

Future-proof your brand for 2017 and beyond

 By Leigh Andrews

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As 2016 winds down and we enter holiday mode, it's time to start thinking of the 2017 work year. Here's why you need to use your down time to put plans into place to upskill your employees and stay ahead of the pack.

[Associations Now](#) says now is the perfect time to 'future-proof your marketing team', which entails filling skills gaps. Most of those skills gaps arise because technology is progressing at an alarming pace, and we're simply not keeping up with it.



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For example, most businesses have social media accounts these days, but few have had adequate training in the basics of social media marketing for businesses, such as knowing when to post content and how best to engage with online customers. Even fewer have embraced a [social media crisis management strategy](#) of sorts, which is absolutely essential in managing your brand reputation. The Simply Measured blog explains five of the most common social media marketing mistakes businesses make in great detail [here](#).

Is your brand ready for conversational experiences?

But this key trend of 'digital interaction with consumers' needs to extend from those social media interactions – which are, frankly, so last year – and extend to a variety of chat services, as [Adweek](#) states: "Messaging apps are becoming the new second home screen."

Based on [Edelman Digital](#)'s annual trends predictions for 2017, Adweek adds that marketers should specifically focus on these '**conversational experiences**' through Skype, Facebook Messenger, chat bots and more. That's not just a passing fad. Forbes quotes Mastercard's chief marketing and communications officer as stating: "...chatbots have the potential to literally change the conversation for brands. The opportunity for marketers to play a role in this space is tremendous. We're always striving to be present at that critical moment of truth and this technology enables us to be exactly right there."

New ways of work for everyone

It seems the days of framing your university degree and flying on that textbook knowledge are long gone, as we enter an era of lifelong learning and constant upskilling to keep up with, if not ahead of, the pack. Earlier this year, Louise Marsland brought our attention to the fact that [Business Insider](#) listed printing workers, desktop publishers and media workers like

reporters, correspondents or broadcast-news analysts among the fastest-disappearing jobs in the US in 2015, with global repercussions. But it's not all doom and gloom as Marsland reassured: "for those of us who are able to reinvent ourselves or upskill, popular new jobs are anything digital or online."

[Forbes](#) goes a step further, listing the **top marketing jobs** for next year as: CXO – that's chief experience officer; augmented reality producer; lead data analyst; and bot producer – all strongly based on technology, and all roles that simply didn't exist just a few-hundred days ago, never mind a decade ago.

“ [#Digital](#) has potential to help orgs [#futureproof](#) themselves, but this isn't possible unless CXOs personally lead this [#digitaltransformation](#)— Sanchit Vir Gogia (@s_v_g) [December 7, 2016](#) ”

That's scary and proof that there's no better time to start upskilling yourself and your staff to ensure you're business continues to succeed in 2017.

Share how you're futureproofing your business in the comments section below...

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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