

Gary Vaynerchuk's Cannes Lions wake-up call for marketers: Are you still stuck in the past?

Rida Oyebade, of ROC Digital, reports from Cannes Lions, the world's largest and most prestigious advertising and marketing festival. A place where creativity meets inspiration against the backdrop of the stunning French Riviera and where Gary Vaynerchuk shared his wisdom.

Temps de lecture : minute

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This year's festival felt particularly personal. Let me explain.

Flashback to 2015. I was beginning my journey into the world of international marketing with a Master's program that had introduced a module on social media— a pioneering first in its curriculum.

Growing up in an era where digital platforms were rapidly gaining prominence, I watched the transition of regular YouTubers ascend to stardom as influencer marketing began to commercialise. I also saw how online platforms collectively disrupted the digital scene, reshaping the way we connect and communicate.

Like many from my generation, social media marketing felt natural to me. Yet as I graduated from my MSc, I noticed a disconnect.

Many companies struggled to adapt to the ever-changing digital terrain, particularly the rise of social networking sites. It was almost as if their presence on these platforms was an afterthought—a tick box rather than

an integral part of their marketing strategy.

Cue to Cannes Lions 2023, where this same issue was the focus of Gary Vaynerchuk's wake-up call.

At the heart of his message was a startling truth that resonated deeply with me: many companies are not focusing enough on where the attention truly is - social media. Instead, we remain gripped by past successes and future speculations, especially the obsession with AI.

Here are the top 5 insights from Gary's talk:

1. "We are separating the marketing from the objectives of the brand"

One of the key insights Gary Vaynerchuk shared is the growing disconnect between marketing and the overarching business objectives. He emphasised how, often, the two elements seem to function in silos. This results in a marketing strategy that is not fully aligned with the brand's broader goals, diluting the potential impact.

Vaynerchuk argues that marketing is not just about creative campaigns and attractive advertisements. At its core, marketing should be a strategic tool to drive the business forward. Therefore, it is essential for marketers to constantly ask themselves: "Are our marketing activities helping us achieve our business objectives?"

He further elaborated that the disconnect often emerges when marketing becomes too entranced by novel ideas and neglects to place the brand's objectives at the heart of its efforts. The solution, according to Vaynerchuk, is to ensure a harmonious relationship between creativity and strategic objectives.

2. “We are living through a transition of chasing attention.”

The attention economy is changing. In the past, brands could reach a large audience with TV ads. But today, attention is scattered across multiple platforms. This means that brands need to be more creative and relevant than before in order to capture their audience's attention. If your content fails to seize this dispersed attention, it's akin to a tree falling in an isolated forest.

Yet, a significant number of companies, especially larger corporations, are overlooking this reality.

3. “We, as an industry, are audacious to the truth of the consumer”

We need to be more consumer centric. While the industry fixates on AI, Gary highlighted a crucial oversight. Brands are being built on social media platforms through creative content, rendering the traditional approach of TV advertising insufficient in the current landscape.

There is an alternative approach to advertising and it's glaringly apparent. Emerging brands and creators are already leveraging it effectively. We need to adjust our perspective and acknowledge the consumer truth: our audience is spending their time on social media and digital platforms, engaging with content that resonates with them personally.

Vaynerchuk highlights successful brands, such as Mr. Beast's chocolate or Logan Paul' x KSI's Prime, that were born and thrived on social media platforms.

As Vaynerchuk poignantly noted, we must shift our focus to these new

platforms, embrace their potential, and create content that our audience genuinely wishes to consume.

4. “The best ideas that creatives had in their head never saw the day of light in its pure form.”

They say “Great ideas come from everywhere” but the reality is “Great ideas come from the most senior person that makes the call” This contradiction can create a bottleneck, stifling true innovation.

Gary's proposed antidote is a shift in culture and mindset. He urges us to cultivate a space where creativity is empowered, not boxed in by fear or hierarchy.

5. “We are not as creative as we can be, because we are not doing enough creating.”

Vaynerchuk suggested that we need to be producing 10, 20, even 30 ads a day to stay relevant. That's the magnitude of creativity needed in this fast-paced, consumer-driven world.

Instead of creating a single piece of content for mass distribution, we should be outputting numerous pieces of high quality content daily, each fine-tuned to resonate with different platforms. This approach encourages creative freedom, making room for fresh, exciting ideas to thrive.

Gary Vaynerchuk's wisdom at Cannes Lions is a compelling call to action for marketers. He reinforced the crucial role of creativity in marketing, the importance of aligning marketing initiatives with business objectives, and the necessity of tapping into the power of social platforms. In a world

saturated with content, he reiterated the importance of producing relevant, resonant, and engaging content.

In a dynamic marketing world, our strategies need to evolve alongside changes. This flexibility and willingness to adapt set us up for sustained success in the future.

Particularly for startups and entrepreneurs, this guidance is a crucial reminder. Ensuring their marketing ventures are innovative and meticulously synchronised with their business aspirations enables them to fully utilise marketing as a launchpad for their growth. Moreover, creating an environment that encourages creativity, flattens organisational hierarchies, and empowers people with ideas are vital in driving success.

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