



The marketing executive fights a war on two fronts. Her boss expects her to deliver measurable results, make sense of disruptive technology, and satisfy digital consumers who become more empowered and finicky every day. Digital consumers crave immersive online experiences that require a strong dose of creativity and user-centered design. Increasingly, marketers must fight this battle on a global scale. Is it any wonder that the job tenure of a CMO continues to shrink? To succeed, marketers and their agency partners need a smart application of technology, customer insight, design, creativity, and analytics – a blend of art and science. Here's how one agency, Avenue A | Razorfish, is responding.

Unlocking the Power of Immersion

As consumers get more access to broadband, they expect richer experiences. They want animation and product zoom features. They want to escape for a minute to play an interactive game, watch an online video, or configure their favorite automobile styles. But just as importantly: websites and online advertisements must deliver all those goodies without the slightest technical glitch or consumers will shop elsewhere.

What this means to Avenue A | Razorfish is that creativity and strong end-user functionality are converging everywhere. Consider a website like www.Freestyleplus.com, which our London office designed for Standard Life Bank (see Figure 1). This website uses video snippets told from the point of view of a roving reporter to explain the financial intricacies of buying and owning a home.

What's really intriguing is how Standard Life Bank has applied immersion in an information environment – educating 30ish consumers with disposable incomes about mortgages and money.

Consumers expect the advertisements they see online to be more immersive, too. While relevant messaging is essential in delivering effective advertising, immersion can make relevant messages memorable and more powerful.

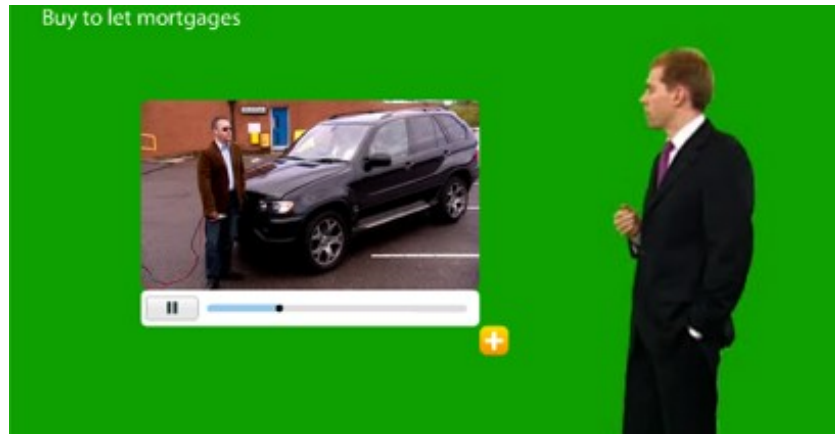


Figure 1

For example, Figure 2 shows a banner ad for Levi's jeans. The advertisement becomes more immersive when it flashes the imagery of the advertisement at the top of the screen.



Figure 2

Even better, you can click on the ad to get a quick overview of some of the styles available. That way, Levi's gives you a taste of its inventory as well as an advertisement without requiring you to leave the original website.

To deliver immersive but functional customer experiences, we are expanding our core disciplines. We increased the size of our user experience and creative teams by 20 percent in 2005 and will increase them by another 30 percent in 2006. We also recently established the Avenue A | Razorfish Creative Studio in New York, which is where art is practiced and taught. The studio is configured as a creative "hive" with zero walls, floor-to-ceiling collaboration boards to foster creativity, evening salons where co-workers talk shop, and a Master Class lecture series where thought leaders talk about the state of the art in creative forms ranging from screen writing to animation.

However, our largest skill sets remain Delivery Management and Technology. The Delivery Management teams use left-brain planning to assemble the right talent at the right place at the right time. And they use a little art when they make judgment calls to customize a project team that will work together and mesh well with a client's culture.

Our Technologists give our clients a blend of art and science through insight and performance. They bring insight when they help a client understand how to embrace newer media like blogging and RSS, or when they try an alternative approach to website development, such as agile programming.

Technologists also need to implement and integrate the software applications that must perform flawlessly behind the scenes, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They strive to deliver the performance needed to make the most sophisticated digital marketing campaigns and websites.

Delivering Stronger Customer Insight

Our clients also require better insight into their customers and how they really behave online especially because consumers are more finicky and sophisticated. Who really visits one's website? Why are they there? Why do some abandon a site before they make a purchase?

To address these types of questions, we need to understand how our client's customers behave in the online and offline worlds, which is where art and science come into play. Figure 3 is an abbreviated version of a user persona, or composite profile, of a digital consumer created exclusively for one of our clients. This sketch of "High Touch Trish" discusses not only her shopping habits, but personal details that inform her behavior when she consumes digital media.

To really understand how people behave in the offline world, we employ more subjective, less scientific tools, like ethnography – where people give us permission to observe them in their natural habitats. Just as consumer products firms can design better household products by observing people's personal habits, we can use observation to design better websites that more naturally emulate how we live in the offline world. For

example, for a major retailer, we were asked to create a website for putting together one's wardrobe. Before we attempted to design anything, we first got permission to visit with consumers. Figure 4 consists of the actual candid snapshots of the women and men sharing their experiences with us. From this field research, we designed an application that emulates how people really go about organizing their clothing and getting dressed.



Figure 3

We apply science when we employ web analytics tools to understand how the consumer behaves online. For example, our Advanced Optimization capability uses tools to analyze how people interact with websites and why they abandon them. Case in point: in 2005, before SBC changed its name to AT&T, the company asked us to help improve SBC.com, the corporate portal used by consumers and businesses to learn about SBC's products and services. So Avenue A | Razorfish used an Advanced Optimization tool called click-density analysis to identify the most visited and least visited areas on the website.



Figure 4

Figure 5 shows the old SBC website with tiny red dots all over it. Each of those dots represents places where website visitors were clicking on content. In SBC's case, the red dots revealed that website visitors were not clicking on the links SBC wanted them to click. The density of dots all over the page also showed that visitors were distracted by too many links.



Figure 5

We used this information to simplify the home page dramatically, as seen by Figure 6. As a result, in just two months, click-throughs to desired content increased by 17 percent, and desired self-service functionality increased by 18 percent.

In 2006 and beyond, marketers can expect more art and more science as we work to deliver stronger customer insight. We will continue to grow our Strategy practice – the individuals who do ethnographic research and advise on the “why” behind customer behavior. (We are growing our team of Strategists by nearly 40 percent in 2006.)

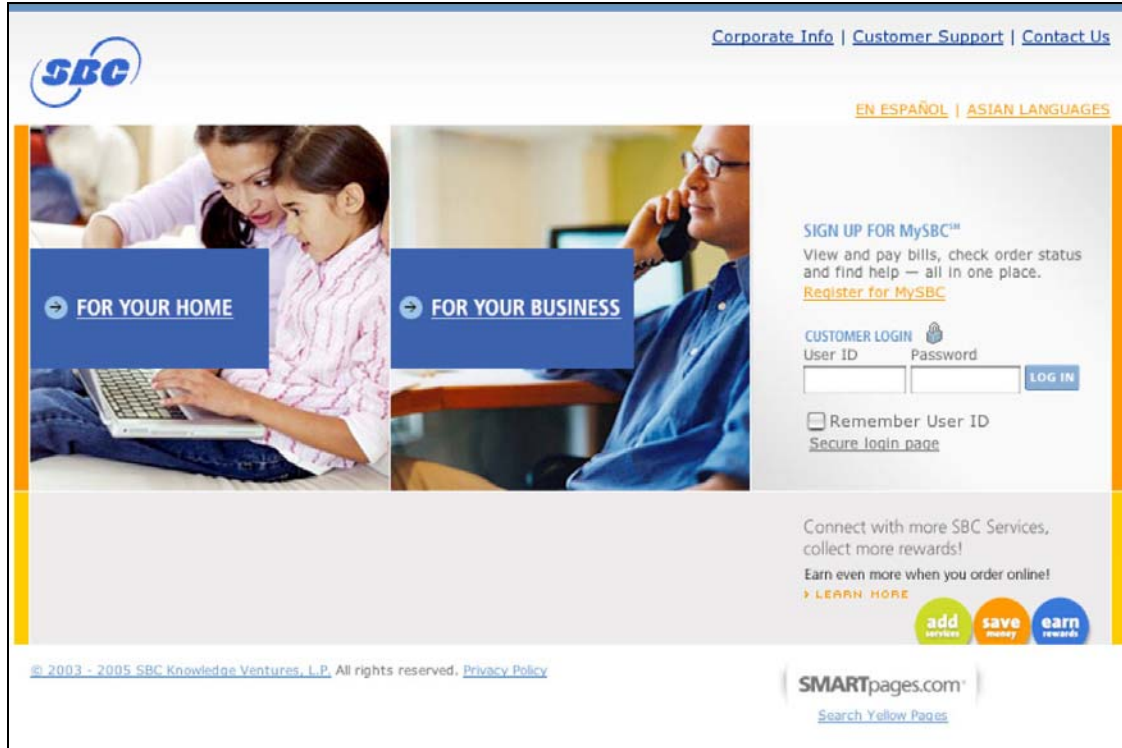


Figure 6

Science will continue to come from our Customer Insight Group, which uses web analytics to give clients insight into how their customers behave across the entire online channel. This group is expanding into high-level strategic services, bringing our rich data and quantitative capabilities to bear on such categories as customer segmentation and media mix and interaction. We will make a capital investment of nearly \$1 million into this important group throughout 2006.

Embracing Emerging Media

It's not enough to maximize the value of well established digital media with the internet. We also help marketers own emerging media — whether we're talking about interactive TV or social media like mySpace.

With the insights gained from the Avenue A | Razorfish Advanced Media Solutions group (established in January 2006), we help clients capitalize on emerging media like podcasts, blogs, games, mobile and video on demand. Our client Verizon was the first advertiser to sponsor an ESPN podcast and an ABCNews.com podcast. And we recently helped Carnival Cruise Lines launch CarnivalConnections.com (see Figure 7). This website makes it possible for cruise enthusiasts to plan and share their experiences through an online community. Participants can post reviews of cruises, share advice, and collaborate on vacation ideas. The site is all about fostering consumer-to-consumer collaboration. According to *Forbes*, "Already, 2,000 of the site's 13,000 registered users

plan trips aboard Carnival's 22 ships in the next 18 months. These seafarers are expected to bring in \$1.6 million in revenue to the publicly held company. That's a respectable starting yield for a marketing effort that probably cost Carnival \$300,000 to set up and, to date, zilch to promote."

Expect to hear more news Avenue A | Razorfish, as we share what we are learning about this rapidly evolving landscape.



Figure 7

Taking the Customer Conversation to a Global Level

A very large percentage of our clients consist of major U.S. brands with substantial operations overseas. Our clients have told us that they want us to grow into a company that can help them create new relationships with digital consumers around the world.

We've listened, and we're taking action. In 2005, Avenue A | Razorfish established an office in Sydney, Australia. In December 2005, we acquired British agency DNA. Founded in 1998, DNA offers services ranging from strategy to media to website design

to a blue-chip client base that includes BMW, O2, Standard Life, and Oxfam. DNA deepens our expertise in emerging media such as interactive television and in vertical markets ranging from retail to the public sector.

Marketers can expect us to expand in the major internet markets around the world.

The Art and Science of Performance

Every day, marketers are faced with decisions about where to invest their money and energy to deliver great results also position their businesses well for the future. We want to have the technology and service capabilities that best deliver results for clients today and prepare them continue to connect with the digital consumer of the future. We will continue to do our best to invest in and practice the art and science of performance.

About the Author



David Deal is part of the Avenue A | Razorfish marketing team. Previously David was a marketing executive for Lante, and before that he founded and directed Andersen Consulting's global industry analyst program. David also worked as an editor in the book publishing industry and helped develop a book about rock singer Jim Morrison. David's personal passions are his family and teaching at his church. He holds a bachelor of science in journalism from the University of Illinois.

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About Avenue A | Razorfish

Avenue A | Razorfish (avenuea-razorfish.com) is the largest interactive marketing and technology services firm in the U.S., and an operating unit of Seattle-based aQuantive, Inc. (NASDAQ: AQNT). Avenue A | Razorfish solutions are entrenched in deep technology, rigorous analytics and a rich understanding of customer needs, including award-winning web media & creative, search marketing services, email marketing/eCRM, and world-class creative, design and implementation of customer websites and intranets/extranets. Avenue A | Razorfish operates three regions in the U.S. – East, West and Central – with offices located in major markets. In addition, the firm's first international presence was established through the acquisition of U.K.-based full-service interactive agency DNA. Clients include AstraZeneca, Best Buy, Ford Motor Company,



Kraft, Microsoft and Nike. aQuantive, Inc. and all of its operating units are committed to Internet privacy.

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