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Where are brands as life gets personal?

OK, I'm sorry - I know I haven't blogged for a while. Thanks to some people at Media for recent 'subtle' prompting. It's mostly because I don't want to waste people's time reading anything that isn't profound. But last night I found it - by accident - as a TED video. To some of you, it will be ancient history, to some of you, it will change your world. Either way, the pace of change in digital technology is happening so fast, we need to re-wire ourselves to keep up.

I'm talking about Pranav Mistry and SixthSense Technology. You can watch the whole thing [here](#). Be patient - the first three or four minutes, go grab a coffee, return some emails, send a few tweets - it's not so exciting. Then block off the last nine or ten minutes to totally freak your mind out.

For those of you not familiar with TED (there must be someone), it's a small non-profit, focused on Ideas Worth Spreading. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design. TED speakers have included Biz Stone launching twitter to the masses, Bill Gates releasing a swarm of mosquitoes and even agency types such as Rory Sutherland and John Gezema. TED came to Beijing last month to great success - other Asian soirees are planned.

Anyway - this Pranav dude is just your typical Indian PhD MIT student, ex Microsoft, basically invented a Wii-like interface

eight years ago, and last year invested a wearable projector/camera device that will essentially change communications as we know it. As the host declares at the end of the video “you’re probably one of the two or three greatest inventors in the world right now”. More shocking is that he’s developed something totally open-source, meaning it will be commercial faster and more complete than would ever be possible if incubated in a company. I’m already thinking programmers in China and India are working on fresh ideas to make this a reality before you can say “2011”.

What does all this mean for Asian marketers and their agencies?

1. Re-think the way you “listen”

We’ve been lucky the last few weeks to meet with a number of Asia’s best digital agencies. All have impressive “listening” tools in place to tap into the consumer, but the best are taking that further to truly interpret and benchmark where their clients brands are. Consumers have taken control of communications, and innovations like SixthSense will only push this further

2. Create your own incubator

The best digital agencies (and clients) in Asia, like Pranav, have invested in R&D. Some have specific teams looking at new technologies and setting up “Test and Learn” metrics. Nokia and Barclays, for example, are Official Sponsors of TED globally, and accrue a lot of benefits with this group of speakers and attendees - incubating new ideas to the community. This year’s bleeding edge will be next year’s leading edge - so plan appropriately

3. Use Crowd-Sourcing to your Advantage

Many marketers are now using consumers for co-creation - whether it’s [Coca-Cola for the 2010 World Cup](#), Pepsi China for their next summer campaign or [Walkers in the UK](#) promising 1% of future sales to the best idea. As technologies such as SixthSense become mainstream, the role of the agency will change from executor to collaborator, and some will be more ready than others for this

4. Set and reward based on metrics

In our recent regional study, we’re a little shocked 44% of marketers agreed with “I’m reluctant to invest more in digital because I can’t measure ROI”. The reality should be just the opposite - the richness of data, mined in the right way, should give unique and compelling insights into the power of new technologies. Dig deep and show it clearly. And agencies can also expect to be paid more - based on the right metrics.

SixthSense might just be the invention of the year - which marketers and agencies in Asia will use it to empower and grow their business?



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Greg Paull



Greg co-founded R3 (www.rthree.com) in 2002 and helps companies improve their marketing effectiveness and efficiency

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