

KEEPING BRANDING CONSISTENT

Maintaining online consistency is a challenge many marketers fail, yet it is one of the most important elements of a campaign.

BRETT ROLFE
Online branding



THE importance of 360° branding is usually discussed in terms of consistent TV ads, point of sale, customer service and so on.

Rarely do advocates of the principle acknowledge that it is equally applicable online.

In fact, it may be even more important online, where a single click can take you from an online ad to a corporate site, or from a one-to-one email to a special offer page.

This instantaneous leap from touch-point to touch-point makes consumers even more painfully aware of the inconsistencies of a brand.

For simplicity, touch-points online can be grouped into the three Cs—corporate, campaign and customer.

At a corporate level, most companies maintain a corporate website—providing company information, online purchasing and technical support.

From time to time, they may deploy online campaigns, using anything from banner ads to site sponsorships.

The more sophisticated and client-centric companies also manage some type of “customer” communication online, usually in the form of email newsletters.

Similarly to offline, there are two key challenges to ensuring online brand consistency.

Firstly, each of these three touch-points is often managed internally by a different group or individual.

While the IT or e-business group manages the website (particularly if it has any busi-

ness-critical functionality), the marketing department will oversee online campaigns.

To complicate matters, more and more companies are situating their email communication within customer service or client relations divisions, splitting things even further.

Secondly, as if this were not enough, activity at each touch-point may be outsourced to a separate external supplier.

The maturity and specialisation of digital media companies over the past few years means you may end up with one company developing your website, another making your online ads, and a third managing your email activities.

There are several ways to address this problem. Many larger organisations faced with maintaining consistency across multiple markets rely heavily on process and documentation—a brand style-guide.

Ensuring these tools encompass digital media is one way to rein in the various online activities in which your company may be engaged.

More often, the key is to empower an individual or group to own your online brand, and ensure its consistency.

There are three ways you can do this—nominate an internal stakeholder as the pri-

mary manager, delegate brand management to one of your suppliers, or appoint a dedicated digital brand custodian.

The internal stakeholder chosen is most often the marketing department (and hence the marketing manager becomes the de facto digital brand custodian).

While this may appear to be an easy solution, the key question is whether the IT guys and the client relations team will happily accept direction from the marketing department to ensure consistency.

Choosing a supplier to own the brand online is usually only appealing to those organisations that already delegate the management of their brand to a lead creative agency and it makes sense to add digital brand management to that agency’s responsibilities.

The key here is to make sure that your traditional agency has the skills to work online—if you are using a separate specialist digital agency to develop your online ads, for instance, the answer is probably not this option.

The third option—appointing a brand custodian—is the most serious, and will be most attractive if you currently have someone in this role.

Adding the digital brand to their portfolio may be a big step

if they have limited digital experience, but with the support of competent partners, this should not be too much of a problem.

At the end of the day, there are a number of ways to bring consistency and focus to your online brand. And more important than the specific approach you take is the fact that you are taking one in the first place.

Being conscious of the online fragmentation of your brand is the most important step toward doing something about it.

Think you don’t need to worry about it? Jump online. Click on a couple of ads. Subscribe to a couple of newsletters. It is not hard to see who is taking their online activity seriously, and who is just tacking bits and pieces together.

Of course integrated online brand activity is just the beginning. How is your offline activity looking? And then the big step is brand consistency between online and offline.

But if that sounds daunting, then think about this: chances are, if you have taken the steps to address the problem—online or offline—you will tend to find that you already have the framework in place to ensure strength and consistency of brand at every touch-point, regardless of the medium.

Brett Rolfe is a freelance digital consultant.
E: brett@digitalstrategist.com

“
The key is to make sure your traditional agency has the skills to work online.
”

	points of contact with the brand		
	corporate	campaign	customer
PRODUCT	Website	Online Ads	Email
STAKEHOLDER	I.T. or E-Bus.	Marketing	Client Relations
IMPLEMENTER	Web Developer	Online Agency	eCRM Provider

Corporate, campaign and customer communication may be just a click away from each other, making 360 branding crucial online.

MORE ONLINE SEARCH ▶

BRETT ROLFE

www.bandt.com.au



Pack your bags.

WIN a \$10,000 consulting package and a luxury holiday.

Visit: macromedia.webqem.com

*Terms and conditions apply

macromedia

webqem