

## Build Digital Content for the Medium

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Our Chairman, Trevor Jones, was an early advocate of the power of digital placed based media to engage consumers in the retail environment. Here he explains the importance of creating digital content for the medium.

### Creative:



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**T**he power of effective digital content is undeniable. Thoughtfully designed digital content enables marketers to represent their brand in fresh engaging ways, to involve audiences, and be a powerful means of facilitating consumer commitment.

Digital provides a range of options that may be designed to fit the time and place in which it is seen. This gives digital unique impact and offers outcomes not attainable by other media.

We see digital media, whether in-store or in digital out of home locations (DOOH), providing new compelling opportunities to engage, interact and stake out a competitive advantage that fuels growth for the business.

And yet this potential power is being un-realised by many marketers and retailers. Why is this happening? We can't be suggesting it's all too new – it is fair to say that digital signage and interactive technology have been in existence for well over 10 years. However, standout examples remain rare.

The barrier does not appear to be one of significant cost, business potential, technical or marketing ability, or lack of general marketer open-mindedness to innovation. Simply, the problem appears to be that most retailers and marketers still haven't stopped for long enough to get their heads around the possibilities and advantages of generating first-class digital content.

A root of this unrealised potential is the false belief that digital channels are merely an opportunity for communication distribution, that somehow digital communication strategy is only an extension of existing activity, using existing content, or worse, re-appropriating content generated elsewhere unrelated to the business, audience or brand.

And so all that scope, potential and promise of digital retail and media channels remain just that – a possibility. Unfortunately, we are still (largely) at a point when any **marketers and their agencies are yet to be alive to the rich and independent opportunities that creating digital content provide.**

**Fit for Purpose:** It is fine to have a 'multimedia' marketing and communication strategy – yet this still requires each medium to work on its own terms in order to achieve maximum results overall. The single biggest failure of both managed and media-based digital signage networks, is that the brands regularly fail to develop content specifically for the medium, and that it's an ineffective approach and a waste of investment in resources.

Take, for example, a major retailer recently using digital content in its stores but displaying the same static creative used in their catalogues. It's cluttered, confusing and totally unsuitable for the medium. Other examples are the way many retail stores will invest in a storewide digital network only to resort to using a Foxtel channel for content, running the risk of broadcasting competitive content to its customers. In an example closer to home, one client asked us "why can't we just put PowerPoint slides up there?"

By contrast we believe smarter marketers and retailers will soon realise there is a way to stand out, and put some time and resources into developing branded digital content as a competitive asset.

**Hold the Phone:** It's not all doom and gloom. There are signs of life. You'll notice some telco store rollouts have included a mix of simple external messaging with more detailed product information inside their stores. It demonstrates the understanding that each content zone has its own specific role to play.

It shows what can be done when content is being developed for the medium, resulting in better brand engagement and an enhanced the retail experience – drive sales. And a further bonus is that digital content and creativity could be one of the most cost effective aspects of the entire marketing campaign.

It's really not that hard to achieve. Put some time and effort into the thinking upfront and you will see significant returns.

If you have ambitions to achieve better results in using digital content in your paid campaign, or through your owned digital network, I recommend following a few simple guidelines:

**Find time to plan ahead and be clear about your vision and objectives:** Take time to articulate the change you are trying to achieve for your brand and business. Think of an opportunity, the business problem and the issues you need to address. Think about the competitive advantage you hope to achieve and how your objectives are driven by your audience's needs.

**Identify and understand your digital media assets:** Think about the full range of potential that these assets 'might' be used to achieve your objectives (whether they be paid, owned or earned assets). Identify the specific added value potential each opportunity provides, then set out how to leverage that value.

**Have an insightful perspective about your audience:** Their needs and the solutions they wish to achieve. Think about who the different audiences are. Think about how needs may change over time and at different places or occasions. How does this result in the need for different content and how media is used?

**Make a connection with the potential of digital media and your audience insights:** How might your brand be most effective, as audience needs change along the pathway to commitment and purchase? Your brand and messaging needs to adapt to the audience and the purpose will change. Really think about these connection moments and develop content around them.

**Tailor content and messaging suited to the medium:** It's a false economy and fallacy to think that content does not need to be adapted to the medium and the context in which it is being used.

**Be selective about what you would like to achieve:** Do you want to inform, entertain or just make them aware of your product or service? Do you want to up-sell or cross-sell? Improve sales, or brand awareness? Your digital content can meet all those needs, but be careful not to try and achieve everything through one piece of content or campaign. Cluttered communication that doesn't engage is often the result of trying to achieve too much.

By following these guidelines you'll be in good shape to develop an effective digital media strategy – by utilising the full capabilities of what digital media is ideally suited for, responding to audience needs and optimising commercial returns. ☛