

WHY WE DON'T HAVE FLYING CARS, PART 2
OR
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AGENCY THAT DOESN'T "GET IT"

A Manifesto of Sorts by Jolie O'Dell

1. What we call "new media" is not new. "New" software and devices are already in place and being used by millions and billions of people. All marketers need to do is harness them in efficient, effective ways. This requires innovation, imagination, hard work, and courage.

Recommendation: Make a commitment to researching new media and advising clients appropriately, being sure to carefully guide them toward research & development and managed incorporation of new and established technologies.
2. Agencies have a great fear of presenting new technology to clients, who are often afraid of very new technology in itself. So we end up using "old" tech, such as email and Internet display, things users have long since learned to tune out and which may not generate the best ROI. Overcoming apprehension is the starting point for incorporating new technology, and incorporating it well will lead to exponential growth.

Recommendation: The surest way to overcoming fear is through knowledge. Key agency staff members, not just the ones who are already tech-savvy, should attend seminars, shows, and webinars and (on a personal, individual level) make a sincere effort to understand and adopt new types of media. Understanding by doing creates both fluency and excitement that can better be conveyed to others than a cursory understanding gained through hearing alone.
3. Partnerships with tech-strong agencies are necessary during the entry phase. Those companies we don't end up partnering with will still have a lot of valuable insight that they are eager to share; when learning the industry, it doesn't hurt to hear as many voices as possible and make distinctions between them.

Recommendation: Get together with key agency staff and take meetings with companies from a wide range of tech competencies, from those that are currently standard practices to those that look far forward. These competencies can include consumer profiling, progressive ad network systems, CPC and CPA, video/social/mobile, evolving search technologies, and anything else that might be worthwhile to investigate through meetings.
4. Social media is measurable. Social search is gaining importance. Social applications are huge branding vehicles. Blogs are now as old as email; Twitter, social bookmarking, widgets and apps, and other technologies are a lot closer to

'new' and are becoming heavily popular with non-tech types as the early-adopter phase comes to a close. Without a presence in social media, a B-to-C company is missing out on a huge opportunity for impressions and branding. A B-2-B company is missing out on the most valuable and accessible kind of networking available. We need to advise clients to become early adopters of new social media; a lot of influencers are in this crowd, and the potential for really powerful word-of-mouth and great PR is huge.

Recommendation: Make sure key employees are using LinkedIn, social networks, chat, blogs and microblogs, industry networks and forums, and social video and music sites, both for personal enjoyment and for staying abreast of developments in social media. We need to be early adopters and testers of new media on an individual basis and develop a regular method (New Media Lunches once a month? Internal newsletters? A dedicated forum?) of keeping one another informed and excited about social and other kinds of new media.

5. Our agency's blog displays a lot of problems common to both new bloggers and corporate or enterprise bloggers. Updates are not posted with enough frequency; key agency staff members are not contributing; there is no way for a user to know about or share the blog; the topics are largely not newsworthy; and the lack of transparency and authenticity regarding authorship and voice does us a disservice in the long term. Also, traffic is low because we have no way of sharing our blog with others. There are better ways to blog, and we need to decide whether or not the blog is a priority so we can devise a plan everyone can stick to.

Recommendation: Make sure that designated staff members write blog entries at least once a week, each under his or her own byline. Each entry needs to be in a certain format: Op/ed content on breaking industry news, list of best practices or steps in a process, authoritative how-to articles, etc. I.e., we need to write genuine, compelling linkbait. Entries should be reviewed and turned around within 8 hours of submission, and every effort should be made to preserve the integrity of the author's voice. The blog should be indexed on Technorati and similar sites, should be sharable through many social bookmarking channels, and should be shared with others through our contributors' commenting on other blogs and making an effort to be valuable industry voices and social media presences.

6. Considering the increasing emphasis on relevance of digital advertising, the demographic model of identifying consumers does not work for nontraditional platforms. Because of the stratification of behavior across age groups (there are 50-year-olds who are consistent early adopters and 40-year-olds who don't even own cell phones), consumers must be targeted differently. Consumer profiling can provide the specificity of behavioral and demographic targeting at once, generating a more individualized concept of the consumer so the message can be made more relevant for a greater response.

Recommendation: As per previous note, meet with [company names] to discuss.

7. SEO is evolving. Keyword search is already being challenged by LSI (latent semantic indexing), and semantic search is the next step. It will probably eclipse keyword search by 2010. What this means for users is that the content they receive for a search will likely be more and more relevant to their intended query. What this means for SEOs is that content can't rely on keyword-stuffing; also, expectations of keyword density and what search engines are "looking for" is going to change drastically. Being prepared for semantic search is necessary as clients with previously good SEO will likely see SERP fall. What we also need to look out for is the next iteration of search: natural language search. This is definitely farther down the timeline, but it won't hurt us to be prepared and "sound smart" when discussing search strategy.

Recommendation: Get key staff members registered for at least one semantic search education program and allow time for research on the evolution of search technology. Research and/or invest in Powerset.

8. The single greatest concern I have is being told that anything is impossible. Going to the moon was impossible; television was impossible. Sailing across the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in Western history was impossible. Sending a marketing message across established media is a playground for possibility.

Recommendation: Work together within the agency and with clients to fundamentally change attitudes so we can all make progress, reach consumers in innovative ways, and continue to be a powerful marketing ally through the next decade of operation and those to follow. Commit to research and development in meaningful ways. Rather than displaying sporadic interest in this technology or that, take the time to be informed about a wide range of technologies and possibilities. Rather than operating with "technology blinders," look around at the companies who are using very new kinds of marketing tools to get great returns and meet consumers' needs. Eliminating negative vocabulary, look toward new media as a tool that we can and must use if we are to live up to our commitment to serving clients passionately and well through innovative and creative marketing