GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY MARKETING

September 2016

To predict future marketing trends in technology, it's often helpful to review the similarities and differences of past marketing practices, and to reflect on how marketers have helped to advance technology over the years.

Taking a look back

Between the 1990s and 2010, marketing technology to consumers (B2C) and to businesses (B2B) evolved from educating customers/convincing them to try the technology to more sophisticated value-benefit arguments, positioning strategies, and creative approaches and channels. Pricing models were also developed, to incentivize trials and upgrades with little risk. It's a lot less of a hard sell today.

The acceleration of technology adoption by industries such as banking, financial services, manufacturing and professional services has reaped gains in efficiency and productivity. Customers now seek out innovative products and services.

I worked at Ogilvy & Mather Direct in the mid-90s on a "small" $40 million Microsoft account, where we created simple but powerful ads to sing the promises of SQL Server SDK and FoxBase Pro. We sent printed direct mail pieces to several hundred thousand prospective seminar attendees, ads were placed in publications like PC Week and Dr. Dobb's Journal, and we used toll-free telephone numbers and tracking codes. Microsoft's tagline "Where do you want to go today?" was launched in November 1994 by Wieden+Kennedy. Although email marketing was not popular until 1995 when AOL, Prodigy and CompuServe all showed up, by 2001, more than half of North America was using email.

I later worked for a client then called PowerPC (an alliance between Apple, IBM and Motorola) to deliver a microprocessor product to compete with Intel. We compared PowerPC Reduced Instruction Set Computers (RISC) architecture against Intel's Complex Instruction Set Computers (CISC) architecture by showing application runtimes in side-by-side comparisons.

This same side-by-side creative approach was also successfully used by Apple in a brand-building switch campaign—Apple knocked the PC, but with style and humour. In 2010, Adweek magazine declared "Get a Mac" as the best ad campaign of the first decade of the new century. The 66 spots that aired between May 2006 and October 2009 were all directed by Phil Morrison of Epoch Films for TBWA Media Arts Lab.

Fast-forward

By 2010, mobile device sales had outpaced PC sales, and the majority of consumers were now well educated in basic and even advanced technology concepts like apps and cloud storage. A new phase of development with internet content—interactivity—then started to drive big data and the power of analytics and insight.

As return on investment (ROI) metrics became apparent, advertisers gradually moved online and away from print. The core marketing messages in B2B segments were about "speeds and feeds": the power of productivity though speed gains in processing power and data throughput, and the enhanced capability that resulted because of sophisticated new programming.

B2B creative messaging tended to be about throughput, efficiency, productivity and power, promoting 24/7 "anyone, anywhere, anytime" access and uptime. Creative messaging such as "imagine the possibilities" communicated the limitless power and capability that new technology could bring. Sometimes you could even reuse tried-and-true messaging from the 60s and 70s. "Try our technology and you'll get these amazing benefits: Do more. Get things done faster."

Tech marketing was also alliance- and standards-focused. This was critical to market adoption of technology (e.g., Betamax vs. VHS, DVD vs. Blu ray, Netscape vs. Explorer, WordPerfect vs. Microsoft Word, PC vs. Mac). It was critical to ensure that alliance-building and standardization were part of a tech marketer's product strategy and marketing toolbox.

The decline of Blackberry (RIM) shows how a firm that once succeeded in a profitable business segment underestimated the "consumer impact" of its customers. Blackberry failed to predict customer tastes—customers wanted iPhone's features and user experiences—and lost market share to Apple and Samsung. This blurring of the lines in consumer and business segmentation should not be underestimated in how markets should be defined, segmented and approached.

Today

Advances in marketing technology have allowed marketers to develop interactive and highly differentiated/segmented messaging to multiple audiences, increasing marketing effectiveness.

Major players have developed new marketing technologies such as Salesforce Pardot, Oracle Eloqua, and Marketo. These applications have allowed marketers to leverage data analytics to nurture prospective B2B and B2C customers by using powerful capabilities such as customization, email drip campaigns for education and conversion, and sales funnel management. Social media tools like Twitter, Facebook and Hootsuite deliver awareness and engagement-building power to a tech marketer's fingertips. Each step of a campaign can be analyzed to improve it, and you can now easily manage and replicate successful campaigns.

Although fresh innovative thinking—creativity—cannot be automated or programmed, Adobe applications like InDesign, Photoshop and After Effects now help us create more imaginative brand identities, more creative user experiences and more compelling messaging.

Tech start-ups and "unicorns" (start-ups with billion-dollar valuations) have developed their own style of marketing, using irreverent, fun, light-hearted and playful brand personalities to capture new audiences and new employees. It is a millennial brand personality trait that truly must be appreciated. Unicorn brands are smart, approachable and friendly, and they offer incredible value.

Finally, new centres of innovation from New York and Tel Aviv to Austin and Vancouver are all vying to compete with Silicon Valley as the world's innovation capital, driving strong new messaging standards and creativity into the global innovation network.

What's in store for us?

Blockchain technology, post-Bitcoin disaster, promises to change the way we view currency. Significant investment in digital currency by firms like Deloitte and several major banks is one of the hottest new trends. How will technology marketers instill trust in a new technology currency? How do you positon Blockchain away from Bitcoin? At Estey-Hoover, a PR firm working with Deloitte, marketing efforts are focused on instilling trust by building a consortium of high-profile partners.

Device interconnectivity and the Internet of Things (IoT), coupled with artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning, promise to drive automation, human interactivity, and efficiency to new levels. We are creating technology that really is more human.

Gartner has identified the top trends in technology for 2016: device mesh (wearables, augmented reality, virtual reality with everything else), ambient user experience (seamless transitions from one device or experience to another), 3-D printing materials (nickel alloys, carbon fibre, glass, conductive ink, electronics, pharma and biological materials, and even skin and organs), information of everything, advance machine learning, autonomous agents and things (robots, autonomous vehicles, virtual personal assistants), adaptive security architecture, advanced system architecture (GPUs and FPGAs for IoT), mesh and service architecture, and IoT architecture and platforms. We will need new messages, creative approaches and strategies to market this technology, and it may be important to integrate advanced marketing technologies in the process.

To persuade customers, technology marketing professionals often rely on positioning, strategic concepts of precision, thought leadership, power, enhanced capability, cost-effectiveness, control, and anywhere or anytime access. Advanced marketing now enables the customization of these messages to segments at a highly granular prospect level. In the future, our marketing technology will likely be intelligent, predicting which messaging will be most effective, and at what price point, for each prospective customer based on behaviour. Prospective customers will be nurtured to convert

What's in store for us? *(cont...)*

them automatically into loyal customers. Programs will learn and adapt, to be more effective in helping marketers improve marketing ROI.

From a B2B perspective, partnering and aligning with leading innovations will bring rewards. Thought leadership, "next" practices—not just best practices—and clearly articulated business and strategic benefits must be communicated by the B2B marketer. We must be better at sales force enablement, developing customer persona profiles and delivering customer insights for decision-making.

From a B2C perspective, we will need powerful human emotional benefits and positioning that allows technology to connect us, not dissociate from each other. We can always use high-touch branding strategies that elevate our deep internal desires for esteem, self-actualization, organization and community.

Artificial intelligence

But can we go further?

How will you, as a technology marketer, be inspired to develop new, compelling and creative approaches to convince your customers to buy your technology? How will you identify key new marketing issues and overcome them? Or are some things always the same? How will you go beyond what has been done?

And where will you take technology marketing tomorrow?
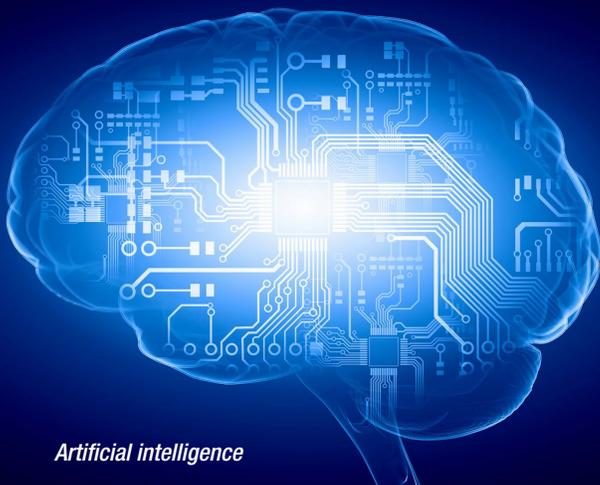
Al Leong is a former contributor to Techvibes. He earned a Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing from UBC; an MBA in Global Management, Strategy Consulting and Technology Innovation from the University of Toronto; and a Certificate in Managing Complex Product Development Projects from MIT, Sloan School of Management. He has consulted for clients and projects including Adobe, Apple, IBM, Motorola, Disney, Estey-Hoover/Deloitte, IDC/IDG Canada, Microsoft, Ogilvy & Mather/Direct, Siemens, Sony and the US Department of Defense. If you need consultation or advice, or assistance with developing powerful, elegant and innovative solutions, contact him at 1 604 781 4470 or at alleongvbc@gmail.com.