Integrated Marketing Communications

What it is & why it’s important

Tom Beakbane
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"Integrated Marketing Communications" (IMC) is a complementary aspect referring to the integration of a firm's entire set of capabilities, including sales, production, accounting and human resources into a seamless system with the goal of exemplary customer satisfaction.

Total Integrated Marketing, Breaking the Bounds of the Function by James Hulbert et al, 2003

"Brand integration" is different. It refers to how a product is woven into a TV show or movie. For instance Aston Martin in James Bond movies. And Heineken in Skyfall, who reportedly paid $45 million.

What is "Integrated Marketing Communications"?

The planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service, or company, in order to meet a common set of communication objectives, or more particularly, to support a single 'positioning'.

Strategic Integrated marketing Communication by Larry Percy, 2008

The requirement is to force all aspects of the communication programme to deliver a single-minded and unified message to the target consumer.

Integrated Marketing Communications by Tony Yeshin, 1998
Dyson is an example. The design of the products themselves and the corporation’s commitment to innovation is a powerful expression of their brand – even though Peter Dyson claims he does not believe in "branding".

Historically the target of IMC has been to communicate to "the consumer", however this overlooks the role of other parties who directly and indirectly determine the fortunes of a brand including: employees, retailers, resellers, service personnel, suppliers, shareholders, journalists, online reviewers and so on – as well as their friends and families.

The definitions on the previous page don’t capture the full meaning of IMC because, when done well, it pervades all aspects of how a company operates and communicates. Integrated branding articulates the vision, goals and culture of an organization and is expressed through:

- How employees and stakeholders view the company
- How employees behave when they interact with each other, with suppliers and with customers
- The design of the product itself

But "Integrated Marketing Communications" runs deeper:

Dyson
Here is a definition that recognizes that integrated branding is both a cultural matter as well as a means to sustainably increase sales.

Integrated branding is the leadership practice that aligns all actions and messages of a company with its core values and communicates the brand promise so as to create deep, long-lasting relationship with its audiences, which increases sales and sustainable brand value.

**Lindt**: An example of strong leadership that is creating deep relationships and brand value.
A brand will stand out and be remembered if it presents itself consistently and in a manner that is clear, credible and pleasing. A company with a strong brand will sell more at better prices, will raise money more easily and be able to hire higher quality employees. A company that presents itself consistently will engender more trust than if it is inconsistent. Also its products will be perceived as higher quality. Contrast the extremes:

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<th>Integrated</th>
<th>Non-integrated</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Instantly recognizable</td>
<td>• Identity less consistent and therefore blends in amongst market noise</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consistent message that is easy to remember</td>
<td>• Less distinctive and less focused so easier to forget</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Easily understood</td>
<td>• Requires more effort to understand</td>
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<td>• Acting together</td>
<td>• Individuals, departments, divisions of an organization appear to act independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Trustworthy</td>
<td>• Less trustworthy as product/service will appear less consistent</td>
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<td>• Pleasing character</td>
<td>• Character less identifiable and harder to anticipate</td>
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Era of mass media when a single well-executed advertisement could increase sales

Recognition of importance of a clear "positioning"

Channel flipping and video-recording reduces effectiveness of mass media

Retailers become better marketers and launch private label

Web and e-mail become significant modes of communication

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Growth of customer relationship management (CRM) and one-to-one marketing

More sophisticated research into "consumer insights" along with an increasing appreciation of the role of "emotion"

Advertising agencies implement "account planning"

Search engine marketing starts growing

Emergence of social media

Smartphones enable geo marketing

The growing complexity of the different modes of communication requires greater coordination.
With the diminishing effectiveness of mass communications, the marketing department has been fighting to be recognized as a strategic function within each corporation – rather than just executional.

Sales or marketing? The sales department provides the lifeblood of companies. Marketing is often disconnected and accused of wasting money on intangible brand metrics.

Advertising agencies have been recasting themselves as guardians of the brand and not just concerned with advertising.

Digital agencies have been competing with advertising agencies to be the leaders in defining brands.

Public relations companies have been stepping forward to manage the brand narrative and the social media conversation.

Science or art? Marketers have been trying to harness metrics and show that brand communications can be managed scientifically. The challenge is to make communications a science rather than just a subjective art.

The CEO? Most are too busy – nor are trained in marketing.

Because roles compete, marketing efforts are often siloed and poorly tied together.

The growth of integrated marketing has been played out in the battlefield where competing disciplines have been fighting for primacy.
And then there was Apple

Apple contradicted many generally accepted best practices:

- Leadership was highly concentrated, top-down and political
- The company was siloed and secretive
- Consumer research was treated with disdain

Its success was due to the singular vision and strong leadership of the late Steve Jobs. **Apple demonstrates** the following:

- An extraordinarily committed vision to create "insanely great" products that combine world-leading technology with zen-like simplicity and elegant design
- The products and packaging are themselves powerful communications
- A reverence for the art of communication where the significance of every detail is considered
- Remarkable consistency of tone, style and message through every medium from brochures, websites, e-mails, TV, retail
- A beautifully choreographed supply chain that enhances the customer experience
- Well stage-managed product introduction events and ability to generate media buzz

**Apple demonstrates what true integrated branding looks like and what it can achieve - It is an all-encompassing approach to business that transcends departmental divisions**
Marketing is often perceived as traditional TV advertising, and maybe a little bit of promotion. Brand building is looking at the purpose of a brand. It’s about identifying how that brand can touch and improve lives with its benefits and how you can then take those benefits and express them at the store level, in public relations, in digital, TV and print. It’s how you create experiences for consumers that include services, information, education and entertainment, so you build that entire brand experience.”

Marc Pritchard, P&G Global marketing

Source: http://www.marketingweek.co.uk/trends/why-brand-building-must-be-a-digital-discipline/4001221.article

Procter & Gamble provides an example of the new reality. At the 2012 Olympics they ran a worldwide campaign: P&G Proud Sponsor of Mums, which used consumer insights supported by PR, online, social media, sampling, promotional events and in-store merchandising.

Why integrated branding is now more important than ever

- With the diminished effectiveness of traditional media – local and online communications become relatively more cost efficient

- The digital communications ecosystem (which includes mobile, social, news, entertainment and workplace information systems) is pervasive in modern life – it effects how we do everything

- Online reviews and chatter can trump company controlled communications. Consumers can uncover details about a company and its brands with a few clicks

- A brand is more likely to be successful if it is appealing to all constituencies including employees, distributors and shareholders. This becomes easier if the brand is represented authentically
Integration is not just "what" - it is "who" and "why"

Many of the biggest brands that have been built over history have been run by leaders with a higher calling. Examples are Kellogg, Campbell’s, Cadbury and Hershey. Now social media accelerates the dynamic and favors companies that have an appealing character.

Brands that are more authentic and appealing on a deeper level will outperform those that are superficial

The web enables consumers to find answers to questions like, Why does the brand exist? What are the motives of the leadership? The answers will affect people’s attitudes and behaviors

See the widely shared TED talk by Simon Sinek: How great leaders inspire action

Steve Jobs was no philanthropist but he was passionate about creating beautifully useful devices

Dietrich Mateschitz founder of Red Bull epitomizes the high risk adrenaline rush
"Brand focus" - the foundation for integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications is so multifaceted that it can be overwhelming to manage.

What should be tackled first?

Step 1 Formulate the business strategy
Determine the objectives, the market and how to generate revenue. The literature on business strategy is substantial.

Step 2 Develop the "brand focus"
The brand focus is key because it expresses the appearance and personality of the brand and its benefit. It should also express the company vision and its personality.
The essential components of a brand focus are:

- The name
- Logo, wordmark and colour palette
- Positioning (What it is)
- The benefit
- The personality

Traditionally these elements would be developed at different times but they will be more effective if they are developed to form a cohesive whole.

The brand focus provides the foundation to develop all the marketing communications.
Integration was traditionally viewed as a task of ensuring the tone and message of communications tied together from the perspective of the consumer.

A new aspect is becoming pivotal – tying all the different sources of information together so they are easy to find and appear seamless on desktops, tablets, and phones – this is digital integration via the cloud.

Digital integration is becoming more straightforward because of open data formats (e.g., XML, HTML5) and APIs (application programming interface).

Websites and mobile apps can now be designed to enable different stakeholders to find up-to-the-second information, get trained, book appointments, read reviews, and reach out to others in the community.
• The brand is easier to sell and will generate more revenue because it is more appealing and trustworthy.

• Integrated marketing communications help companies sell more, more profitably and achieve their objectives, increasing the return on marketing spending.

• The cloud enables brands to integrated into the lives of stakeholders making interactions more pleasing.

• Increasingly, integrated branding is not optional. It is impossible to achieve success otherwise.
If you have a brand challenge please contact Tom Beakbane
tb@beakbane.com

www.integratedbrands.org
Integrated brands is a showcase of brands that are innovative and strategic and successfully growing their sales. It is a wiki so everyone can upload examples of brand communications and discuss them. It is designed to inspire.