



Our Industry's Problem Is Clear — So Is the Solution

Posted by [Derek A. Lackey, Editor](#) / December 06, 2017

Having recently joined my third programmatic digital marketing company, I could have experienced a what have I got myself back into? moment as 2017 wound down. First, the ANA Masters of Marketing (MoM) conference Visionary Marketer of the Year award went to Procter & Gamble (P&G) Chief Brand Officer Marc Pritchard who won the honor in part by withholding \$140 million worth of digital ad spend. Furthermore, Pritchard used the MoM forum as a bully pulpit, labeling digital a crap trap and declaring, We will vote with our dollars and will not waste our money on a crappy media supply chain.

Tell us what you really think, Marc.

Several weeks later, at NBCUniversal's State of the Industry Forum, NBC Entertainment Chairman Bob Greenblatt piled on, asserting that consumers are running away from advertising in droves.

That drumbeat of criticism directed at digital advertising could have been severely demoralizing to a marketing industry veteran. Instead, it reinforced why I made this career move.

What He Said

For one thing, those high-profile critics simply echoed what the head of my new company, PebblePost, has been saying for a while. Compare the three quotes below:

In the column quoted above, Lewis predicted that brands would start doing exactly what P&G did a few months after the column appeared: Will digital marketing die? No. Will brands invest less? Yes but a correction will be a healthy step. It will lead to a smaller pool of more powerful vendors, stronger results and a more sustainable industry through a better user experience for the consumer.

Hearing my new boss's words in my head as I strolled around the Masters of Marketing conference was reassuring. But MoM provided positive reinforcement in many other ways as well.

Using (and Abusing) Consumer Utilities

Among the MoM events I attended were a lunch sponsored by Google, a lunch sponsored by Facebook and a breakfast sponsored by the U.S. Postal Service. It dawned on me that none of these three institutions was founded with the primary goal of driving ad dollars. Instead, the idea in each case was simply to connect vast numbers of people in a positive way. (You can add the institution behind NBCUniversal's State of the Industry Forum television to the list.)

The U.S. Postal Service was the original social network.

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