

# Change is the new constant

By [Shireen Jaftha](#)

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Just when clients and agencies alike thought they had digital nailed, things changed - and quickly. This is what it means to operate in the contemporary media environment; change is the new constant.



## Ad-blocking apps

Having navigated the choppy waters of the digital media revolution, clients were really beginning to feel the value of their online presence, when along came... ad-blocking apps. These apps, which allow users to block the display of ads while surfing the web, are having an immediate and significant impact on marketers trying to consolidate their digital presence. This is particularly true for the FMCG sector, which depends more heavily on price point and direct response advertising than other sectors.

Worse still for brands both large and small, ad-blocking apps developed by Apple was soon available for Android, meaning it can be used on Facebook and YouTube, cutting access to affluent and influential social media users.

By June 2015 a staggering 198 million people worldwide had downloaded ad-blockers.

Rapid and unexpected change in the digital media environment is a trend that is expected to intensify in 2016, and marketers need to be alert to the effect that this will have on reach, recall, effectiveness and likeability. And, importantly, they need to find creative new ways in which to maintain a seamless experience of their brands across all media platforms.

## Navigating the digital wilderness

What does this mean for clients and their agencies? In short, it means that the days of agency staff fulfilling a single function are over. Multi-skilling is the new trend as agencies strategise new ways in which to meet the challenges of an ever-changing digital media environment.

One of the ways in which they are doing this is by gearing up the branded content component of their communications. This, in turn, means that creatives, strategic planners and account managers will need to have a wider and more inclusive understanding of such disciplines as broadcasting, PR and customer relationship management than they have had to have in the past. A multi-faceted understanding of the proliferating and constantly changing media environment is now not only desirable, it's become essential.

In practical terms, this means agencies will need to focus on the diversification of skills within their own operations. Across the board, staff will need to be upskilled in order to handle the complex demands of conceptualising and developing integrated branded content. In particular, they will need to have a better understanding of trends and how they develop; an insight into the customer psyche that goes beyond straightforward selling.

## New strategic directions

From a strategic perspective, this means marketers will need to shift the focus of their communications budgets to accommodate more branded content, which will not only straddle all media platforms, but which will be able to by-pass the ad-blocking barrier. This will be necessary not only to cut through the clutter but to ensure a seamless customer experience of their brands and to close the loop from point-of-contact to post-sales experience.

Specifically, they will need to use innovative branded content to reach the discerning 18-24 market in order to secure lifelong customer relationships. They will also need to look beyond such traditional tools as LSMs, demographics and psychographics in order to make an emotive connection with their audiences. Effectiveness now rests on a constellation of four components: visibility, understanding, needs fulfilment and engagement. Talking to the customer is no longer an option; marketers need to have discussions with their customers.

As the song goes, the times are a-changing, and we need to change the way in which we do business in order to keep up with latest developments.

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