

Whoosh! The year in which nothing happens

 By [Walter Pike](#)

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Time magazine named the protester as its 2011 man of the year. The protester using the power he/she obtained from a new media landscape in social-media-enabled grass roots protest movements.



These protests starting in a remote village in Tunisia, where a fruit seller set himself alight, and spread through the entire region in a phenomena known as the Arab Spring. It didn't stop there in; countless small protests, it morphed into the highly successful anti-rape slutwalk movement, the Occupy movement and from there onto the streets in Russia.

Power of connections

These movements have a number of characteristics: they are spontaneous, they are leaderless and they use the power of connections enabled by the internet to spread their ideas. It's also important to notice that they are not only a first-world phenomena.

The clues to the future of marketing are to be found in these movements. Marketing is, after all, a way to spread ideas. The idea that one brand is better than another, the way to spread the idea that you should be at this event this weekend, a way to spread the idea that you should be buying this brand.

I am not going to forecast for 2012 that marketers in South Africa will pick up on this because very few will but it is the trend to watch for 2012.

Things will stay the same

In 2012, things will stay the same. Everyone still believes that marketing has not changed and that social is a channel. Yes they are starting to understand how important channel is but they have not and will not grasp just how much it has changed their world.

Marketers will still run smart digital enabled campaigns and will run online competitions and digital promotions on Twitter and Facebook and think that they are running social media campaigns. They will still try to manage their online reputation as they manage their PR.

Some very few - those with insightful leaders - will take stock and in the Arab Spring they will understand a new way that ideas spread; they will think of how one person starting a protest petition against bad service or as a protest against a dictator could be used as an opportunity for their business.

Stop using

They will stop using legacy-marketing thinking and stop using old-school measurements. They will understand that digital is not social and that, whereas you can use social for promotions and to talk at people, that most people won't want to be friends with most brands, and that it really doesn't matter at all how many fans you have; the number is meaningless because you are still thinking of an audience and, even though they are your fans, they are highly likely to never ever come to your page again after your recruitment campaign.

Almost no one will admit that they no longer control their brands; almost everyone will continue to manage their brands - instead of curating them. Almost everyone will manage their online reputation with lessons that they learned from their university text books written in a different era.

The big billing winners this year will be those agencies who can, for the moment, run campaigns on social media, in digital, without taking their clients onward to understanding social networks and how ideas spread in the this world.

Go get yourself up to speed

My advice to everyone reading this is go get yourself up to speed: start questioning all your beliefs about how marketing works and build yourself a new marketing and advertising paradigm . Make sure that, when I write my next article in this series, I can admit exactly how wrong I was in this!

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