

interactive marketing summit

Marketing Mix recently hosted the 3rd Interactive Marketing Summit. This year's content focused heavily on social networks and networking, and mobile – all of which indicates a change in direction for marketing, more specifically direct marketing. And this is a good direction – not only providing even more measurable media, but allowing instant one-to-one marketing to occur. It's also a way to access the youth market, using their tools and on their level.

As Charl Norman, co-founder/ops manager, Blueworld Communities points out, there are simple tools that can be used to keep youth interested in a social community and online – videos, free SMSes integrated to competitions only available online, and allowing users to customise website are some of the winners. "Don't forget to track the influencers on the website as well," he says.

Pete Case, creative director, Gloop says that the future of the Internet is media that has been created specifically for it and agrees that most downloadable stuff is pre-made instead of allowing users to create their own stuff. The lesson here is to put the power of creativity in the hands of the consumer, particularly when dealing with the youth market as the response is much greater.

Creating a microsite for a campaign is a creative way of allowing consumers to design and make their own content, and the microsite can be used for more than a particular campaign. "If you create a microsite, don't shut it down after the campaign has finished, simply redirect the site to the main site and share the content," says Rob Stokes, CEO, Quirk. "Also, make sure to share content socially on your website," he adds.

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of Twitter, is driving the next evolution of marketing. But, as Alistair Fairweather, social media manager, 24.com points out, it's amazing that while advertising and media agencies have departments devoted to traditional media, social media might have one full-time person looking after it – if it's lucky! He also says that marketers should not be put off by the technology side of social media, but instead concentrate on the fact that it's merely another way to have a one-to-one conversation with consumers, something marketers are familiar with.

All of this is well and good of course, but whether it's the youth market, the mass market or a niche market, the basics still need to be put in place with interactive media, the same as with any other media. The basics pertinent to interactive media such as social networking, e-mail, online and mobile is the trusty database and the input of the ad agencies to use the available mediums. Both of these key elements are sorely missing. "Specialist agencies are way ahead of the traditional agencies, and it is vital that ad agencies are involved in the digital realm," says Adrian Hewlett, chairman of the Online Publishers Association (OPA).

The database, particularly gleaned information through the use of interactive media, can be filled with rich customer intelligence. "Marketers haven't interrogated the data properly," says Marco Lopes, product manager, TransUnion Credit Bureau. For Lopes, customer intelligence is gained when analytics is added to customer data. "Marketers need to know their base, what data is needed, where and when, how often, how to get it and what to do with it.

"Intelligent segmentation can provide useful demographic, behavioural, financial, geographic and timing data, for example," he says.

But, as Russel Stormin, founder of Strike Media points out, all too often, agencies ask for an SMS campaign, for example, but then never return for the database once the campaign is finished! A wasted opportunity. Rodney Kuhn, co-founder and director, MyBeat Interactive backs this up, saying that while SMS is still one of the most powerful media around, marketers need to optimise the database.

It is certainly agreed that mobile marketing and advertising is key to reaching South African consumers; even Google agrees: "Mobile is expanding and exploding in SA, there is huge potential out there. But you must map customer intelligence for interactive media," says Dave Rooney, industry manager, Multi Sector, Google SA.

The integration of online and mobile is rapidly becoming apparent with more mobisites appearing, and the fact that for the majority of the population first-time access to the Internet will be through a cellphone. "Mobile is now mainstream; it's a real alternative to traditional media. It's an amazing way to bond with consumers," agrees Kuhn.

The following pages offer expert insights into the world of interactive marketing that will help to explain and guide marketing campaigns to success.