Digital transformation is dead! What's next?

By Johan Walters

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When we entered 2021, Incubeta pointed out that the digital marketing crystal ball was broken. Behavioural patterns had been turned on their head, rendering algorithmic decisions all but impossible. Predictions for 2022 are still tricky, but we can safely say that the conversation has moved past digital transformation.

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Marketing leaders are now focusing on digital maturity and how technology can help them leapfrog competitors. Technology will also be the cornerstone of getting your brand ready for the metaverse, which we think should be on every marketing leader's radar for 2022.

Here are six tech insights to help you prepare for the year ahead:

1. Some nasty surprises in store for those who lagged in privacy efforts

If 2020 was the year of getting ready for all the privacy requirements, 2021 was the year of action as brands rushed to

revalidate databases and activate privacy strategies.

We see 2022 as the year that will prove how effective companies have been in preparing for PoPIA and the end of 3rd party cookies. Unfortunately, many brands will find there is still much work to be done and privacy audits and workshops, if not already done, will become an urgent agenda point for many local companies.

2. Democratisation of martech finally in sight

The introduction of GA4 has heralded the age of enterprise tech finally being within reach of all companies. This is great news for our local businesses, giving them access to machine learning, AI and BigQuery. However, this empowerment of non-enterprise brands also comes with some challenges. Accessing the right skills to help marketing leaders manage all the new technologies may prove difficult in the current market and working with agency partners while building an in-house skills pool is the best solution to this immediate predicament.

3. Maturity framework to the rescue

One of the best ways of addressing the challenge of connecting and automating new marketing technologies is through the Google Maturity Framework. Using the framework to quickly graduate up the maturity curve will allow forward-thinking brands to leapfrog their competitors. It will allow them to connect all their various technologies to truly experience the power that comes with combining advertising, platform and website data with internal business data. Once achieved, businesses can also start using predictive modelling to explore lifetime value segments and other insights that will give them a real competitive advantage.

4. Digital transformation is dead long live digital maturity

We believe 2022 will see the conversation finally move away from digital transformation and rather focus on the more manageable, bite-size efforts of the digital maturity curve. We see the incremental maturity efforts of connecting tech to give your organisation a more user-centric view as the key to achieving digital goals.

In a privacy-first world, seeing the full user journey will become more difficult and there will be a growing need to mix technologies and leverage more machine learning in order to fill the gaps left by the recent privacy drives.

We also see automation and scale occupying the minds of marketing leaders as we enter into 2022. These will remain key to their success as the year progresses and as brands try to find better ways to have one-on-one conversations with their customers.

5. Collect, analyse, activate the key to expansion into new markets

As more brands expand into new markets, understanding the nuances of their new customers must be key. To achieve this, brands should take a simple three-step approach to their martech. By asking how they are collecting data, analysing data and then activating on that information, brands can determine what tech will help them achieve their goals and what is needed in order to boost performance. This simple gap analysis can be a powerful tool in what could otherwise be a daunting task.

6. The metaverse is here, get busy

Those in the know describe the metaverse as the ‘successor-state’ of the internet - the sum of all our virtual worlds, augmented reality and the internet. And, as tech becomes more accessible, AR and VR experiences will soon be within reach of the average consumer, making the metaverse a priority for marketing professionals.

Big brands are already rushing to create virtual communities along with content, fashion, art, experiences and even currency for the metaverse. The marketing objective must start with getting found in the metaverse and SEO will be vital to

achieving this. It will also be important to include visual search to ensure search engines can identify and serve up your brand to meta consumers.

Content strategies, meanwhile, will undoubtedly need to include more AR and VR elements if they hope to be metaverse ready and as social networks such as Facebook quickly gear up to move from a 2D to a 3D world, getting to grips with these technologies becomes vital.

As daunting as all of this sounds, tech has once again come to the rescue. Retailers can now rely on new AI technology to create 3D images of their SKUs at scale and a fraction of the cost, which goes a long way to making their inventories suitable for AR-explorable sites.

To sum up, 2022 will be the year when martech will be accessible to companies of all sizes. Getting the most out of it, however, still depends on which digital partners you choose to work with.

ABOUT JOHAN WALTERS

Johan is a digital marketing transformation specialist helping brands on their transformation towards digital marketing maturity.

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