



Innovators Provide Guidelines for Brand Success in Today's Complex World

Agility. Brand Experience. Relevance. Millennial Values. Provocative. New Models. These are more than a collection of marketing buzzwords; they are the shorthand of today's *Innovators* as they offered insights on how to achieve international success for brands in a fast-changing, always-on, technology-enhanced borderless world.

At the end of 2012, a dozen breakthrough agency thinkers, recently named *Innovators*, offered their perspectives at an **Internationalist** Summit that demonstrated how innovation is alive and well in our industry. Through high-energy TED-like sessions and fast-paced panels, they showed how thinking and acting differently to build teams and work with brands is necessary to insure that marketing programs resonate with consumers and make a difference.

Although the specific subject matter of the discussions varied widely, a number of actionable themes emerged: disrupt the pattern, know when to change, create relevance, be brave in the face of complexity, and adopt new models. Here's a quick look at highlights and core concepts framed by today's *Innovators*:

What are the principles for creating a good brand experience? **Michael Litchfield**, Executive Creative Director of Doremus who shifted 150 years of perception about Corning in one viral video called a "Day Made of Glass," shared his checklist of five critical campaign elements. "1. You have to be provocative to get noticed. This takes the courage to push to the edge. 2. You've also got to be entertaining. Generally being funny creates great entertainment. 3. Be relevant. 4. Be unexpected—disrupt the anticipated pattern. 5. And finally be truly 'remarkable.' In today's social media world, programs fail when they are not 'remark worthy.'"

Michael underscored that a marketing program today can lead to a lasting experience if two or three of these five standards are achieved. His Corning work exemplified three of the principles, and has

now received over 20 million views on YouTube and countless mentions in the press and blogosphere, earning Corning the status of innovator and thought leader.

James Fox, CEO of Red Peak Branding, also shared a set of guidelines for being brave in a fearful marketing world—a timely topic given current economic worries about a US fiscal cliff, Greek bailouts and a slowing China. Red Peak is a new marketing services group that uses creativity, design and strategy to transform brands. James describes the venture as a 21st century company designed to solve 21st century problems by developing bold solutions to today's marketing challenges.

James provided a clever journey that transported the audience through the 7 basic human emotions—including joy-- (*the emotion that clients usually mean when they specify that ads should be more "emotional"*) and fear as we live in particularly fearful times. His advice, through terrific campaign examples, is threefold: 1. Be honest (in accessing the product, its values and its appeal); 2. Change the rules; 3. Know when to change.

Jan Gerits, Regional Business Intelligence & Development Director of Omnicom Media Group, agrees that "business as usual" only results in failure. He provocatively asked, "Are you ready to meet change faster than the person next to you? His suggestion was to embrace "agility," a way of thinking and acting that is immediately responsive rather than reactionary. "Agility," he says, "is predictive intelligence, not analysis of what has been. Technology demands agility, and agility matters most to a business like ours."

He provided three lessons in tactical agility by describing a new way of behavior that is:

1. *Always asking...* He describes this as keeping plans fluid with multiple variable. "Guess where the ball is going to go as opposed to waiting for it to land."
2. *Always thinking...* Consider where the opportunities will be while inspiring innovation from a dedicate team.
3. *Always doing...* constantly invest in the talents of your group and bring in new type of thinkers.

Scott Hess, SVP/Human Intelligence & Research at Spark, not only provided a snapshot of the values of today's Millennial generation, but underscored how they are changing our business and our world. Millennials are the largest living generation; they are entering their prime earning and consuming years now; and are uniquely influential. Not only are they today's adopters, adapters and arbiters of what's cool, but they could prove to be the next "Greatest Generation" as they are inclusive, tolerant and see the value of commerce and conscience together. Media for them is personal and immediate, this is the Facebook, mobile, multitasking, digitally-native generation whose mantra may well be "I am always everywhere with everyone."

Sure, Millennials may be experiencing a number of hurdles to adulthood due to the nature of today's economy and their need to explore for nearly 10 years to "find their why." However, if brands don't lend themselves to their "form, function and philosophy," they will be in trouble.

Wayne Arnold, Co-Founder & CEO of Profero, the independent digital agency known for transforming brand experiences across all digital platforms, shared his philosophy for managing the

“cutting edge” in our “Age of Access.” According to Wayne, “Technology is changing the way that we as human beings access information, content and stories. It also puts us at the frontier of the new marketing world.” His belief is that three elements are critical to delivering success brand messaging today: media, creative and technology.

He also believes that basic business models are changing as we embrace new forms of media and technology. Whereas most understood the 20-80 rule of the past where 80% of business came from 20% of customers, today’s new model may be considered 1-9-90. In a digital age where viral influence matters the 1% are the “innovators” or the activists, the 9% then become the “enablers” sharing the ideas of the top tier of advocates, while the 90% are the masses who are influenced by the thinking and discussions of the 10%.

A panel discussion among five of this year’s *Innovators* on “What’s Next” was led by 2011 *Innovator* **Paul Woolmington**. Among the questions discussed were:

- What are ways that we can be more effective or productive in the communications industry without necessarily increasing budgets? Sometimes we have to do more with less. This is a real test and motivator of innovation.
- How do you think innovation is realized and how can marketing communications companies and clients alike structure themselves to achieve greater innovation?
- What device, site, gadget, or technology can you not live without today—particularly as it relates to marketing solutions?
- What is the next “shiny object” or “new new thing” that is keeping you up at night or causing you to grapple with solutions for your clients?

Some of the issues and answers of greatest personal consequence included the following:

John Noe, CEO & Founding Partner of full-service digital agency Rokkan, admitted that with success he fears “getting comfortable.” He associates comfort in advertising with losing passion for the work. John has led the agency’s growth from a 3-man production startup in 2000 to 70 full-time employees.

In fact, Rokkan (which is the Japanese word for intuition or sixth sense) was acquired just this December by Publicis Groupe. All Rokkan employees have now joined the French holding company and will operate as an autonomous shop with its own brand identity.

Jim Russell, Chief Innovation Officer at McKinney, is a believer in “human innovation, as opposed to technological innovation.” He is proud to have fostered the McKinney Ten Percent, a program that encourages employees to follow their creative muse and devote 10% of their time on projects unrelated to client business. As a result, client work has been strengthened, as have the perceptions of McKinney as an innovative agency.

Jim’s background is in both service and technology, yet he is fanatical about putting certain structures in place to allow McKinney to align itself around the innovation mantra of “more leading ideas faster.” In addition to the McKinney Ten Percent, the agency has a structure called Bullpen, where individuals can share and build off of others’ ideas. He adds, “We also have a venture arm where we

are able to fund those ideas and turn them into real business opportunities. These things together are very rare for an advertising agency.”

Andrea Suarez, President of World Markets for IPG Mediabrands believes that in an age of complexity a better understanding of how to be simple may serve us all well. Andrea brings a sense of ease to an amazingly complicated role of leading and inspiring 52 offices around the globe known as emerging world markets, which include countries in Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. A native of Colombia and a resident of Miami, she sees immediate parallels between markets as seemingly diverse as Thailand and Ecuador as they face new realities that are far more similar than different.

An advocate of internal communications, she discussed how Yammer connects over 6,000 employees via a global, social enterprise network that helps her find “influencers” who are driving change, as well as community managers within the company. “Just following the conversations is a process of internal crowdsourcing.”

Steve Williams, President of PHD New York believes that using the imagination to the fullest extent is critical to achieving innovative work. “Giving people time and permission to be bold is critical.” In fact, he states, “My brand promise is delivering energy and imagination through cultural leadership.” He adds that at PHD, innovation is about talent collaboration and iteration. “Ideas and innovation come through a restless and obsessive approach to finding a better way to create a difference to a client’s business. Innovation needs to solve a business problem, not be for its own sake.”

Sebastian Jespersen, CEO of Vertic, the digital agency with offices in New York, Denmark and Singapore, believes that today’s media complexity is also rife with opportunities for greater relevancy. “This year,” he said, “innovation took a new turn when we imagined if we had the ability to combine awareness and lead-generation in one highly customized solution that was so compelling it redefined direct marketing.” He added, “A solution is not truly successful unless it grows a brand and noticeably changes the core business, bringing tangible results.”

ABOUT THE INNOVATORS

INNOVATORS are critical to moving our business forward.

Every year since 2006, **The Internationalist** has named those agency executives who have the rare ability to rethink current notions of brand building by simplifying complex internal processes, encouraging collaboration, managing risk while working in the midst of fast change, keeping sight of “the big idea,” championing multinational strategy, and involving customers directly in the creative process. Known as **Innovators**, they underscore how break-through thinking knows no bounds of geography, age, company size, or title within today’s agency organizations.

the internationalist

The Internationalist connects the *people and ideas* in international advertising, marketing and media. Today **The Internationalist** has become a trusted source for international best practices, and is dedicated to the business needs and challenges of international marketing professionals as they participate in multinational branding and campaign building. **The Internationalist** is now IN PRINT, ONLINE and IN-PERSON through events-- all to better serve the needs of this community.