

A Look at Key Emerging Media Trends

insight

Jeremy Lockhorn | August 2008



I got in to advertising because I'm a geek (the good kind, really) and I love art -- or perhaps more accurately -- creative expression. A high school art teacher demonstrated a [Mac II fx](#) and built a simple print ad in minutes. The desktop publishing revolution was underway, and it hit me: advertising could perhaps be a way to combine my affection for technology with my fondness of art in such a way that might actually be commercially viable.

So I studied advertising in college. This was during the early days of interactive -- back when it was mostly about CD-ROMs and things like CompuServe were all the rage. No one was teaching these digital technologies at the time, but they were schooling us in the advertising philosophies of luminaries like David Ogilvy and Howard Gossage. I was taught (among other things) that getting the consumer to interact with your ad in some way was one of the best ways to ensure that they'd remember your message. I remember distinctly sitting in class and having a revelation that must have been obvious to my professors and everyone around me: advertisers used to have to rely on gimmicks and tricks to get people to interact with their ads. But the coming digital revolution would finally allow us to be truly interactive. Gossage said, "An ad should ideally be like one end of an interesting conversation." That's great for a print or TV ad, but suddenly, here with digital, why can't an ad be both ends of an interesting conversation? I knew then and there that I wanted to be in interactive advertising.

So a couple of years out of college, I found myself working for an interactive agency startup that eventually was acquired by Avenue A (then merged with Razorfish to create Avenue A | Razorfish and ultimately became part of Microsoft). For the last 11-plus years, my advertising career has revolved around the Internet, and it's been a fun ride, to say the least.

But then something funny happened over the last couple of years: the Internet has become bigger than the PC. We're squarely in the age of the digital lifestyle, and the Web has become so ubiquitous that it's nearly invisible.

All of the learning we've done with regards to marketing via the Web is suddenly bigger than the Internet. And, just as importantly, the challenges we've yet to solve on the Web are now challenges that exist beyond the PC. This is all relevant anywhere that digital technologies and experiences exist, and these days, that's just about everywhere.

So with that as a backdrop, I thought it'd be interesting to explore four key emerging media trends that are showing the tremendous impact of interactive media -- both on the PC and beyond.

Trend: The Web is Everywhere

Mobile phones are leading this charge, bringing Web connectivity to your pocket. Smartphones in general and the iPhone more specifically have radically accelerated Web usage on mobile devices, and the newly announced 3G version of the iPhone will undoubtedly bring another leap forward. According to Nielsen, there were 87 million mobile subscribers who use the mobile Web at the end of 2007, up nearly 20 percent year over year. That growth will accelerate as carriers push flat-rate data plans, and begin to break down the walled gardens. Those moves by the industry are already leading content producers to accelerate investments in building robust mobile offerings.

What that means is that the transparency that the PC Web brings to decision factors like price and product quality is suddenly free from the desktop or even laptop. Whether or not that means people will go to the Web to make "informed impulse" buys remains to be seen. But one thing is certain: continued advancements in device capabilities are making consumers more informed (and better connected to friends and family) as they shop.

The phone is just the beginning, too. Everything is getting connected: in-store kiosks, interactive storefront windows, shopping carts, refrigerators, cars and so on. The march toward ubiquitous computing is in full swing, and we're only just beginning to see the massive implications of the changing realities of how we interact with digital technologies and vice versa.

Trend: Out of Home Has Gone Digital

Not long ago, Times Square was the epicenter of digital signage in the U.S. It may still represent the highest concentration, but digital out of home (DOOH) is exploding and you see it just about everywhere now. Digital signage is officially "the next big thing" for a lot of marketers. In a mobile survey fielded via text messaging at our Client Summit, it was ranked second to mobile as the most important emerging media channel in the coming year. Roughly 51 percent of respondents ranked mobile as the most important, followed by DOOH with nearly 32 percent. Other channels trailed by a wide margin.

The growth in this space is tremendous, driven by falling technology costs, fragmentation of media, a steady increase in the amount of time the average American spends outside of the home, and so on. It's a powerful channel for marketers, bringing a lot of what we love about Web advertising to the OOH advertising world. Suddenly we can centrally manage an OOH campaign just like we do on the Web, allowing for rapid changes and optimization. Interactivity doesn't exist yet on all flavors of digital signage, but where it does, it's being embraced by marketers who recognize the power of an experience as opposed to a message. Advances in measurement technology also promise to bring a keen focus on return on investment and accountability to this nascent channel, meaning again that the analytical rigor we've applied to brand and direct response campaigns alike on the Web will quickly become important in the signage space.

Trend: The Return of Personalization

Perhaps I have an overly generous definition of personalization: any kind of change to Web content that's based on what the content delivery mechanism knows about the person viewing it. The change could be triggered by information that is either actively shared by a user (e.g., by establishing a profile) or passively shared (e.g., behavioral targeting).

However you define it, personalization has long been one of the strongest Web application and marketing tenets. The capability was an Internet buzzword for a while in the early part of the decade, until it lost favor due to questionable ROI ([define](#)) from extremely expensive and frequently overpromised out-of-the-box systems and a flurry of privacy concerns. There were a few notable exceptions, such as Amazon's collaborative filtering. But by and large, the first personalization boom never seemed to live up to its promise.

Clearly, that has changed. Privacy issues must be addressed, but we can find the right balance. And if we do this right, it'll benefit consumers as much as it benefits us. Viewing completely irrelevant ads may one day be a thing of the past.

Personalization isn't a new trend, of course. What is new, however, is the systems that power it are getting cheaper and more reliable, driven partly by Web 2.0 standards and open architecture.

Personalization capabilities are also getting more granular and extending across multiple channels. It's not just about personalizing a Web site anymore. Now it's also about changing a banner ad or even a video ad based on a range of available criteria, such as geographic location, a behavioral targeting profile, the weather, and so on. Companies like [Real Time Content](#) and [Qmeecom](#) offer these kinds of services. [Visible World](#) provides similar functionality and extends the capability to TV advertising.

If consumer control of media and increasing ad clutter are a recipe for a massive drop in ad effectiveness, increased relevance is a key solution. And that means reinventing the way you concept, moving away from a static, linear story toward one that's flexible and adaptive. Rather than create a singular story that hopes to resonate with a cross-section of your target audience, create a single platform with flexible interpretations or expressions of the key story, and let technology do the hard work of assembling the most relevant bits for a particular consumer.

Trend: It's a Wide World of Widgets (After All)

In December 2006, [Newsweek](#) wondered if 2007 would be the year of the widget. Earlier this year, comScore reported that 148 million U.S. Internet users had viewed a widget in November 2007. Back in February, [eMarketer](#) said that 15,000 Facebook applications had been created since the site opened the platform, more than 100,000 developers were working on applications or widgets, and ad spend on widgets and applications would grow from \$15 million in 2007 to \$40 million in 2008.

Widgets and applications are huge. And why not? The platforms can be an effective way to engage consumers and expand distribution of the content you worked so hard on to earn attention. But it can also be a troubling trend. People don't start at your home page anymore; worse yet, sometimes they don't come to your site at all. It can be a troubling factor for publishers (including bloggers) and marketers alike.

I read industry trades every day but haven't visited their Web sites in months. Rather, I read through widgets and RSS feeds. This kind of behavior led Garrick Schmitt, our VP of user experience, to question whether the home page matters anymore in our [2008 Digital Outlook Report](#). Distribution may just trump destination after all.

There seems to be a widget for just about everything under the sun, and more are on the way. There are many keys to building a successful widget, but chief among them is to provide value to the audience. This isn't about cramming your entire site into a tiny space; it's about figuring out what unique and relevant piece of value you have to offer and crafting something around that.

To do this right, you need to understand your audience, what social environments they participate in online, and why exactly they're there. People sometimes maintain multiple profiles on a single social network for different personas, a professional profile and a party profile, for example. Sometimes they use different sites for different reasons. This proliferation of different personalities means you must understand the audience and how they're using a specific environment. Further, it's not enough to just insert a brand message; you must bring more value, ask the audience to participate, and give them the tools to share.

At the end of the day, the old Internet ad model of driving traffic to your site is being turned on its head. Suddenly, it's much more about driving your site -- or the right pieces of your site -- to the traffic. That's a significant shift, and we're only beginning to see the results.

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<http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3629907>

<http://www.clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3630196>

About the Author



Jeremy is an emerging media expert at Avenue A | Razorfish where he is also a key leader of the agency's emerging media practice. The team functions as both a think-tank on next-generation media and an extension of current client teams and is focused on driving innovative marketing solutions for clients. As the marketing landscape continues to fragment and new channels emerge, Jeremy functions as a filter and consultant – helping clients and internal teams to understand, evaluate and roll out strategic pilot programs and analyze the results in an effort to fuel future efforts and broader campaigns. He helps teams take a core idea and extend it to new digital environments, building connections with target audiences in unexpected, yet efficient, ways. This approach goes beyond campaigns; it translates to powerful digital solutions that can transform businesses. While his expertise covers numerous emerging media technologies, his primary focus is on video across all platforms. Jeremy's efforts to research and assess the landscape ultimately feed global strategy development and uncover unique opportunities for innovative campaigns.

Jeremy is a 15-year advertising industry veteran, having spent time at offline and direct marketing agencies before joining Philadelphia-based digital agency startup i-FRONTIER in 1997 as its first employee. He teamed with founder Brad Aronson to grow the business and

ultimately join forces with Avenue A | Razorfish. During his tenure at the agency, he has served many roles, but they all meet at the intersection of media, creative insights and technology.

He is a frequent speaker on emerging media, having presented at OMMA Video, Digital Hollywood, Streaming Media East and West, CES, Internet Retailer, the AAAA Media Conference and several others. Jeremy also writes a monthly column for online magazine ClickZ (<http://clickz.com/showPage.html?page=3622705>) and regularly publishes whitepapers on a broad range of emerging media topics (<http://www.avenuea-razorfish.com/points>).

Jeremy holds a BSJ in Advertising Management from Ohio University's Scripps School of Journalism, and is currently based at agency headquarters in Seattle, WA.

About Avenue A | Razorfish™

Avenue A | Razorfish is one of the largest interactive marketing and technology companies in the world. With a demonstrated commitment to innovation, Avenue A | Razorfish counsels its clients on how to leverage digital channels such as the Web, mobile devices, in-store technologies and other emerging media to engage people, build brand loyalty and provide excellent customer service. The company is increasingly advising marketers on Social Influence Marketing™, its approach for employing social media and social influencers to achieve the marketing and business needs of an organization. Its award-winning client teams provide solutions through their strategic counsel, digital advertising and content creation, media buying, analytics, technology and user experience. Avenue A | Razorfish has offices in markets across the United States, and in Australia, China, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. Clients—many of them served in multiple markets—include Carnival Cruise Lines, Coors Brewing Company, Kraft, Levi's, McDonald's and Starwood Hotels. Visit <http://www.avenuea-razorfish.com> for more information.

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