nmc

NEW MEDIA CREATIVE

telephone cacophony

next generation mobile phones promise interactivity and connectivity on the move

two-way tv

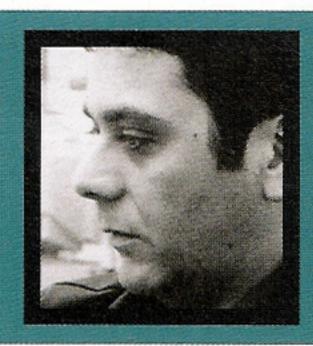who, why and when of iTV + the opportunities to be had when new media meets the broadcasters

browser envy

despite what they'd have you believe there's more to life than just the big two,

as the internet goes post-PC who's to say you won't be better served by a rival browser

containing content

principles of content management in the digital age

Brand new day

Understanding marketing objectives doesn't mean swapping your urban modernist designer outfit for a suit or giving up original thinking, says Organic's creative director **Darryl Feldman**

Pssst. Wanna buy an online brand? It's good. It'll work. Honestly. But will it? New media creatives are frantically inventing brands that appeal to users in a mad race to market. And, as commerce booms on the internet and new business plans arrive with the regularity of pigeons, this explosion of new online brands and .com businesses eager to compete in an overloaded information space are part of a trend that's bound to continue. But successfully bringing them to market is a difficult and tricky thing to do. For this new form of virtual business, new skills need to be learned and a 'big picture' attitude adopted to turn these innovative plans into real businesses that work.

As a foundation for any creative work, it's important to gain and retain an understanding of the business model and marketing objectives. That doesn't mean swapping your urban modernist designer outfit for a suit; good business nous and solid, well-thought out objectives shouldn't limit or hinder original thinking, just act as a springboard for new ideas. Creative work should be measured against these objectives at key stages throughout the development of the brand, which will ensure effective integration of a creative treatment into the overall marketing plan. Put a brand development process in place to guide the project team to an end-solution in the shortest possible timeframe. A set of appropriate values and a blueprint for the brand should be drawn up before the creative sparks begin to fly.

Once the branding strategy is in place the fun starts. After the long and sweaty task of brainstorming a list of suitably obscure but sexy brand names, you discover after a session checking domain names that most of them are long gone. Back to the list. A new, improved list now emerges that needs to be checked for legal issues and tested for international appeal, after all that really cool name you've come up with could translate as "grandmother's fleshy bottom" in Danish.

Finally you've got the name, and if you're really lucky it could even have a .com after it. Now it's time to just add water in the form of logo designs and visuals depicting brand extension scenarios such as letterheads or office interiors. This shouldn't be underestimated and can take a very long time to get to the final version. It is hard to get something working well across a number of different media – if your online brand's as successful as you obviously want it to be, it will end up in print, on TV and in media situations you never dreamed of.

It is also a challenge to produce a design that competes visually against the clutter of the internet. This is perhaps another reason why so many online brands end up looking cheesy, opting for garish colour schemes and animated widgets in place of conceptual or strategic depth. It is smarter to leverage the unique properties of interactivity to establish a brand presence, and to offer new types of compelling content and useful services. This can persuade the user to get to know the brand in an intimate and personal way.

If your service is selling something online it is important to communicate the values of the brand right throughout the purchasing cycle. Often the quality of experience deteriorates rapidly when the brand goes offline and a crumpled, unidentifiable package arrives a month later. Ensure that customer service, support and back-end processes communicate brand values too, or at the very least don't defeat them.

Communications that promote brand awareness away from the core product or service itself are needed, and another excellent opportunity for the brand to fall over arises when shock tactics are used to attract attention in animated banners or though other media devices, instead of drawing and communicating clearly the real benefits of the brand.

Where does branding go from here, in a world of ever evolving communication channels and technology platforms? The biggest challenge may be to ensure consistency across media and to get all brand voices speaking the same language – preferably in a mother tongue that does not blow raspberries at its customers. Processes should be adopted and blueprints adhered to which will bring the brand to life and help it survive. How long it survives for is a different matter. **NMC**