

TORCHING THE BIG IDEA

DIGITAL MEDIA ALLOWS BRANDS TO CREATE LOW-RISK INITIATIVES WITH THE POTENTIAL TO GROW. KARSON STIMSON ASKS WHY MARKETERS REMAIN OBSESSED WITH PUTTING ALL THEIR EGGS IN ONE BASKET WITH ADS THAT RUN FOR ONLY A LIMITED TIME ANYWAY.



It's traditionally accepted by marketers and the advertising industry that the Holy Grail of success is creating the one big campaign.

Wrong. In this digital age, marketing is about lighting a series of spot-fires, rather than pinning all your hopes on one big idea.

There are many marketing professionals, brand managers and business owners gambling with their budgets by investing everything in one campaign. And there are plenty of traditional ad agencies who are happy to sell this notion to their clients.

But it's not that smart when you think about it.

Even with buckets of money spent on research and attempts to gaze deep into the crystal ball, it's impossible to predict what will be an overnight success, which is why I'm constantly perplexed when businesses and agencies alike decide to gamble their budgets on the one big campaign.

What makes this even more surprising is that after a few months, most of the resultant campaigns drop off the face of the earth.

Surely there's more value for a business or brand to create a platform, tool or service that entertains, engages or serves as a utility

and creates some sort of long-term value and connection between the customer and the business?

The Michelin Guide and star rating system got out of the gates early and established itself as a true stayer. It's a great example of a branded utility. First published in 1900, it has grown significantly over time to include hotel, restaurant and tourism guides, road maps, online mapping, travel solutions and its star rating system.

Similarly, the Amazon.com Wishlist is a service that has been scaled up over the years to the point where now, people can add anything from any website to their Wishlist. Imagine the incredible data gained: What people have bought, what they're thinking about buying, their tastes, shopping habits, seasonal habits. This service creates serious value for both business and customer.

More recently, there's the Nike+ online platform. Integrating directly with a sensor embedded in Nike trainers and your iPod or iPhone, it's able to track your personal workout statistics and your workout music. Nike+ allows runners to share routes, challenge and network with other runners, and to find the most motivating music.

Nike has created a platform that generates long-term value. Due to its success, this spark has erupted into something much bigger, running on its own momentum.



Jamie Oliver is an empire built on a series of smart ideas such as his iPhone application, which is among the top 15 highest grossing apps of all time.

Two businesses on top of this approach are Jamie Oliver and Google. Jamie Oliver has launched *Jamie Magazine*, his TV shows, his iPhone application - which is number 15 in the list of top grossing applications of all time - his online community, including the "where food lovers meet" dating service, to name just a few. Jamie Oliver is an empire built on a series of smart ideas.

At the same time, Google lets its employees spend a fifth of their work time on side projects. Some of those projects catch on internally, and some are scaled up until they're launched as public products. It's a survival of the

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fittest; may the best spot-fire win. So, it's time to wake up, Australia, and start hedging your bets. Rather than backing the one horse, why not spread it around, back the field and light lots of little spot-fires in the digital space and see what sparks?

Once you see an idea starting to flame, then you can start to scale it up and increase its value.

The idea is as important as ever, but it doesn't mean it has to be an expensive idea or a big execution.

Be a digital arsonist. <

Karson Stimson is founder of WeAreDigital.

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