

Are business consultancies the ad agencies of the future?

 By Louise Marsland

13 Nov 2017

Anatoly Roytman, managing director of Accenture Interactive and Global lead for EALA (Europe, Africa, Middle East and Latin America), believes that Accenture Interactive is building the "agency of the future". We asked him to elaborate as our #MeettheMarketer this month on Bizcommunity.africa.



Anatoly Roytman.

Roytman is the brains behind the recent acquisition of Fjord and Karmarama and believes consultants and ad agency groups are facing a seismic change as their two worlds collide resulting in a restructuring across the consulting and marketing landscape. And Roytman believes Accenture Interactive is building the agency of the future.

The vision is for Accenture Interactive to become the first "experience agency of record" for global clients. "We want to partner our clients and become the custodian of the brand experience," explained Roytman. He said that Accenture Interactive can be this new breed of shop – the experience agency of record – because it has built up a range of capabilities across design, user experience, data, analytics, customer relationship management, ecommerce, content, advertising and programmatic.

■ Please unpack your statement: “Consultants and ad agency groups are facing a seismic change as their two worlds collide...”

We believe brands are built less by advertising these days. Ask any millennial what their favourite TV commercial is today

and you will likely get a blank stare. Consumers' perceptions of a brand are increasingly the result of an amalgamation of touchpoints and interactions that consumers have with your brand across, increasingly, digital channels. Now brands need a partner to manage the whole customer experience and every touchpoint along the way – from the inception of an idea to developing and designing a product, building awareness and then selling and distributing it. Agencies have to adapt to better help brands manage the entire customer experience. In order to do that, they have to be able to link technology, creative, media, marketing, sales and service.

■ Can you tell us what the “agency of the future” will look like?

We are absolutely at a stage where a new breed of agency is required: an experience agency. Just doing ideation and acting as creative vendors is not enough. Clicks and open rates will only get you so far. If you want to have an impact you need business strategy chops too, you need to be good at technology, to get analytics.

In today's interconnected world, clients need partners who can scale campaigns with speed and agility through strong technology platforms and global reach. Then, they need to link it all together to create the best possible customer experience. Customers have high expectations and frustration at the lack of control they have over their experience. Because consumers are faced with too much choice, too much content and not enough time, brands need to insert themselves into the places where customers need them the most - and do so in a natural, human way. The human must be at the centre of the experience - not the brand or the technology. It takes an experience agency to make this a success.

The final element of the agency of the future is the way that it operates for clients. Not only do they focus on customer strategy and experience delivery over pure creative and media planning as an end goal, but they also focus on business outcomes, not activity metrics. As more clients desire outcome-based billing, it takes an agency of the future – with enough visibility across the whole experience – to be able to drive and show positive outcomes for the business. With one particular automotive client we're working with, we only get paid on net-new cars sold.

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■ What makes Accenture Interactive the “agency of the future”? What makes consultants better “brand custodians” than advertising and brand agencies?

Accenture Interactive can be this new breed of agency because it has end-to-end digital customer capabilities that span all the areas needed to be successful at acquiring and retaining customers today: design, user experience, data, analytics, customer relationship management, ecommerce, content, advertising and programmatic. We can tie marketing to bigger transformation projects due to our technology and strategic consulting heritage. We want to be the provider that clients hire to do complex, global things. We're shifting the definition of digital from banner ads to digital transformation.

■ I asked an ad agency CEO recently, the same question about whether consultancies will buy agencies and he said no, but that agencies need to add business consultancy skills to their mix to make their model more marketable. Do you think the advertising industry knows what is coming?

The ad industry is shaking by itself right now, as more and more disruptive forces are affecting it. We want to partner with our clients to become the custodians of the brand experience, which takes an agency that can manage every aspect of that experience. Starting from the inception of an idea and working through the design and development of a functioning product and then creating a campaign to drive awareness and sales.

Even looking at the distribution of the product to match the experience with the expectations around the brands.

Getting all of these talents together is a large strategic mission, but consultancies buying agencies is already happening. We have made a number of acquisitions to complement our double-digit organic growth in order to build a range of capabilities across creative, design, user experience, data, analytics, customer relationship management, ecommerce, content and advertising.

The whole industry needs to change. Holding companies need to break down their organisational siloes in order to move towards the new model for operating, which will be very difficult for them to achieve.

■ Will consultants, who are not known as “creative people”, be able to bring the depth of brand experience and creative strategy to marketers? Why will marketers buy your strategy over that of a traditional creative agency or brand shop?

Accenture Interactive is the experience agency arm of Accenture, so we have a different target buyer, skill sets and culture than our parent company. Accenture Interactive is a culture of cultures. We blend business consulting with a technology powerhouse and creative agency expertise. We are a multi-disciplinary bunch of business strategists, designers, content marketers, user experience professionals, developers, SEO specialists, and more.

Through Karmarama and The Monkeys, we have bolstered our creative expertise. Through Fjord, we have global innovation through the world's biggest design firm.

We are attracting more and more people from the agency world, who want to become part of something new. Tammy Soares, former CEO of Rosetta, has recently joined us in the US, as well as Eduardo Bicudo, former CEO of Wunderman Brazil, to name a few.

■ Should advertising agencies be worried?

Both the consultants and ad agencies recognise their challenges and that they need to change, but it won't happen overnight. There are some well-run ad holding companies out there, which have been successful and resilient over the years. We are not trying to be an ad holding company, but we are offering a new model that we believe will be more relevant.

CMOs today are looking for a new type of partner: according to a recent Forrester report, a higher percentage than ever – 73% - of CMOs say that they would be open to hiring consultants. At a time when consumers are less attached to brands, finding new ways to deliver great customer experiences is paramount to CMOs, and anyone who doesn't bring that proposition to the table will find themselves a smaller and smaller piece of the overall picture.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

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