

How to Cultivate a Cohesive Brand Through Micromessaging

An Interview with Dave Grzelak of The Shipyard

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Marketers want to create data-driven experiences for two big reasons: They believe customers want them, and there's a growing need to justify investments based on results.

For our four-part "[Customer Experience](#)" report series, we spoke with Dave Grzelak, managing partner and chief strategy officer at full-service agency The Shipyard, about effective segmentation, creating a cohesive brand while navigating marketplace micromessaging, and harnessing first- and third-party data.

When creating segments, what kind of data are you using, and where are you getting it?

We have a customer data platform [CDP] that allows us to model third-party segments off first-party data to get a clear picture of what those different audiences and segments look like. From there, we can take the information coming out of that universe and tie it back in to other data sets, like from GfK MRI. Then, we can build multiple personas of different top audiences that exist.

How do you take that data and turn it into what you think the messaging should be for each segment?

We use the data that's coming out of our platform, along with the different segments that are merging, to create a human analysis that pieces together like-minded individuals based on traits you can see in the data.

For example, if we're looking at a car enthusiast, we take all the different third-party segments for car enthusiasts and combine them to get a sense of size and scale that exists for that microsegment. Then we look to primary and secondary research based around that audience to help build insight into why this microsite has an interest in a category and why a certain type of messaging resonates with them.

How do you think about effectively cultivating a cohesive brand while simultaneously creating micromessaging?

As marketers, we somewhat misunderstand how consumers think about a brand. In truth, if you ask people about the most famous brands, they have a different understanding or connection to that brand from what you're expecting in your marketing and advertising communication—or at least what the strategy is behind that marketing communication.

We like to think about it as going to a cocktail party. When you interact with different folks, you start to show different sides of yourself. You might talk about politics [with one person], or you might gossip [with another]. And the truth is that's how human beings are, and brand needs to reflect that. So we work hard to keep a brand standard and consistency in place. We make sure that there's a point of view and a positioning of what this brand stands for. And instead of telling a story, we're just telling chapters of stories.

We're breaking the stories down in a more sophisticated and systematic way, which still allows you to have a consistent brand that's properly positioned in the marketplace. But there's also an increased focus on the pages of those chapters, as opposed to the overall story when it comes to messaging.

What challenges might hinder brands from creating that cohesive storyline?

One of the biggest challenges is taking third-party data, and the signals you get from this data, and trying to build upon it in an inspiring way from a messaging or strategy standpoint. Third-party data comes in little signals that tell you things about what consumers are interested in, where they're coming from, or ways they've interacted with your brand.

But [this fragmentation] requires a lot of work and attention before you can really understand how to talk to this group differently from another. Translating third-party data into something more meaningful and useful takes time, resources and investment. Creating this single view of the consumer is much easier when you're dealing with first-party data.

Is the industrywide shift to first-party data influenced by the added accuracy of this data?

The data is much more reliable. It's accurate. It's contextual. So, it has a lot to do with the interactions that consumers are having with your brand besides its category. You know what kind of content they are consuming, what kinds of messages they've responded to, how long it takes from impression to conversion, what kind of transaction they are making, and what basket size they have.

Your first-party data and the segments you've created out of that data are always going to outperform what you're doing with a third-party data set.

To learn more about how marketers can deliver personalized experiences for customers across all channels, read our four-part series.

Report by Lauren Fisher and Nicole Perrin Jul 19, 2019

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