

Be brave: Differentiate with digital

 By [Mike Saunders](#)

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Digital presents a powerful opportunity for brands to differentiate themselves against competitors. We've all heard the stories of great digital projects and wonder how we could create the same traction for our own brands. In our quest to thrust our brands into the digital era, we have found it to be more difficult than we initially anticipated.

The trouble is, brands who are unsure of the value of digital choose a copycat approach to digital marketing. They hear of something that worked for someone else and copy it. Choosing to copy others rather than create new opportunities results in a saturated market of 'the same old' digital tactics.

We see it all over the place, in social media, as brands and agencies adopt the same ideas over and over again. Even in the mobile apps market, brands are too quick to jump in fast and end up with smaller and smaller returns from their online efforts. We need to make the copycat approach public enemy number one!

The copycat approach comes when:

- Brands aren't sure of who they are
- Brands are chasing speed to market over innovation
- Brands are afraid of failure

It's become my experience that brands who succeed in digital know who they are, they make sure their digital ideas match their overall strategy and they are brave. They're even a little crazy, in a good way!



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So, it seems fairly practical that we could apply a simple process to getting out of a copycat approach and I'd like to unpack this a bit more.

In short, we could apply this three-step approach:

- Become one with your brand
- Align your digital objectives to the overall strategy
- Be brave

Easier said than done!

Become one with your brand

In life, our confidence in who we are helps us become a stronger, better version of ourselves. Most emotional intelligence programmes will help us highlight our strengths rather than focus on our weaknesses. In other words, to be better and stronger we need to focus on what makes us different from everyone else, instead of focusing on how we can be like everyone else.

Branding is the same. Focusing on understanding your brand should clearly articulate what makes you stand out from the crowd. Why do people buy from you instead of your competitors? This understanding helps build your confidence as a marketing manager in making the right decisions for your brand. It helps you be bold with your strengths and eventually aids you in becoming an even stronger brand. Without a strong understanding of your identity, you won't have the strength to make an impact.

David Aaker provides a Brand Identity Model that helps brands work out who they are and what is important to them. It's a great model to get a deep, tangible understanding of a brand. In short, the model defines brand equity as a collection of Brand Loyalty, Brand Awareness, Perceived Quality, Brand Associations and Proprietary Assets.

If you haven't done this Brand Identity work before then I would encourage you to give the Aaker Model a spin.

Alignment

I really like Aaker's Brand Identity Model because he helps marketers make the next step, from brand understanding to digital alignment. In his article, "[The Four Faces of Digital Marketing](#)", Aaker helps marketers apply digital to their brand identity. The four faces of digital that he describes show you how to apply digital to your brand:

1. Support the product offering
2. Amplify other brand building channels
3. Extend the value proposition
4. Create digital brand building channels

With a clear understanding of the brand, you should be able to apply the four faces of digital to identify unique digital experiences that will help you stand out.

So, when looking for the power of digital for your brand you can reframe these faces of digital into these questions:

1. How can digital help me enhance my product offering?
2. How can digital amplify my other brand building channels?
3. How can I use digital to extend my value proposition?
4. Can I create my own digital brand building channel?

Be brave

Any marketer who is afraid of taking a calculated risk will never receive the reward of truly innovative marketing. Marketers are like entrepreneurs and innovators. They need to research the opportunities, paint a picture of the future, build innovative consumer engagements and then take the leap. They need to back themselves and the research they've done.

I remember reading that the best entrepreneurs had low risk profiles. They had just spent enough time working out every possible way something could go wrong and they had a plan. They reached the point in their research that they knew it would work and they knew how to make it happen.

Marketers who think like this are the marketers who will show bravery and lead brands in becoming stronger versions of themselves with great, purposeful digital solutions that their customers love.

ABOUT MIKE SAUNDERS

Mike Saunders, CEO of Digtalab, is a renowned Digital Business and CRM Consulting expert acclaimed for his unique ability to blend technological expertise with insightful business strategy. His leadership in digital consulting, combined with his roles as an international keynote speaker and author, has solidified his reputation as a visionary in the digital realm.

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