

PLAN 2009 RIGHT FROM THE START

Although for most the year is only half over, for the best prepared marketers in Asia, the annual planning cycle has already started again for next year. From our experience, these plans can often just be a 'gate' for local teams to have to walk through, but in the most effective of cases, they become an important and collaborative step to a better year's activities. Here's how we believe this process can be optimized

1. Plan around consumers, not business

While it's important to look at return on investment, returns come from consumers, not from marketing. Put your target front and center of your planning, understand how they think, feel and act – let them lead you on your path forward. Several companies now have created online panels to serve as research and sounding boards of future trends. Be aware of how this can improve your insights and improve your returns.

2. Don't just launch when you can test

P&G's great success in China for twenty years has come from investment in testing – not just media mix, but product mix, pricing, distribution and point of sale. Only through investing in test plans can you build stronger learning. Most marketers today are time-poor – a campaign may go to 50 markets with an identical (or 'optimal') marketing mix – but this doesn't allow the opportunity to build learning from mix management

3. Plan your digital spend – then double it

No marketer would leave online and mobile off a 2009 plan – but chances are, few have accurately forecast the growth in these mediums so far in advance. Eighteen months ago, Facebook was in its infancy, Twitter barely existed and mobile was still under-exploited. The power of digital is its interactivity and measurability – already marketers in Japan and the US are using it for some campaigns as their primary medium.

4. Involve your agencies

The benefit your agencies offer is perspective and a deeper connection to consumer insights. It can only help the Annual Planning process to arrange a

half day or full day workshop *before* the plans are aligned to get some fresh insights into your thinking and collaborate to a better plan. A creative agency planner, linked with a media agency strategist will mean you cover off the content strategy as well as contact strategy – and also enable you to access special events to enhance your proposal you might otherwise have not been aware of.

5. Live the Plan

The worst plans are the ones written to simply ‘jump through the hoops’ of regional or global management. If you can’t stick to a plan, then those around you and your agency partners can’t effectively plan either. You will end up with resource and talent issues as well as turnover problems.

At this time of year, if you fail to plan, you will plan to fail. The best marketers have already honed this to a fine art – it’s important you and your company aim for best practice in this area

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