

Top five things learned at SxSW 2012

 By [trigger/isobar](#) goes to SxSW

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Karin Botta: During [South by South West Interactive](#) (SxSWi) this year, I saw a lot of new work. New web services, interface designs, ideas for content, robots, gadgets, 3D printing, TV shows - there was even talk of spaceships.

But, with the exception of one session, the digital agency didn't hold much of a presence, entrenching my view that digital marketing is a lot more than an entertaining Facebook tab, some cute tweets or a campaign that relies solely on user-generated content. It's more dynamic, involves real people, but mostly needs to be as simple as possible, weaving together technology, messages, analytics and innovation.

It was this, and the next five ideas that had the biggest impact on me during my time in Austin last week:

1. Efficiency

I hate to say it, but time, process and people will always kill innovative ideas.

Given the amount of tweets, blog posts and conversations during SxSW, the concept of '[the lean startup](#)' was seemingly the most enlightening theme for a lot of attendees. It's actually from a book by Eric Ries, (see [theleanstartup.com](#)) and doesn't only apply to small new businesses; it's rather a principle of efficiency that we all should remember.

Innovation is relative; if you want to be innovative you have to do something first, and that means getting the product, or project, out fast.

The principle says: cut out the fat of processes, make decisions quickly and get things done with the less people the better. You don't need 10 people in a meeting to validate the size of a project or an idea. The bigger the project gets, the more diluted the idea will become, the longer it will take, and the more likely it will be that it will never see the light of day. The advice is to do the technical build first, rather than last.

[Rei Inamoto](#) also said, "To run an efficient team you only need three people: A Hipster, A Hacker, and a Hustler." Thank you, Rei, I will remember that.

2. Digital products and user behaviour

Penetration of digital devices is at critical mass in South Africa. If you are talking to the LSM 7-10 market, your potential consumers are online, they have smartphones, they have email addresses, they check Facebook in bed, and they tweet in front of the TV.

I read something cute while at the conference: someone compared including digital in a marketing campaign as the same as asking "Would you like fries with that?" as if it were an optional add-on.

Digital is embedded into people's lives. So, it should be embedded into marketing initiatives in the same way not as something that is added on at the end of a campaign plan but rather included in any user journey or consumer lifecycle upfront.

Most importantly, the greatest value can be derived from building digital products that consumers will find value using - delivering ROI, higher engagement rates and, most importantly, users actually using what you have built. A digital product doesn't need to be something that people need to buy. It can be a tool on your website, an app, a game or a customer service interface.

Finally, if you build a digital campaign or interaction that is new and innovative, teach people how to use it, otherwise they probably won't.

3. Liquidity

[Something that I made reference](#) to in a blog post yesterday, Monday, 19 March 2012, is the shift in traditional brand strategy where repetitive messages are disconnecting consumers and a new strategy that allows for liquidity can take its place, so that brands can stay relevant to individuals and surrounding environments over periods of time.

The opportunity that the digital medium and direct marketing has is to talk to individual consumers in different and relevant ways, in targeted places.

Brand strategists need to account for this and ask, "How can the brand stay consistent but different?" Achieving this can result in better engagement, and consistently sustaining the attention of an audience.

Although rather simple, the '[Google doodle](#)' is a fine example of this kind of liquidity: consistent but different.

4. The second screen

Considering the importance of mobile in our market, the interpretation of it as 'the second screen' pins down mobile from a marketing point of view quite effectively. The way that American speakers used this definition, however, was only in the context of television and its strong relationship with mobile users.

Mobile is a supplement to the TV viewing experience, but the way I see it is as a supplement (or the second screen) to any offline experience from in store to transport and out-of-home media.

Knowing this, digital marketers need to consider the location and environment that mobile users might be in before talking to them on mobile and consider pull strategies, rather than simply push messages.

5. Gamification

In SA, where there is such a high penetration of mobile phones as opposed to computers, I'm surprised that marketers do not use mobile games as much as they could. Digital media is not about clicks any more or impressions, but rather success and differentiation come from engagement activating users of your brand and marketing. Games (and I don't mean the shooting, racing, bird-catapulting kind) can incentivise users to stay engaged

and interested, but also can be used in education or even in social problem-solving.

I am still overflowing with inspiration and ideas that I aim to apply to projects that I will work on in 2012, but I do hope to go back to SxSW next year and one day to present work from SA in that forum; we're definitely good enough.

For more:

- Bizcommunity Blog: [trigger/isobar goes to SxSW](#)

The introduction of this piece was replaced at 4.49pm on 22 March 2012 as the previous one, referencing an interview with a global digital director, could not be validated.

ABOUT TRIGGER/ISOBAR GOES TO SXSW

Karin Botta, business unit director at trigger/isobar (www.isobar.co.za; @triggerisobar), attended South by South West (SxSW) 2012, the annual film, music and interactive festival held in March in Austin, Texas. Email Karin at karin.botta@isobar.co.za, Skype [karinchiarabotta](#) and follow her on Twitter at @karinchiara.

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