

Editorial: *Empowering People in the New Age of Image and Information*

At the beginning of 2014, it was underlined that: “*The drought in consumer technology is about to be replaced by a deluge*”.¹ In this respect, a first example was that of Apple’s attempt to redefine an entire product category (as it did in 2007), this time being the case of wearables (instead of phones), but not forgetting to mention that on the groundwork laid in the years before we could see major upgrades to many other kinds of consumer technology that could quickly reach the hands of regular users, not just in those of early adopters. And this while the so-called “*Code Halos*” (term coined by Cognizant to describe the new capacity for making meaning from both, data generated by the personal activities, as well as all the code that surrounds people and organizations we interact with) is now creating “*a whole new ecosystem of interconnected technology enablers and business opportunities for enterprises*” (the “Code Halos” being seen as the essence of the competitive advantage of these enterprises).² According to this last point of view, the challenge is to be smart enough to create, share and derive meaning from all of the halos around organizations, places, and things we creatively interact with.

The end of this year brought to us the invitation (launched by Michael Stelzner by interviewing Paul Rand, who told us what he discovered at his first encounter with Stew Leonard’s, a popular East Coast grocery chain building sociability into their business from the very beginning)³ to learn how to build a business that’s highly recommended, starting from two evidences: people love to share something that they think might help someone else; the dramatic influence (bigger reach than face-to-face recommendations) of online implied (e.g. liking a Facebook page or sharing a post) or explicit (e.g. through a post or from an online review that something is great) recommendations, considering the importance of targeting the right influencers online. It is well-known that social media always knew how to exploit word-of-mouth recommendations (“the Holy Grail for marketers”), by right using their potential for reaching millions of people. That is why it is considered to be very important to ask yourself to get more positive recommendations for your brand, by: focusing on how people talk about you in

¹ Christopher Mims - Why 2014 could be the most interesting year in technology in a long time, January 6, 2014, available at: <http://qz.com/293377/how-a-sea-of-red-ceramic-poppies-captivated-britain-and-brought-wwi-to-life/>

² Ted Shelton - 2014 Year of the Code Halo, January 10th 2014, available at: <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/2014-year-code-halo>

³ Michael Stelzner - Becoming Recommended: How to Build a Business Others Love Recommending, November 21, 2014, available at: <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/becoming-recommended-with-paul-rand/>

everything they do and achieving the right balance between providing relevant information related to your brand and promoting your products or services; making sure your customers are truly satisfied with their purchase or find out if they have any questions; using post-sale actions to encourage recommendations.

But as we are both in the “Age of the Image” (being no doubt that our brains are more efficient at processing images than words), and in a “New Age of Information” we also have to consider:

- the popularity of the images overlaid with text (“Internet memes”, which are used by brands to reach their audiences), the wide-scale practice of sharing them, and to create our own marketing images for distribution.⁴ Within this context it is recommended to follow three steps: selecting the right images to use; adding the accompanying copy; using social networks to spread the message;

- the recent move toward curated content made by prestigious publishers (such as the New York Times and the Financial Times),⁵ this natural, logical, and customer-centric move (for publishers and brands alike) being seen as “a seismic shift in consumer expectations of information” by the integration of selected third-party content (of the consumer) meaningful to consumers and ultimately valuable to the business;

- the “*reshare test*” (seen by Guy Kawasaki as being the most important test of all of social media, *and* the so-called (by the same Guy Kawasaki, who consider social media as a marketing platform and uses it as a business tool) “*NPR model*” (National Public Radio - as a marketer you should think of yourself like NPR) now in full “renaissance of marketing”).⁶

And coming back to the old good habits,⁷ as we are now at the end of 2014, let us finally take a look at the 14th annual Edelman Trust Barometer, the largest exploration of trust in

⁴ Elizabeth Victor - How to Use Internet Memes to Market Your Content Your Products and Your Brand, December 12, 2014, available at: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/articles/print/2014/26678/how-to-use-internet-memes-to-market-your-content-your-products-and-your-brand>

⁵ Christian Jorg - Why Curation Matters to Content, December 10, 2014, available at: <http://www.marketingprofs.com/opinions/print/2014/26662/why-curation-matters-to-content>

⁶ Michael Stelzner - Content Sharing: How to Build a Following Using Other People’s Content, December 5, 2014, available at: <http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/content-sharing-with-guy-kawasaki/>

⁷ Theodor Valentin Purcarea - On the Path to Greater Trust While Going Through a Major Transformation, available at: <http://crd-aida.ro/RePEc/rdc/v4i4/1.pdf>

institutions, industries and leaders.⁸ It is worth to underline that the authors consider that this year barometer showed the largest ever gap between trust in business and government since Edelman began this study in 2001, and that now there is an opportunity for business (which has recovered trust from the crisis period) to push for deregulation. As Richard Edelman argued: *“In a world of constrained resources and growing stresses, compromise and choice are required for forward progress, based on values and with the commitment of greater societal value”*.

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⁸ Richard Edelman - 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer by Edelman, available at: <http://www.edelman.com/insights/intellectual-property/2014-edelman-trust-barometer/about-trust/executive-summary/>