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BrandAnimation: Old World Order

By Erik Hauser



There is a reason that United Airlines doesn't let the passengers fly the planes. There's also a pretty good reason that the hospital doesn't allow its patients to perform emergency surgeries. Simply put – the majority of folks don't have the skill set to do it.

I would like to think that I have a fairly good understanding of the marketplace. There are products and services that are created for consumption, and there are advertising professionals that are asked to help expedite this process, and to help make their client's product or service outsell the competition. I've really enjoyed the American Idol age of advertising, but I'm convinced you will be seeing a lot less of it soon. The rush to allow customers to create everything will trend down, and in many respects, the old world order will re-assert itself. I am certainly not saying that customer generated content (CGC) will disappear completely, but like everything else in business it has a natural lifecycle and the cream will rise to the top – great creatives will once again be the driving force in marketing campaigns.

Let's take a trip down recent memory lane – shall we? Remember the first blogs? Blogging quickly asserted itself as an extremely powerful tool. Many people with intelligent points of view now had a platform to be heard, and there was a thirst from the public to hear real individuals and non-professionals speaking up as an alternative to the established media power structure.

The amazing blog phenomenon helped create a new world order and dynamically shifted the way information was being consumed by the general public. Bloggers were now on the same playing field and had the same reach and opportunity to be heard as the most well respected journalists. The world of media had become flat with no hierarchy - amazing.

What do blogs and CGC have in common? They have both reached the stage where hyper-saturation and hyper-fragmentation are setting in. Blogs may never die, but they will slowly fade into the distance and lose the intense allure and attraction of something new. Which

kinda' brings me to my point. There is a good reason why web-site traffic at established news resources is rapidly growing more than, dare I say it, less credible web properties. People are starting to raise the red flag, and want to feel confident the information that they are getting is based on fact or objective truth, not just personal opinion, and in some cases, paid for personal opinion. I'm not saying that established media outlets never slant a story, but they are much farther along the credibility chain than Joe Schmo's blog. They have checks and balances.

What's causing this accelerated lifecycle? History is a good indicator that squeaky wheels are the ones that often get to be heard. The Internet, the most powerful tool for dissemination of information in the world, has given complainers a moment in the spotlight, a brief 15 minutes of fame for them to be indexed right next to Charlie Gibson or Katie Couric. It's also given aspiring creative directors a chance to produce national advertising campaigns without lots of experience or layers in between them and the customer. For a brief moment all is equal – but just for a moment. As the internet as an information source continues to grow and evolve, and we watch the results of CGC in terms of sales and metrics, it's becoming clear there is a very good reason that regulated news mediums and ad agencies exist. A pro is a pro.

The Internet has grown out of its terrible twos/Wild West days, and has begun to mature, and the CGC fad is slipping. No longer does even the average Internet user weigh all things equally – in essence, order is reasserting itself.

For some reason people will always feel that creating successful advertising is as easy as 1-2-3. Just like the hundreds of thousands of American Idol hopefuls are convinced they are the world's best undiscovered singer. Is it so? No! Great singers don't come along every day, and great creative directors are just as rare. The sound of everyone shouting to be heard is becoming white noise, and the voice of tried-and-true will be the one that rises above the roar. The Internet is definitely the doorway to the world, but most people are still discriminating about who they ultimately invite home.

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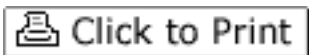
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