Storytelling has to sit at the core of it all

By Brett Morris   8 Jan 2018

It's always interesting to reflect on what trends will be impacting our business in the coming year. What's important to remember though, is that trends don't keep calendars and usually they are trends because they are close to, or have already reached, critical mass.

Brett Morris, CEO and Chief Creative Officer of FCB Africa.

If you want to ride the wave of a trend, you need to see that wave coming and have the necessarily skills to surf it, which are the fundamentals that are too often overlooked as we head gleefully to the beach in pursuit of the next big wave.

Agile, high-quality video content

So, what are we currently surfing? (Or what wave is heading our way, depending on what stage of this plucky analogy you choose to visualize.) According to a recent Cisco study, 90% of all internet traffic will be video based in 2019. The size of that wave may vary in different countries but it's most definitely coming our way and it'll get exponentially larger in front of our eyes.

There's absolutely no doubt that the way brands communicate will more than ever have to cater for an insatiable need for agile, high-quality video content.

It is probably important to note that agile does not mean fast. Agile means responsive, able to adapt and be more efficient in how you execute. That may sometimes mean that you are able to use less money but it could also mean that you get more value for the money that you spend.

Which is why, more and more, as technology makes the production process more accessible, we can find smarter ways to create high value content.

The need for great storytellers

But no matter how advanced the technology, it will never supersede the need for great storytellers.

Technology tends to get its unfair share of attention when it comes to trends probably because a lot of trends are fuelled or enabled by technology. But we tend to forget that these trends are always underpinned by a timeless and fundamental truth, no matter how innovative it may be or how advanced the technology that surrounds it.

As Angela Ahrendts (senior VP at Apple) said: "The more technologically advanced our society becomes, the more we need to go back to the fundamentals of human communication."

In the world of marketing, that fundamental is creativity and storytelling. There seems to be a misconception that communication will ultimately become more about technology than anything.

As for the content, as long as it's done quickly and cheaply, it's good enough – AI will get people to watch it… Nothing could be further from the truth.

The more advanced the technology that profiles you, stalks you, manipulates and cajoles you; the more people will come to resent it and find ways of blocking it out. Don't get me wrong, we're all for using technology and AI to help design more advanced surfboards (there's that damn analogy again) but we simply cannot ever let go of the craft of surfing (storytelling).

Mastering creativity

So, anyway, I'm not really sure if that's a trend or more of a surf report (sorry, that's last of it, I promise) but our focus is, and will continue to be, mastering creativity at scale along with the help of programmatic media, data and insights and the

exponential potential of AI that we can't even begin to fathom.

For us, storytelling has to sit at the core of all of it and that is simply the only way we are going to get it right.

ABOUT BRETT MORRIS

Brett Morris is the CEO of Nahana Communications Group. In 2014 Brett was appointed Group Chief Executive and has since been voted by his peers as most admired agency leader in Johannesburg for five years in a row and three times across South Africa.
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