

Integrate, collaborate, flatten and rebuild

By [Gillian Rightford](#)

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There will be an increased focus on integration from a marketer's point of view which means collaboration from an agency's point of view.



An edited interview with Justin Apsey, vice-president of Brand Building Home and Surface Care at Unilever, explains why:

"My biggest concern now is the fragmentation of the specialist environments. We used to have the benefit of agencies leading us through the murky world of advertising, and then a couple of years ago we had digital rosters because we had to understand digital, then you needed social and data etc. We've now ended up with all these specialists who are all really good at their jobs and creating these different environments where they optimise solutions and channels. This is becoming increasingly confusing for marketers who are becoming project managers. I fear that the brand is getting lost through that experience, the consumer is not seeing how it's all working together."

"So my view on agencies is that I want to see more collaboration, and not just advertising agencies, with media agencies as well... You need to create one seamless experience and orchestrate it for us as clients, sell us the dream, make it easy for us to understand, allow that trust to exist between you because you'll get the trust back from us. At the moment I'm not sure I'm getting the best for my buck, because I'm getting fragmented through the entire environment. So come together, work together, work a lot harder together and create," says Apsey.

Collaboration means breaking down walls

With multi-agency teams, and even in big agencies, collaboration becomes problematic because each agency or specialisation has a separate bottom line. Targets are chased and budgets are protected. No true collaboration, customer-centric, media-neutral branded experience (throw in more buzzwords if you like) can be possible when MDs are defending their economic turfs.

Walls must fall. Silos must break down. Incidentally, this has to happen in the brand world too. Silos between sales and marketing, or product and marketing or segment and brand will have to become more integrated and collaborative to be more effective. Massive waste occurs in these groups being unaligned internally.

If you don't believe me that silos are dangerous, here's what Patrick Lencioni says in his book 'Silos, Politics and Turf Wars': "Silos - and the turf wars they enable - devastate organisations. They waste resources, kill productivity, and jeopardise the achievement of goals."

Measurement and management

The pressure on integration is also to improve efficiencies in terms of agency fees. There will be a strong move to mechanise and automate many areas that are currently being done manually or not at all. Consistency, effectiveness, efficiency and insights will be managed and measured.

Fluidity and quality of messaging

The result of all of this will be (could be) stronger, clearer, more consistent messaging that moves fluidly through channels, engaging consumers in ways they want to engage.

"This idea of orchestration to create a branded experience that consumers feel and see, that is unlocked through the power of all these wonderful new channels that we have, that's what we want," Justin Apsey goes on to say.

This might result in more brands developing strategies that aim to do good but are fundamentally linked to their brands. One hopes that in order to be heard amidst the fragmentation and noise levels, brands get back to powerful storytelling, woven seamlessly through the channels consumers care about.

ABOUT GILLIAN RIGHTFORD

Gillian's CV is a mix of marketing, strategy, advertising, and leadership. She obtained a Business Science (Honours) degree in Marketing from UCT, worked in marketing strategy consulting, then headed into the creative world, doing account management and strategy for below and above the line agencies, before becoming co-founder and managing director of Hercules/DVB&B, and then group managing director of Lowe Bull...

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