

Mastering Brand Velocity

Turn distraction into advantage in the instant-everything era.



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A recent study found that the average attention span is down to just eight seconds. It's surprising we can manage to tie our shoes in that amount of time. Apparently even goldfish have greater power of concentration – they can stay focused for nine seconds.

It's easy to see why human attention spans are shrinking. More than six billion people now have access to mobile devices (that's more than have access to toilets.) Those devices deliver a constant barrage of messages, information, invitations, buzzes and beeps that demand attention in small doses. Add apps to the equation and there's no shortage of distracting options to occupy our time. The App Store currently has around 1.6 million of them, doing everything from talking like a pirate to toilet paper races.



Turning Distraction to Your Advantage

For marketers, declining attention spans can create a huge opportunity for brand building – if you can find a way to accelerate your **brand velocity**.

Consumers today are more engaged with brands than ever before. They “follow” and “like” brands. They review restaurants, hotels, doggy daycares and pretty much any other business they visit. They participate in online surveys. And they contribute new product ideas to online communities.

But for your brand story to connect, it has to be at least as interesting as the millions of options that are vying for your audience's attention.

Brand velocity is your ability to connect with consumers and share something they're genuinely interested in, right now and continuously.

Yet today most marketers and brand managers see brand velocity as a problem rather than an opportunity because it introduces a whole new dimension of complexity into a job that was difficult enough already.

Many companies still like to produce 30-second TV commercials. They like to run full-page print ads. They're used to cranking out brochures that have a shelf life of a year. **But suddenly marketers need to:**

- Create messages for fragmented audiences.
- Respond and adapt to topics that are trending today and gone tomorrow.
- Stay on brand across a huge spectrum of channels and touchpoints.

In other words, mastering brand velocity means taming a Big-Bang-style explosion of market segmentation, microtargeting and content-delivery requirements.

Fatal Flaw of Content Marketing: Fragmentation

Many marketers have responded by adopting new approaches like content marketing, which actually make marketing more like a sophisticated publishing operation. Content marketing isn't about direct promotion of your brand; it's more of an ongoing information-delivery system focused on providing content that's topical, timely and tailored to specific audiences.

But all too often content marketing creates fragmentation within marketing. Marketing builds a network of very specialized collaborators, agencies and contractors for digital, print, PR, social, promotions, events and more. Each is expert at wringing attention from a distracted audience in their own way. And each has developed systems and adopted technologies that support a specific creative-development process. There are platforms for marketing automation, mobile marketing, email marketing, SEO, social engagement, events management, online communities, creative development and project management.

None of those people, platforms or systems are connected or coordinated. This makes managing a brand in a coherent way like trying to play six different instruments in six different bands all at the same time.



A Dose of Reality

Consider the experience of a real-world company that tried to manage this process with a traditional marketing asset-management approach.

Like many companies, they placed everything – digital assets, creative briefs, brand guidelines and so on – into a deeply nested file structure that was available to other teams and partners through a cloud storage service.

It didn't go well.

Users had a hard time finding the resources they wanted. Searches either returned nothing or dozens of unrelated files. Sometimes permissions were wrongly denied; in other cases newer versions of files existed but hadn't been uploaded yet. When users couldn't find things, they re-created things, wasting time and creating piles of duplicates.

They stored the duplicate files in the wrong folders. Storage space was quickly used up, so they had to add hardware. This in turn required IT involvement and more money. Workflow and approval cycles were convoluted, managed largely through email. Suddenly the simplest tasks became time-consuming and onerous. It was a mess.

The bottom line for this company was that the brand couldn't operate at the pace of its customers. And if you can't keep up with your customers, their attention – and spending – go someplace else.

A Better Solution for Brand Velocity

Marketers need a better way to keep up with customers moving at a digital pace – a way to grab attention and never let go. That means building versatile content that can adapt to connect to your customer's interests and passions. It has to be delivered across a range of channels with unique requirements. And it has to happen fast.



Marketers today need an asset management system capable of keeping up with the speed of life. Specifically, they need:

Connected Workflow

Step one is to unite teams and assets onto one common platform. This ends the chaos of separate systems and processes for every interaction, every group and every channel. It also speeds creative development by integrating separate systems to reduce steps and simplify workflow. And it expedites review cycles because authorized team members can review, edit and approve as part of a coordinated process.

Brand Control

Brands today succeed by working through others: agencies, partners, retailers, distributors, etc. These collaborators need guidelines and assets, not barriers and controls. Classic brand guidelines have to be updated and set free by publishing online. Access and content have to be controlled centrally but available across time zones and geographies.

Asset Discovery

There are so many options for creating brand experiences now. Developing engaging content means thinking across media types, formats and channels. However, images still largely shape brand perceptions and associations. You need access to as many visual assets as possible and the means to sort through them all to find exactly what you're looking for.

Social Collaboration

The days of command-and-control brands are over. Brands exist and operate in a social, collaborative world. Although challenging to manage, collaborative processes turn out winning results. You need the right social engagement tools to facilitate voting, rating, comments and interaction.

Today brand velocity requires a solution that makes it easy for everyone to participate. You can't move quickly when you're waiting for IT support. The right solution eliminates bottlenecks by offering self-service asset management. It lets people work on the go with their preferred devices.

Life at Brand Speed

Customers today move at a digital pace. Their attention is constantly tugged by a massive array of electronic distractions. For brands that are able to keep up, there's an enormous opportunity to connect with customers in new ways that build trust and preference. But traditional asset-management systems aren't able to support the network of specialists that many marketers now rely on to support marketing programs across channels.

Marketers need a connected workflow that integrates platforms and assets with channels and interactions. They must be able to provide a network of collaborators with easy access to brand assets that are controlled centrally to ensure brand consistency and integrity. Assets have to be easy to find and adapt for specific purposes. And social collaboration must be supported to engage teams in a process that produces the best work.

Marketers need to master brand velocity in order to grab their customers' attention and never let go.

ABOUT WEBDAM

Webdam, a Shutterstock company, is a leader in digital asset management, changing the way marketing and creative teams manage the world's brands. Founded in 2005, the Webdam cloud-based platform connects the visual content that drives impactful brand experiences and allows brand-building activities to scale across the enterprise and consumer touchpoints. Over 500 of the world's leading brands rely on Webdam to accelerate their marketing operations. For more information, please visit Webdam.com and follow Webdam on [Twitter](#) or [Facebook](#).