Ever Evolving

We all know how much the Internet has changed the way we do business. We no longer fax or express mail—we email and upload instead. When I started working at an advertising agency way back in the early ’90s, we were still faxing signed insertion orders and overnighting ad films! And boy, could that cause problems, especially when publishers didn’t get materials by deadline. The panel I mentioned a few posts back, about the Internet and politics, discussed how much the Internet is affecting campaigning and public opinion. But for our purposes, what is really changing is the whole scope of marketing communications.

First, traditional broadcast or print ads are just not enough. All ads and printed materials today point consumers to a website. The website has to be good and has to be UPDATED (I can’t stress that enough). But that is not yet enough. There are online ads—banners, AdWords on Google, search engine optimization. There are email campaigns. Because of the search for more targeted media, marketers have turned to all sorts of social media. Groups on Facebook/MySpace and the creation and posting of events. In the media relations field, we’ve seen a rise in subscription newsletters such as Daily Candy. So now PR practitioners send their materials to traditional and online media, and some also to major bloggers (not me, not yet anyway).

But what is really interesting is that because everything that is on the Internet is available to anyone without a blocked Internet connection, anywhere, at any time, what is said about a company, organization or even an individual, is out there, perhaps even permanently. This is the reality of the Internet. Remember how Tylenol had a problem with tainted medicine or Odwalla with tainted juice? Those cases have made it into print, but can easily be found today on the Internet. You think the Southwest issue with the cracked fuselages has to

make it into print to affect their image? No. It was reported by all media, who then post it on their websites, and even though I haven't researched it, I would bet that the blogosphere discussed it. In fact, even if something is in printed format, there are many databases out there that could be accessed (some for a fee of course) that would give you a nice PDF of whatever information you are seeking. That type of searching used to limited to scholars or journalists on a mission and with an expense account.

The newest issue then for marketers is to limit the damage or correct the image whenever possible. There are positions now such as "Social Media Manager." Here's a link to a blog that explains this http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/2008/03/23/the-need-for-the-social-media-manager/

In fact, this blog has received comments from such people. These people work for a company, like Comcast, and they scour the Internet for any mentions of their company. They then work to correct the mention or work to diminish its impact. See the comment to post We Shall Overcome immediately below.

In sum, with the Internet, the job of a marketing manager has become both easier and harder. We can collaborate more easily and we can find what we need at lightning speeds, but now we have a huge, not easy to control mass medium that knows no borders. Marketing managers today have to be concerned about image both on and off line. Big job!