7 trends in leading-edge communications

April 2015
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Introduction

Innovation and creativity have always been at the heart of the UK communications industry and the 2015 landscape is as inspiring and exciting as ever. There is no shortage of big new ideas and rapid evolution of existing practice.

The challenge for members of the Government Communication Service is to keep pace with new opportunities, learn from the best of our own and others’ campaigns and to work with our industry to initiate and support world-class innovation.

This paper is designed to support those aims by outlining some of the most interesting trends in UK communications today – both current and emerging – that we think are particularly relevant to government communicators.

It has been developed by the GCS Insight Team in partnership with Google and Ipsos MORI, both organisations that play a significant role in developing and delivering communications for the public sector.

It provides an overview of seven significant trends and how they are relevant to our work, plus case studies from across Government and the private sector.

The report highlights a common thread of evolving digital technology, which continues to affect the way that we communicate and how audiences expect to be communicated to. But digital isn’t the only new idea or driver of innovation in communications and we also cover other issues and thinking.

Some of the trends interrelate and are not all are brand new. They have been chosen because of their significance and potential for Government. And we have looked at these issues in the context of our existing approach to behaviour change.
The context for communications in 2015

Accelerating fragmentation of the media landscape

Media platforms and channels are evolving rapidly, with digital technology driving both innovation and influencing consumer expectations. Digital media and technology have put audiences more in control of when and how they interact with news, opinions and organisations. This is not new, but the pace of change seems to be accelerating. We can see a shift in media use and interactions that is not just confined to the tech-savvy or young audiences, but which now is firmly bedded into the mainstream of society.

Where once organisations could confidently push out a message across a small number of mass reach media, they must increasingly engage with audiences across this fragmented media landscape. Consumer expectations and preferences are also changing; people are adapting the way they access content and consume it.

Changes to the media and tech landscape have also driven changes in the nature and style of communications. Content is becoming increasingly complex and fragmented too.

45% of YouTube video views are now on a mobile device¹, so video needs to be mobile optimised and also needs to catch the user’s attention in the first few seconds, especially as people tend to be more impatient when on a mobile device.

More people are watching more video

More viewers and more views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online video viewers</th>
<th>Average monthly reach</th>
<th>15-34 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>29m</td>
<td>+19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>36m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online video views</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>4bn</td>
<td>+300%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>12bn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UK ComScore Aug. 2009 and Nov. 2013

¹ Source: Google UK, Nov 2014
Mobile devices are extremely personal, so well created content can feel more like a one-to-one conversation with the potential to be extremely powerful.

57% of people now access the internet via their smartphones

44% now own a tablet device

Over 8 hours 41 minutes is spent by the average adult in the UK using media or communications devices, which is longer than they spend asleep

99% of adults multi-media task or dual screen, using two media concurrently at some point during the average week

Sources: Ofcom Report 2014

Audiences and use of devices

Many of the techniques and approaches we outline in this paper are influenced by the digital media landscape. We know that in the early phases of its development that adoption and consumption of digital was concentrated amongst younger and more affluent audiences. The reality today is that all audiences are represented in the growth of digital and online video. So these approaches can work well for all ages.

68% of the UK population now use a smartphone and 64% a laptop. Usage is currently higher among the ABC1 audience, but if the current trend of uptake of smart devices continues, there will be 46.4 million smartphones used in the UK by 2018.

Although usage currently favours younger users, over 55s are the group where smartphone ownership is growing fastest. However, it is important to consider that not everyone is online or has access to digital devices, especially those in older demographics. This means that there is still a role for traditional communications channels and approaches alongside new approaches.

New opportunities and new challenges

New developments in technology have given communicators the opportunity to provide relevant, compelling content to their audiences across a wider range of media, with the potential to generate greater engagement and impact.

The challenge is that in an increasingly cluttered media environment government communicators are competing for audiences who have limited time and attention. We need to ensure content is relevant and that we reach the right people at the right time, tell great stories and build stronger relationships.

Over 50% of the YouTube audience are over 35

54% Male

46% Female

65% ABC1

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;15</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55+</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Sources:
2 Source: Google, The Connected Consumer UK, TNS/Google Global Connected Consumer Study 2014
3 Source: “Digital Usage in the UK” Midyear 2014 eMarketer Forecast, Sept 2014
With the significant increase in the use of devices such as mobiles and tablets over recent years, more and more organisations are developing cross-platform integration across channels.

Integration is both a consequence and driver of dual/multi-screening: using an online device such as a laptop, mobile or tablet at the same time as consuming another media. This most commonly happens when TV viewing and digital channels are combined. It also works with radio, print and outdoor advertising, driving people online or on to social media platforms.

As a nation we are leading the world in multi-screening behaviour, so this is going to be a trend that becomes increasingly important to government communicators.

So we need to think about how to engage and prompt actions seamlessly across media throughout the whole campaign, making sure each channel plays to its own strengths and that messages and creative are consistent.
Using integration

Offline and online integration can be used to drive deeper engagement and understanding of messages and campaigns. It can encourage participation and interaction as it provides the ability to unpack and explain more complex information through different media formats.

For more complex or involved actions, the higher levels of engagement from integrated content and messaging can help drive behaviour change. It can also work by breaking up or chunking up behaviours into smaller steps, using tools such as mobile apps. By driving users onto connected/online devices (computers, mobiles and tablets) we can access powerful data on what audiences are viewing and engaging with. And that data can be used to optimise campaigns.
CASE STUDY
Change4Life Smart Swaps

The Change4Life Smart Swaps campaign from Public Health England (PHE) aimed to get families to make simple yet healthy swaps to everyday foods, for example replacing sugary drinks with sugar free versions.

PHE used TV and radio adverts to drive audiences online. Their messages had to integrate seamlessly from the offline across multiple social digital online formats. Social media was used for inspirational bite sized healthy smart swap tips, or for sharing content. The website had handy smart tools with personalised plans which could be used online or mobile. A Smart Swaps mobile app meant that people had the campaign tools in their pocket when out shopping. The team also sent supermarket vouchers, fridge magnets and recipes to people who signed up.

The Change4Life friendly, supportive and informal tone and strong imagery was used throughout the channels to build the brand and maintain consistency.

The website had over 1 million visits during the campaign and the app had 160,000 downloads. Crucially, the campaign changed behaviour as sales of sugary drinks decreased 8.6% year on year as people swapped to sugar free drinks.

https://smarttools.change4life.co.uk/

Other case studies/reading

Motors.co.uk, one of the UK’s leading automotive websites, ran a dual-screen campaign in 2014. When they launched their new TV ad that focused on driving users to engage with them on mobile, the proportion of traffic coming through tablet and smartphone increased dramatically.

2 Storytelling and layered messaging

Telling a story across multiple ‘chunks’ of a campaign has been done for many years, but the increase in media platforms and the trend of multi-screening has added a new dimension.

Using different media, particularly digital, offers the chance to create more content that people can explore or interact with and bring a story to life. An advert or headline content can be used to drive people online to continue the conversation, extend the narrative and provide greater detail, sometimes using real life stories. A layered campaign can also split up a complex message into steps and over time to help drive behaviour change.

Digital channels provide opportunities to connect with audiences in a much richer way – a third of YouTube videos watched in the UK are over 20 mins long\(^4\) – without the restrictions of a media schedule. This can build stronger interactions and a two-way conversation with audiences.

A study by Ipsos MORI shows that building a story and using creative continuity - whether across time or through above and below the line communications - can help to build more engagement with the advertising and create stronger noticeability and message recall.

Campaigns or communications that use continuous and consistent creative across time and/or different channels are likely to have higher recall of the communications. (Source: Ipsos MORI).

\(^4\)Source: Youtube Nov 2013
Sequential messaging and content can lead to the development of an ‘always on’ strategy where, rather than having ‘bursts’, refreshed content is continually made available over time to keep audiences engaged. This approach therefore has resource implications to deliver a continuous supply of relevant and engaging content.

Promotion of content also needs to be considered. It needs to be pushed out and promoted in most cases, unless there is considerable organic traffic already. This could include paying for views on YouTube and seeding to help get content shared by users.

Using storytelling and layered messaging

Layered messaging and storytelling can be used effectively to generate action. For example it can drive people to interact with other content and then to make a decision, change behaviour or to obtain buy-in to a concept or message.

Storytelling with sequential messaging can also help to build understanding and explanation of a particular issue and the consequences of taking/not taking an action, or to explain policy. It can attract interest and change thinking.

Storytelling is also excellent at building empathy using personal or real life stories. Using different media to pull different levers provides a hook to draw people in – getting them to participate or to think differently.

CASE STUDY

With shocking levels of abusive behaviour in teenage relationships, the Home Office wanted to prevent teens becoming victims of abuse in their relationships now and in the future.

The campaign worked with Hollyoaks to harness a relationship abuse storyline running on the soap. It used the TV ads online where bespoke extra scenes from

CASE STUDY

Kenco’s Coffee vs Gangs is a social cause and brand building campaign that aims to change the futures of youngsters growing up in the troubled regions where coffee is grown. 20 young recruits have been given training and support from Kenco to build a better life for themselves as
Teenage Relationship Abuse

Hollyoaks were created, helping to expand the story from each characters’ perspective and deliver unique content. The Hollyoaks Facebook page included an innovative timeline of the characters abusive relationship, enabling teens to spot behaviours from the storyline that they may not have recognised as abuse.

The campaign website had 865,000 unique visits. 30% of teens said they took immediate action as a result of seeing the adverts and 72% of teens surveyed agreed that the campaign make them think differently about what an abusive relationship is (Ipsos-MORI 2014).

http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/

Kenco Coffee vs Gangs

coffee farmers and divert them from gang membership.

The campaign started with a national TV advert featuring a young man on the brink of being involved in a gang before becoming a coffee grower. Kenco’s strategy moves the audience online to their website to follow the progress of the 20 young recruits as they embark on their education and training program, with case studies and day in the life videos created by the young people. This builds not only more engagement but also empathy with the recruits.

https://www.coffeевsgangs.com
Further reading and case studies

**Comparethemarket.com’s Meerkats:** In a category that used to be bland, comparethemarket.com devised a way to engage millions of people every year with its meerkat campaign. This goes beyond just TV to every medium and also to the website. [https://www.youtube.com/user/CompareTheMeerkat](https://www.youtube.com/user/CompareTheMeerkat)

**Dulux: Colourless Future Campaign** is an example of an ongoing story through multiple executions and also includes an interactive website to explore the colours used in the ads [http://www.creativereview.co.uk/cr-blog/2015/march/dulux-goes-sci-fi-in-new-ad](http://www.creativereview.co.uk/cr-blog/2015/march/dulux-goes-sci-fi-in-new-ad)

With consumption continuing to grow, many brands are prioritising online video as a way to both satisfy consumer appetite for engaging content and to deliver marketing messages in a rich, immersive way. Google has created five key considerations will help guide the way. These five considerations are:

1. Use video in layered storytelling
2. Put mobile up front and centre in your plans
3. Think big like a publisher
4. Use co-creation with influencers to create content
5. Be honest and transparent

Linking a message to a particular context or time adds greater relevance to a campaign. This type of approach is now commonplace and many brands and organisations engage in a topic that people are already interested in and talking about. If done well, the brand or subject matter becomes the content that people are discussing.

Organisations also need to focus on getting the content of their message right, rather than simply getting it out there quickly. So ‘right time’ may be a more appropriate term than ‘real-time’. An emphasis on placing messages in the right context – aligned to the subject matter at hand, need state or behaviour we are trying to change – often creates long-term associations for action and behavioural change.

**Using relevance**

Social media, particularly Twitter is particularly well-suited to helping campaigns link to news or cultural and social events. Social listening also facilitates the ability to find out about emerging trends before they break.

A good example of real time communications from 2014 was Kit Kat’s response to Apple’s iPhone 6 ‘bendgate’ problems. Kit Kat’s “We don’t bend, we #break” tweet offered a humorous twist on a current story.

As many brands and organisations are doing this and in an increasingly cluttered landscape, audiences may ignore, miss or dismiss such content as opportunism, so care needs to be taken.

Personalisation is commonly achieved by targeting groups of people, so a message reaches an audience for whom it is more relevant. In the digital world, using behavioural and personal data means it is easier to deliver more appropriate and relevant advertising using re-targeting or re-marketing.
Using re-marketing

The use of re-marketing tags, or search terms allow advertisers to target very specific audiences known to be interested in specific advice or a transactional service.

In an age where over 95% of users don’t complete the action desired by communicators upon their first website visit, the opportunity to continue to engage is huge with remarketing and it has become a commonplace tactic to continue a conversation with an audience or drive the desired behaviour.

For more information on re-marketing visit https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/products/remarketing.html

Using available data

In all these cases of targeting described, the common factor for making content more personalised is the clever use of data. This includes identifying trending topics and events, search queries, social media listening, web analytics, behavioural feedback and user or customer demographics and all other sources of data available to government communicators that can be used to make communications more relevant.


Using relevance

Making content relevant and tailored to audiences can be used to drive engagement as it is more likely to be considered of interest. It can also be used to raise awareness and understanding.

Use of right time messaging can also be used to prompt people at a specific time, which can help to change behaviour.

CASE STUDY

Birdseye

Birds Eye recently ran a campaign with a simple hypothesis that reaching people in the right need state is more likely to lead to behavioural change and drive sales.

So they served online ads to people specifically between
Without a regular reminder, smoke alarm testing quickly falls off people’s ‘to do’ list. In 2011 the Department for Communities and Local Government adopted a new strategy, encouraging people to test their smoke alarms when they change their clocks at the start and end of British Summer Time.

It not only serves as a timely prompt and reminder of something vital that people might easily otherwise forget, but enables them to test their alarms as they change their clocks, so bringing two behaviours together to simplify the action of testing.

The bursts of the campaign have resulted in between 11% and 18% of households testing their smoke alarms when they change their clocks. Deaths and injuries in accidental fires in the home are 15% lower than when the campaign started in October 2011.

https://www.youtube.com/user/FireKillsCampaign

5pm-11pm, when they were most likely to be hungry and in the mood for a fish finger sandwich, whether at home or still at work.

33% of hungry people who were exposed to the ad said they wanted to “eat fish fingers right now” compared with just 12% of those who were not hungry. The campaign also drove longer term behaviour: 43% of hungry people who saw the ad said they’d buy Birds Eye fish fingers next time they shopped, compared with 33% of hungry people who didn’t see it.

4 Shareable & snackable content

Shareable or viral strategies encourage audiences to re-transmit campaign content, either online or offline via conversations.

Offline sharing, epitomised as ‘the water-cooler moment’ has always existed and word of mouth is still considered a very strong factor in engagement. A study of the US SuperBowl (arguably one of the biggest advertising events) found that for every online share, there were at least twice as many offline conversations.

But the digital environment and specifically online communities, social media and online video channels have enabled sharing to reach wider networks faster and have facilitated the transmission of messages. Social media and online communities bring people into more regular contact with a bigger network and also widen their influence beyond casual acquaintances.

These factors combine to create the rapid scale of viral campaigns.

Aside from extending the reach of a particular message, this re-transmission drives earned media, the social value that comes with ‘shares’, suggestions to friends, ‘likes’, comments and photo/video uploads by others. This can translate into increased advocacy because:

1. People value social proof – response increases when consumers think others have been motivated already.

2. Sharing feeds itself – the more people talk about something, the more likely that ‘talk’ will grow exponentially.

The Icebucket challenge is an excellent example of shareable content.
Factors that can help make content shareable

In the world of shareable content, success is difficult to predict. Many view viral marketing as an art, not a science and difficult to control. Social@Ogilvy have suggested seven principles that make content shareable.

**THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL DESIGN**

**BY JOHN BELL**

**THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL DESIGN**

**HOW TO MAKE CONTENT SHAREABLE**

**IT'S ALL WORD OF MOUTH**

**DISRUPTIVE IDEAS**

WE STOP TO NOTICE ideas or concepts that challenge our understanding of the way the world works.

**GREAT STORY**

SO MANY OF OUR DECISIONS are based upon emotional drivers, not the rational features and benefits of the latest widget. Great stories are not only dramatic, they are also emotional.

**SOCIAL PROOF**

WHEN WE SEE OTHERS doing something, we are often more apt to make the same choice ourselves.

**CREATIVE PARTICIPATION**

I WROTE A CHAPTER in the ebook "Social@Scale." Since I participated and was able to be highly creative—those were my words and thoughts—I am now far more likely to pass that content along.

**SIMPLE ADVOCACY**

WHEN WE MAKE IT SIMPLE and then actually ask people to share, they are more likely to do so.

**FRESH INTEREST**

PEOPLE WANT NEWS they can share around the vending machine at work or via their Twitter handle.

**VALUE EXCHANGE**

UNDERSTAND WHAT your audience values rather than assuming they have an innate fascination in your brand talking about itself.

**Source:** social@Ogilvy
C – Gen C
Always aim your shareable content at a slightly younger audience than your target. Aim it at and use Gen C, who are connected millennials, they will share content on sites such as Reddit, which often kick starts viral campaigns. These then get shared on sites such as BuzzFeed and then get picked up by news sites such as the Daily Mail.

A – Amplification
Use existing owned channels such as your websites, YouTube and social media to reach existing supporters. But even great content will often need an initial paid for push in the right places, such as promoted social media and YouTube advertising.

R – Reasons to share
All good shareable content has a reason to share and a value to sharing. It might tap into current cultural references, trends or news, it might be funny, touching or shocking. The best content has many layers, meaning it has multiple hooks and works for multiple audiences to ensure maximum longevity.

E – Emotion
Whether it is funny, touching or shocking, good shareable content is always emotive, it needs to tell a good story and pull at the heartstrings. But beware because it can’t be all things to all people so focus is needed.

A slide pack on shareable content has been created by Don’t Panic with some great examples of viral videos. [https://www.dropbox.com/s/qgk0x3clbu2gsva/Don%20Panic%20Cabinet%20Office%20Creds%2015_04_15.pdf?oref=e](https://www.dropbox.com/s/qgk0x3clbu2gsva/Don%20Panic%20Cabinet%20Office%20Creds%2015_04_15.pdf?oref=e)
Snackable content

Snackable content describes easy to read and digest, bite-sized pieces of content. This is becoming increasingly important as attention spans decrease and is exemplified by rising media brands/sites such as Buzzfeed. With more content being consumed, and shared on the go across different devices, snackable content helps grab interest and make sharing easier.

There are no rules for snackable content, but it can be used for both serious news and lightweight entertainment. What is important is an approach that seeks to consistently edit down so content is pithy, interesting or visual.

Visuals, including infographics are a frequently used technique as is short-form video and imagery on platforms such as Instagram, Vine, and Snapchat. They’re easily viewable on any device (desktop or mobile), and can motivate people to share if there’s an element of surprise, entertainment or interest.

Using shareable content

Shareable content is an effective way to encourage greater engagement and build awareness rapidly and at low cost. The reach and engagement achieved can be high, even with only modest investment and can help to extend the value of paid-for campaigns. Shareable content can also be useful for building trust with the help of advocacy from audiences doing the sharing.

Snackable content can be useful to help people start to get to grips with a new idea or programmes, making it easier to understand or visualise.

Most often, shareable content is intended to reach an online audience. The rapid facilitation and distribution of social networks and online video, coupled with the ability to deliver longer creative, favours this audience. Online shares seem to happen most amongst the under 35s, but, with the simplicity of sharing video through many different platforms, is not limited to this age group.

However, this should not be seen as limited to the digital world. As noted earlier, viral campaigns are in essence a form of word of mouth. The impact of word of mouth, although difficult to measure, should not be underestimated as it is a significant factor in building audience engagement.
CASE STUDY
THINK!

The Department for Transport’s THINK! road safety campaign created a short film called ‘pub loo shocker’ to warn young men of the dangers of drinking and driving. It featured three unsuspecting young male drinkers in a pub bathroom, looking into the mirror while they wash their hands. They are then suddenly brought face-to-face with the bloody head of a mannequin smashing through the mirror – much like a car crash with realistic sound effects.

The film was designed to be shareable, being shocking and gruesome but also thought provoking and disruptive, to encourage people to view it online and share it. The film received 13 million views and was shared over 17 thousand times.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJDsH64sqNY

Other case studies/reading

British Heart Foundation – Stayin’ Alive
https://www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/nation-of-lifesavers/hands-only-cpr
Digital influencers

Whilst partnerships with brands or media owners are not new, increasingly partnerships with influencers such as video YouTube vloggers are gaining in popularity. This is due to the relationships they are developing with fans, especially younger audiences, making them powerful and credible messengers.

Vloggers are emerging as media heavyweights in their own right, with passionate followers that outnumber traditional media audiences. For example, well known vlogger Zoella from Brighton has seven million subscribers and 12 million monthly hits on her YouTube vlog.

There are a few key principles to creating authentic branded content in partnership with YouTube creators:

1. Partner with the right YouTube creator for your brand: For brands and YouTube creators to have successful, symbiotic relationships, they have to share more than an audience. Ideally, there’s an organic link or synergy between their messaging and style and the messages you want to convey.

2. Work together to help them do what they do best: When the vloggers as creators leave their mark on branded content, it feels more authentic to their fans, increasing the likelihood that their audience will share and engage with it and it is less likely to be rejected.

3. Be exclusive, have a secret to tell: Try to create authentic excitement around a message.

4. Keep the cameras rolling: If it is relevant and appropriate don’t be afraid to make use of authentic behind the scenes footage. It’s this real added value content that fans love.

5. Ask questions and invite audience participation: Online audiences love to feel involved. Invite participation in the campaign, such as enabling them to create and share their own content, or help them to continue the message on other social media platforms to generate more ‘earned’ media.
Using influencers

The success of vloggers has come from building personal and authentic relationships with their fans. With their personal connection, credibility and trust, they can reach and activate millions. This provides a big opportunity for communicators who are willing to work collaboratively with them.

Collaborating with online talent is all about leveraging their relationship with their fans to drive understanding of your message and engagement with the campaign. Because of their credibility, the use of influencers can also build trust which can help to change behaviour.

This opportunity is best used to reach a younger audience, especially 18-24s who are increasingly difficult to reach through traditional media. However, some digital experts predict that the trend towards video bloggers that reach older people and parents is set to expand considerably.

There are a small number of YouTube channels and vloggers that appeal to an older demographic. Examples of these would be Global Cycling Network (https://www.youtube.com/user/globalcyclingnetwork) which is the largest online video community for cycling, and Jamie Oliver (https://www.youtube.com/user/JamieOliver) who has collaborated with brands such as EE, Hellmans and LV=. 
Awkward Conversations

Research showed that stating the facts alone wasn’t enough to delay or prevent uptake of risky behaviours amongst teenagers. But having positive conversations and encouraging young people to discuss how they felt about the topics could help them cement their attitudes and give them the confidence and skills to make better decisions.

Most teens avoid talking to their parents about these issues and would even find it hard to talk to their friends. So Public Health England selected ten popular and trusted vloggers and asked them to create relevant videos that would engage teenagers and start conversations to help them build self-confidence and resilience.

In the first couple of months, the videos received over 5 million views, over 130,000 likes, around 50,000 comments and all 10 videos were featured in the ‘Top 50 Most Liked Videos on YouTube’ on the day of upload.

6 Emotional connection

Successful communication needs to be current, relevant, and memorable. Creating an emotional connection supports all three. Few people engage actively with organisations or even brands, but successful emotionally-focused communication connects messages with issues people care about.

An emotional journey provides both a reason to engage with a campaign at a time when we are exposed to more media clutter and competition for our attention than ever before. Enjoying content or feeling an emotional connection with it builds a more positive and developed impression of the organisation or campaign, which in turn builds message recall. This means it is more likely to be considered at the point of need.

We know from behavioural economics studies that rational decision-making governs only a minority of daily decisions; we continually rely on instinct, based on learned behaviour and emotive associations. Forming an emotional connection with an audience taps into the power of this thinking, building positive associations that continually influence snap-decisions and consideration.

Ideally, a brand or message becomes a heuristic – an immediate solution that shortcuts more rational (and lengthy) consideration. Research by Binet and Field argues that rational advertising has an immediate but short-lived impact, whereas emotional messaging can build distinctive and positive brand impressions with greater potential impact in the longer term.

Using emotion

There is a strong link between story-telling and emotion. Emotion-led campaigns can speak about issues we care about and relate to, which are often more important to people than rational considerations. Most people are naturally more engaged with stories and experiences than organisations or associated messages. Weaving messages into a story, so that it becomes a fundamental part of the journey, is a successful way to generate strong engagement.

Emotional messaging can also help people to take action: By establishing a positive position for the message, ideally as a heuristic, in people’s minds, the content is better able to change behaviour.

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5 Facebook fans. A fan for life? Karen Nelson-Field and Jennifer Taylor, Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science: 0.5% of fans talk about a brand on Facebook, 77% of people say they don’t have a relationship with a brand.

Over the long-term consistent emotional messaging helps construct a positive identity, which people can recall and relate positively and can help to build understanding and increase trust.

CASE STUDY
Fire Kills

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) runs a campaign twice a year encouraging people to test their smoke alarms.

The most common reason given for not testing is simply not remembering to do so. This campaign aims to shock viewers out of any ignorance or apathy and to provide an immediate reason to change their behaviour.

Using impactful print and digital campaigns DCLG have focussed on the aftermath of preventable fires using burnt clocks with an emotional link to a group particularly vulnerable to fire in the home (e.g. children and older people), or show people from these groups asleep as smoke swirls around them. This triggers an emotional and protective response as well as tapping into guilt responses, it also emphasises the need for tangible action and plants concern in people’s minds about the potential repercussions of not testing immediately.

With relatively low spend over a very short media burst, the print ads scored above the Ipsos MORI norm for recognition, with almost 70% finding the ads shocking and over 80% agreeing that they are a useful reminder to test smoke alarms. The number of people claiming to test for others (especially older people) has risen to 20% and the number of single parents and their children dying or being injured in accidental fires has fallen significantly.

https://www.youtube.com/user/FireKillsCampaign
CASE STUDY
John Lewis

The John Lewis Christmas 2014 advert is an excellent example of emotional advertising.

Interest is maintained throughout the two minute ad. It begins strongly (with a nostalgic hit of Pingu). It is consistently funny, with some stand-out scenes (fish fingers and lake-swimming). Viewers are intrigued; initially by the set-up and later to know how the story will end. The end of the advert is also satisfying and rewarding; reminding people of the things they really care about at Christmas. Engagement peaks in the final stages of the ad; first at the reveal of Monty’s companion, and then at the realisation that the scene is in a child’s imagination.

The journey inspires a range of emotions. Viewers of Monty are intrigued from the first second, and experience happiness, sadness, and concern along the journey, before finishing with a cocktail of feel-good emotions. The final scene is multi-layered; the happy ending for Monty gives the initial emotional tug on the heart-strings, and it is then topped by the realisation that it is all in the child’s mind and that Christmas is really all about
imagination and wonder.

**Empathy is crucial to engagement.** Monty’s sadness is the emotional heart of the ad and provokes empathy, helping to build light and shade into the story and ultimately leads to content which the viewer feels involved in. The music is used to give a resonance to the more melancholy moments and the emotive revelation at the end.

The brand message is introduced when people are most engaged in the story, shortly after the emotive second reveal, and is simple and understated.

Brand purpose

Communicating a brand purpose is about setting out values and a reason for ‘existing’, such as a role in people’s lives, communities and in the world at large. It goes beyond product/service benefits, brand positioning and business objectives. Purpose is the intersection between an organisation’s values and beliefs and those of the people it reaches.

A purpose can focus and unite employees in pursuing a common goal, so can also be useful for internal communications. At the same time it allows companies to think beyond product and innovate in more meaningful ways. If Apple’s purpose had been to make better home computers, instead of “empowering creativity and self-expression”, it would never have developed the iPod, iPhone or iPad.

Using purpose and values

Government communicators often have social change at the heart of what they do. So having a purpose is something that we can build into communications, to mobilise people or communities to come together for a common cause.

Campaigns that communicate a brand purpose can help to inspire both employees and audiences alike. They can be used to drive engagement as well as to improve understanding. If used on a long-term basis, or used in community or grassroots communications they can also help to change behaviour.

Having a brand purpose is relevant to all audiences, but it is particularly relevant to Millennials. This generation have grown up in the digital world, so their expectation, access to and use of information means they know more about the products and services they buy (and the companies behind them) than any previous generation. As a result they have high expectations of organisations.
In July 2014 the Department for International Development (DFID) ran the first ever Girl Summit, aimed at mobilising domestic and international efforts to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) within a generation. UNICEF co-hosted the event.

In July more than 600 people and UK media gathered in London for the event, which brought together grassroots campaigners, faith leaders, survivors and young campaigners to discuss the issues and make commitments to take action. Social media with visual and emotive infographics were also used to widen the engagement and help mobilise those who could not attend the event to get involved. This included a virtual pledge to end FGM and CEFM on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

The summit resulted in commitments and encouraged 485 organisations and individuals, including 42 Governments, to call for specific action to end FGM and CEFM. The Instagram film was viewed 146,000 times and the Facebook posts reached 700,000 people.

Further reading/case studies

Sport England - This Girl Can
https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/equality-diversity/women/this-girl-can/

Always Like a Girl

Dove Real Beauty Campaign

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