Putting the 'I' in live.

By Mike Sharman

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Two fundamental social media content events occurred in 2016. Chewbacca Mom elevated Facebook Live to 'Citizen Broadcaster' status, and Instagram sucker-punched Snap with its introduction of Stories, which has amassed more than 300 million daily active users (DAUs) in 2017. That's almost double Snapchat's DAUs (at 173m).



Mike Sharman, owner, Retroviral Digital Communications.

The significance of these two incidents is that they propelled live-thinking into the mainstream consciousness and paved the way for a real-time, broadcasting tipping point of 2017.

Live digital content

Live has been the major evolution in digital over the past two years, but it is still under-utilised from a brand perspective in South Africa. We have used live effectively for authentic message delivery on Facebook for brands such as Russell Hobbs. Live competition draws have been championed by our fans for the simple premise that our customers are seldom exposed to such transparency.

From an integrated marketing perspective, between 22-24 November, we leveraged live to execute the ‘Holy Trinity of Marketing’ in its purest form.

The HTOM is the hybrid mentality that was the basis for the establishment of the Retroviral agency, whereby the ideal scenario for a through the line (TTL) execution pertains to the use of digital content, leveraged in the real world for a more immersive, emotional experience with an activation, amplified by both traditional and digital PR.

When we were briefed by M-Net to promote the return of the *Survivor South Africa* franchise, we were required to cut through the clutter of the ubiquitous format of reality TV. This is Outwit. Outplay. Outdoor…

Podcasting as an emotional connection opportunity

Live video isn't the only content tactic exploding on the local scene. Podcasting has seen the digitalisation of one of the world's most impactful media – radio – and resuscitated the theatre of the mind with a consumption option that appeals to a millennial audience and older.

Shows like *Serial* have done wonders for the PR of podcasting and the increase in downloads for local properties from *Cliff Central*, as well as the aggressive marketing of the industry - by individuals such as Matt Brown - has led to the increased awareness and adoption of the media by a constantly growing audience.

Brands should consider podcasting as an emotional connection opportunity and as we conclude 2017 and look ahead to 2018, Anchor is the app to watch. It combines the simplicity of recording a voice note – the *defacto* form of communication for the digital native – with the platform that links into social media to disseminate one's Citizen Broadcast on the audio front.

Voice shouldn't be taken for granted as we head towards 2020, and communicating with our connected devices as AI-like personal assistants will become second nature where our IoT world will continue to complete tasks for us at the drop of the spoken word.

ABOUT MIKE SHARMAN

Mike Sharman is the owner of Retroviral Digital Communications, an online communications consultancy specialising in communication strategy, social media and content creation.

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