



SUMMARY NOTES FROM THE FORWARD POP-UP BREAKFAST DEBATE – 27 JANUARY 2010

Debate – Can you create effective content using turn-page technology?

The House of St Barnabas in Soho was home to key marketers on Wednesday 27 January who attended Forward's first Pop-Up Breakfast Debate. On the day of the Apple iPad launch, the timely topic for debate was the effectiveness of different online magazine formats, with a focus on the pros and cons of digital page-turning software.

Forward's Business Development Director, Helen Ketchin, welcomed guests from brands including Tesco, Alfred Dunhill, Fat Face and Orange, explaining that the purpose of the debate was to explore the effectiveness of different online magazine formats and find insights that would help improve the reader experience and brand engagement.

Kath Ludlow, Forward's Editorial Director, opened the debate by highlighting her passion for creating – and consuming – fantastic content, whether on- or offline.

“Great content comes in all manner of different guises and formats, and page-turning software is simply one of the options to house this content. But content is king.”

Kath shared three examples of where publishers have used page-turning software effectively. Her first example demonstrated how existing print titles such as GQ can use a digital page-turning format to raise desire and encourage readers to subscribe to the offline publication by creating a 'teaser' edition.

<http://cde.cerosmedia.com/GQ-Men-of-the-Year/1A4aa67222d60c8012.cde>

For her next point, “Page-turners can work well if you want to encourage people to ‘do’ rather than ‘read’”, she used *Camouflage* as an example. It's constructed to allow users to navigate and share content in an interactive way, perfectly suited to its younger and action-orientated target audience.

<http://cde.cerosmedia.com/Camouflage-Magazine/114ab8caf25b1c7012.cde>

Kath then continued to her third example: “If the main objective is to lead to a transaction, catalogue page-turners can work very well. The Sears *Cradle & All* catalogue is essentially a buying guide, which showcases products in a beautiful environment. Not only this, it is also an effective way of editing choice for a large retailer for specific customer groups. Here, Sears have controlled the customer journey and raised both need and desire, before leading through smoothly to the transaction.”

<http://cradleandall.sears.com/baby-furniture-baby-health-nursing-baby-safety/1Z4a981253593cb012.cde>

Kath's final example of well-constructed page-turning content was the new Fat Face jeans brochure. Developed as a specific campaign, the brochure reinforces the campaign message and branding, and builds desire for a particular product.

<http://interactive.fatface.com/>



She then discussed the fact that page-turners control the customer journey. “Research into how readers consume magazines shows that they are not read from front to back, in fact many readers start at the back and flick through. But page-turners control the customer journey and the order in which content is absorbed. This can be very effective, but the downside is that people are used to choice and the ability to self-select when they are online, so it may feel restrictive.”

The benefits to advertisers are clear with press ads being reused with little or no reformatting required, but digital versions offer the added benefit of easy tracking.

Page-turners allow for software variations but the downside is that it is still difficult to optimise for Google. Kath ended with the thought, “although page-turning software can be restrictive, the functionality is improving all the time and the effect of the launch of the new iPad will be watched with keen interest over the coming year.”

Kath then handed the debate to Andy Schiller, Digital Senior Account Director at Forward. Andy responded to the ‘pro page-turning’ case by stating his belief that: “Page-turning magazines offer a solution to a problem that no longer exists. In a world where consumers are increasingly web-savvy, they intuitively know how to navigate to the relevant content but page-turners make it difficult to get there quickly.” He continued, “It’s all too autocratic and I predict the continued evolution of the way navigation works.”

Andy highlighted *Orange Exchange* as an example of an online magazine designed to suit the online medium. A coverflow device and page descriptors provide instant access to all the content making it easy to navigate to exactly what you want. Andy said, “this gives the ability to engage with the brand in a deeper way – which has always been an issue for online – but this functionality changes that to a degree.”

www.orangeexchange.co.uk/gfs21/#/contents/

When it comes to SEO there is a distinct lack of benefit for page-turning magazines as pages are not being indexed individually. Despite that, page-turners can be optimised but content is not indexed in a ‘rich’ way as far as search engines are concerned. He made the point – “Content may be king but context is the kingdom!”

Andy admits, “There is such a thing as a ‘good’ page-turner, but there are plenty more bad ones out there. The worst examples are nothing more than flash animated PDFs, with no interaction.”

“For automotive brands, for example, interaction is an essential part of the solution which will inspire action, such as driving consumers to order a brochure or book a test drive. The Ford site executes this perfectly as it adopts hybrid navigation.”

www.fordeumicrosites.com/fordezine/200901/en-ie/index.html?campaignid=ezone&advertiserid=seed&bannerid=email#/international-icon

In an age of targeting and personalisation, non-page-turner solutions enable content to be localised and personalised much more easily and this helps with future-proofing this format. Andy summarised by saying, “Some page-turners are relevant content solutions but I believe they are tired and have had their day.”

The debate was then opened to the floor for questions and further discussion, and the following questions were discussed:



“Is there such a thing as too much interactivity?” to which Andy responded, “Yes, although it depends on the client and the overall objective. The key thing is to create clear access points for your audience without forcing them into anything.” Kath added, “there is also a danger that with too much interactivity you risk navigating people away from your content into other brands through third-party links.”

“As you can’t access flash on the iPhone, doesn’t this present the same issues and limitations as turn-page technology?” Andy’s response reinforced the message that rich-dynamic content does need to be indexable and while the solutions are continuing down an evolutionary path, flash-based content mimics the production of print. *The Guardian* application was cited as a good example of a personalised more radical way to consume news.

“In your opinion, is it better to email prospects with existing brochure content as a flat page turner or to send nothing at all in the meantime while the best solution is defined?” Kath suggested starting with what it is that you want people to feel when they received your communication and then what you want them to do. The solution will come out of this journey.

Simon Hobbs, MD of Forward, then led the debate to a close with a point on age-appropriate formats. “Perhaps page-turning software is simply a solution for a transitional period, where existing consumers move away from the comfort and familiarity of ‘reading’ an online magazine and are gently coaxed into the new and exciting world of possibility. For example, the new audience of *Smash Hits* online have no experience of reading the print version of this title, so why would they expect a page-turning format?”

The final point of the debate, which gained mass approval, was that the iPad would bring in new possibilities for content providers, but knowing your target audience, having clear objectives, and creating content that is genuinely useful and life-enhancing, is far more important, than the software in which it is housed.

SUMMARY

KATH LUDLOW’S ‘PRO’ PAGE-TURNING SOFTWARE POINTS

1. An effective promotional format for existing printed magazine titles
2. The ability to create action-led interactive issues that appeal to younger readers more interested in doing than reading
3. Works well for catalogues where retailers can edit choice, and link to a transactional site
4. Controls the reader’s journey – no other medium can do this
5. A quick and cost-effective way to upload existing printed content
6. Easy to download or print pages or sections as PDFs
7. Simple to adapt press-style and tv ads for the online format
8. Traditional/older readers may prefer to absorb content housed in a familiar format

ANDY SCHILLER’S ‘PRO’ BESPOKE INTERACTIVE SOLUTIONS POINTS

1. Gives readers flexibility on how to consume content – not controlling
2. Navigation creates a more intuitive for way people read online
3. Content is search-engine optimised
4. There is more opportunity for interaction – improves brand engagement
5. Ability to personalise content
6. Can adapt readily to future developments in technology and user behaviour

For further information on Forward, case studies of existing clients, and more details of how we can help with your digital marketing campaigns, call Helen Ketchin on 020 7734 2303 or email helen.ketchin@theforwardgroup.com