

Connectioncy: A Hypothetical Advertising "Agency" for 2010

by Barak Kassar, Friday, Jan 20, 2006 8:15 AM EST

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN you ask senior advertising execs from the world's largest tech company, an old-line media conglomerate, a global telecoms firm, one of today's largest ad agencies, and one of the teeniest, to design the ad agency of the future?

We were one of several breakout groups at the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) "What's Next" conference in December. Our "job" was to anticipate societal changes and invent a new type of ad agency to capitalize on them.

What we came up with: the Connectioncy, a hypothetical firm that could: dramatically reduce the classic "Principal-Agent problem" that can occur in almost any situation where an owner hires an agent, goals are seldom fully aligned and information flow is often incomplete. This is exactly why our imaginary firm will not be an "agency."

Generate always-on information-osmosis among advertiser, consumer, and media/publishing entities; and
break down barriers between research and creative work.

The hypothetical firm will not be housed in one tall building. The "offices" will be hundreds of connected street-level, walk-in, pop-up retail "stores" that look like a cross between a café and a Kinko's (with video, audio, photography and Web stations).

The two-day ARF event in San Francisco was a conference in the true sense of the word. People conferred. The size was deliberately kept small (they held two similar events in New York and Chicago) and the sessions---heavy on intimate "breakout" sessions--were designed so that we could connect beyond talking "to" or being talked "to" from a dais.

By being about talking "with," the conference itself inspired many of the elements of the Connectioncy. We brainstormed changes in society and industry such as:

- Trust/dislike of advertising Why was ad-skipping technology even invented? There is no technology called "stuff I love skipping". There'd be no

market for it.

- Fast-changing consumer habits and tastes---including rapid-growth media formats such as MySpace.
- Consumer-created media. Some examples can be found at the interactive version of this column at <http://www.rassak.com/blog>.
- Stimulation inflation, i.e., waaaaay too much information for any one to process---and the sharply increased need for hyper-relevancy of both message and media.

The Connectioncy is an always-on connector between advertiser and consumer:

- Our distributed walk-in, pop-up "offices" will be in diverse neighborhoods throughout the countries where we work---not just in the urban centers. We'll also own tricked-out RVs so that we can roll up at events ---and roll our own events.
- We will co-create advertising with consumers. Creative sessions will be de-facto research sessions. We will absorb consumer tastes by osmosis, and they will go directly into the advertising itself. Our creative people will be coaches---they will help consumers create ads with our means of production and expertise. Of course, our best creative experts will know when to hold back and let the consumer shine.
- Of course we will have the means to upload our co-creations to the free mediasphere. Even better, by having an always-on knowledge of consumer media habits, we will be able to execute highly targeted media buys. We will not only be facilitating so-called consumer-generated ads, but also consumer-generated media buys.
- Everybody will be a principal. We will not have clients. We will have joint ventures. Every new account will in fact be a new company co-owned by what used to be called the "client" and what used to be called the "agency." There will be ample stock options for employees of both firms---as well as for active, involved consumers and media partners.

This is all theoretical, of course, so why not join in with your ideas, inspirations, improvements or plain old rants of your own---click over to the interactive version of this column at <http://www.rassak.com/blog>. You'll also find a complete list of the participants in the original breakout group.

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