information, social media helps companies place a greater emphasis on reaching the right audiences through great content, which helps them to be part of the conversation rather than interrupting it. Its strengths are in its cost, targeting power, and effectiveness. Once in awhile you may encounter skepticism from higher-ups or other colleagues, but this is where education comes into play; it is especially helpful in putting those doubts to bed.”
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Kenshoo’s Take

Technology plays a massive role in helping keep marketers agile and the role has only increased as marketing has gotten more complicated. In a world where marketing is constantly evolving, it’s critical for marketers to be able to respond to change. Marketers have a lot of levers and channels to choose from these days and technology platforms, like Kenshoo, help marketers test, refine, and measure their campaigns more effectively. Moreover, technology can serve as a tool that helps automate tasks, measure performance and optimize campaigns on a marketer’s behalf so they can better respond to the change that constantly occurs in the industry.

Today's consumer is able to seamlessly navigate the growing complexities of the marketplace. The paths they take on the way to a purchase or conversion might be complicated and full of pivots, but they maneuver easily. Marketing programs, although made up of people, are not yet as agile. That same ease of adoption and fluidity that individual consumers enjoy isn't shared by marketers. Consumers might have to navigate a learning curve, but for marketers, there are far more barriers to entry.

Technology’s role is to help close this gap between marketers and consumers. It should make the marketer’s journey as agile as the consumer’s, removing roadblocks, improving targeting and relevance, driving engagement, and ultimately, bettering the experience for each. Smart technology and advanced algorithms can optimize in a way that humans simply cannot and help scale efforts. Automation makes the marketer’s job easier, but connecting across real human moments requires a balance of technology and teams, of people and platforms.

What role can and should technology serve in keeping marketers agile?

continued...

Brian Utter

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The future of digital is…

“Bryan Benavides

A happy customer. Retailers now have the technology and data to create a custom experience for their customers, which should create a positive shopping experience and a happy customer. From segments and ads to landing pages and content, a retailer can message to new and existing customers using the right technology and data.”

“Ryan Bonifacino

Already passed by the time you read this response.”

“Blagica Bottiglieri

More transparent. Everyone is getting savvier with what their devices do and don’t do, how content is delivered, even what ‘clickbait’ means. We've seen the vaporware created by programmatic. We have a unique opportunity to be more upfront with ourselves with how digital really works and what we rely on for everything from ad delivery to social clicks.”
The Future of Digital is...

*continued...*

"Comprehensively deployed with improved returns for marketers and a better consumer (or business user) experience from being inspired to engage and buy products and services that fit their needs and preferences."

*Thomas Hoegh*

"Exciting! With new platforms, ad products, and ways to engage audiences being introduced every day, it’s an exciting and challenging time to be a digital marketer. There are endless opportunities to test and learn, and constantly improve your marketing."

*Chris Owen*

"While digital budgets are still headed towards a growth trajectory, it is interesting to observe where marketers will be putting their money towards. After all, the market landscape is rapidly evolving; thus ultimately, these changes will affect how digital marketing plays out in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, with the rise of new mobile apps, all eyes will be on marketers to see how they plan to cross-promote and be creative in order to stand out in this competitive market."

*Simon Trilsbach*
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Kensho’s Take

Exciting, promising, complicated, evolving. We’re still very early in the overall digital marketing ecosystem. Trends, insights, channels, mediums have yet to born yet. And that is both exciting for a marketer but also intimidating. As we move into 2016, digital will be increasingly mobile and data driven. Mobile continues to grow rapidly as consumption increases on these devices and those that have mobile specific campaigns and strategies are best equipped to compete. Additionally, as more data is collected and made available, marketers will increasingly leverage these datasets to reach their desired audiences – it’s about people, not pages or keywords.”

The future of digital is.... agile! To meet the needs of the evolving consumer and reach them wherever they go next, marketers must be able to have flexible strategies, work with speed and power, and think with ingenuity. Publishers, formats, tools, and opportunities will always be emerging and changing so agility will be key to keeping up.

At the end of the day, the future of digital marketing will not be about the channel or the publisher or even the tech. It will be about the people—the marketers and the consumers and the connection between the two.

Brian Utter

"The Future of Digital is... continued..."