

# REAL-TIME MARKETING

Speeding Up the Creative Process

**MAY 2013**

**Debra Aho Williamson**

Contributors: Danielle Drolet, Lauren McKay, Tracy Tang



Read this on  
eMarketer for iPad



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**To be successful in real-time marketing, marketers and their agencies need to rethink the creative process.**

Marketers know that they must speed up the ways they produce content and advertising to capture consumer attention in today's fragmented media and device landscape. But in the months since the famous Oreo "You Can Still Dunk in the Dark" Super Bowl blackout tweet, businesses have struggled to produce creative that resonates as strongly as Oreo's did. Naysayers have concluded that that means real-time marketing is a flop: "Fast creative = bad creative."

However, that analysis is shortsighted. Social media and mobile devices have driven fundamental changes in consumer behavior and opened up new avenues for consumers to engage with brands. The need to move faster is greater now than it has ever been.

Companies such as Mondelez International, Nestlé Purina, Unilever and Procter & Gamble, whose brands are profiled in this report, believe it is essential to speed up their creative development process. They are using what they learn from rapid-response marketing in social media to create efficiencies in their broader marketing organization and to find ways to deploy real-time strategies not only in digital media but in traditional media as well.

## KEY QUESTIONS

- **How is the push toward real-time marketing affecting the creative process?**
- **What models are marketers and agencies using to develop successful real-time creative for social media?**
- **How are marketers using what they learn from real-time social media efforts to streamline other forms of marketing?**

## US Social Network Users\* Who Think It Would Be Effective for Brands to Create Timely Online Ads/Social Media Posts During Major Events\*\*, March 2013

% of respondents



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding; \*who follow brands on social media; \*\*like the Super Bowl or Oscars  
Source: AYTM Market Research as cited in company blog, March 5, 2013

153188

www.eMarketer.com

## CONTENTS

- 3 Real-Time Marketing Is Remaking Creative Process
- 6 How Marketers Are Applying a Real-Time Mentality
- 11 Agencies Are Evolving Toward Speed
- 13 Truths and Myths About Real-Time Creative
- 16 Real-Time Marketing Beyond Social Media
- 18 eMarketer Interviews
- 19 Related Links
- 19 Editorial and Production Contributors

## REAL-TIME MARKETING IS REMAKING CREATIVE PROCESS

**The current fuss over real-time marketing should not be a surprise. The marketing industry has been heading down this path for several years.**

Shiv Singh, global head of digital for PepsiCo Beverages, discussed how Pepsi was embracing the concept during a 2011 conference presentation. In 2010, Procter & Gamble's Old Spice put out hundreds of personalized videos featuring "Old Spice Guy" Isaiah Mustafa responding in near-real time to tweets and other social media comments. Going even further back, Apple PR guru Regis McKenna wrote about the concept in 1995.

Meanwhile, brands have spent several years perfecting their ability to market via social media, delivering countless Facebook status updates and tweets in real time.

But it wasn't until Mondelez International's Oreo brand latched onto the 2013 Super Bowl blackout with its "You Can Still Dunk in the Dark" tweet and graphic that the lights truly turned on for the marketing world. The race toward real-time had officially begun.

As marketers, "we've always wanted to be real-time," said Mondelez's Bonin Bough, vice president of global media and consumer engagement. "The social channels have provided an opportunity for us to deliver on that more than ever before."

In the months since Oreo's now-legendary tweet, the merits of real-time marketing have been debated on blogs, in conferences and webinars, and in news articles. It is clear that the marketing industry is confronting the topic with equal measures of curiosity and trepidation.

Historically, responding quickly in social media—the place where most real-time marketing is currently done—has been relatively easy to manage on a day-to-day basis. Community managers could fill that need with a simple text post.

Now that images are a primary tool of social media marketing, creative execution—long the domain of ad agencies—is becoming much more important. Reacting and responding in real time is exponentially harder when the demands are far more substantial than a snappy tweet, a pithy remark on Facebook or a simple response to a customer complaint.

As Guy Slattery, executive vice president of marketing at A&E Network, said: "Being able to be responsive and have a real-time conversation with your consumers or viewers is nearly essential now for any brand. Marketers are realizing that the big moments that happen on social are very fleeting and quick. If you can capitalize on those and be a part of them, that's really the next level."

To meet these new demands requires marketers and their agencies to take their partnerships to new levels of flexibility, trust and fearlessness.

"Anybody who participates in a [creative] pitch process realizes that when you compress what normally takes place in many months into a few weeks, great creative can happen," said John Robinson, senior vice president of creative at Digitas. "The speed that real-time marketing demands is going to influence the way that creative agencies, marketers and brands look to react to the marketplace." That will be the case not only in social media but across the entire range of marketing vehicles, traditional and digital.

The upshot: In the future, brands will be able to take advantage of a Super Bowl blackout not with a tweet but with a TV spot.

## FOUR REASONS THE CREATIVE PROCESS NEEDS TO CHANGE

Just as technology is speeding up the pace of work in other industries, the same is happening in the advertising business.

"We can now do things far more swiftly and efficiently than we could before," said Grant Hunter, regional creative director for Asia-Pacific at iris worldwide. "From a creative standpoint we have an arsenal of digital tools that allow us to stay up all night to code and design a microsite or generate amazing video content in a 24- to 48-hour window, or within minutes generate a Photoshop comp and then post it on Facebook."

Even so, the vast majority of advertising creative is generated the same way it has been for decades: first a strict creative brief, followed by several rounds of presentations and approvals before the piece finally sees the light of day. Not only is this true in traditional media, but also online and even in social media, where the posting strategy of many brands is dictated by a content calendar.

The creative model “needs to evolve to catch up with the new tools,” said Kevin Crociata, marketing director for North American Haircare at Procter & Gamble. “I honestly think a Facebook post could be equivalent to a great print ad of the past.”

The reality that marketers and agencies must confront is that there have been irrevocable changes in the ways that consumers interact with media and advertising. Until the creative process catches up, the consumer will always be one step ahead and the ad business trailing behind.

**The newsfeed mentality has changed the way consumers get information.** Facebook and Twitter have played a monumental role in redefining the relationship between consumers, media and advertising. “We are consuming media and content radically differently now,” said Dan Buczaczer, managing director at Denuo Worldwide. “We are consuming almost everything in a stream, an ongoing, relentless, never-ending stream.”

For advertisers, the stream has had an unfortunate consequence: The shelf life of their hard work is now extremely short. “Clients look at the content that they have so carefully produced, and they’re watching it peak and they’re watching it decay all within the course of half a day,” Buczaczer said. “The content that seems like it was important an hour ago is way off the bottom of the page 60 minutes later.”

Operating in the new newsfeed mentality means finding ways to stand out in the stream—and that means acting quickly.

**Cultural touchpoints are fleeting.** The feed mentality and the rapid pace of information exchange between consumers have dramatically reduced the length of time that a trend is a trend. Today, marketers celebrate if their brand hashtag makes Twitter’s list of trending topics for 30 minutes. Memes circulate the internet for hours, only to disappear from the public consciousness as rapidly as they arrived.

Brands that want to play in this realm don’t have the luxury of time to debate and make decisions, said Ken Kraemer, executive creative director at Deep Focus. “If you’re going to be real-time and comment on culture, you need to work differently,” he said. “You can’t work in the old model. You don’t have six to eight months or even six to eight weeks to make a video.”

Marketers can continue along their old path, hewing to an old standard of time, or they can bring their own spin to what is in vogue at the moment.

“It means moving from that world where we had a 21-week cycle to make a television commercial into a world where we’re going to be closer and closer to zero, closer and closer to creating content at the moment that something else is going on in the world,” said Noah Brier, co-founder of social media company Percolate.

**Life happens “now.”** Technology is speeding up the ways consumers receive information and interact with their friends. “People are used to having search delivered in real time, video on demand, news the second it happens, instant updates on their friends’ status, etc. The world is used to getting everything ‘now,’” said Hunter, who in addition to his role at iris worldwide is co-author of the book “Newsjacking: The Urgent Genius of Real-Time Advertising.”

Once consumers get used to this always-on mentality, there is no turning back. Cable subscribers who sign up for their provider’s video-on-demand services wonder why they ever used a DVR to record programs. And internet-enabled VOD services such as Netflix or Hulu Plus have added even more choice and immediacy to the experience. People who join one of *these* services wonder why they ever paid for their cable provider’s VOD service. And so it goes, as the amount of real-time content at consumers’ fingertips grows exponentially with each passing month.

In this environment, being slow to respond or perceived as disconnected from real life can be deadly for marketers. Social media users routinely complain that the marketing they see is not relevant to them. In an October 2012 survey, Janrain and Blue Research found that 58% of social network users considered the promotions they saw in social media either frequently or always irrelevant.

**Thousands of little moments add up to more than one big moment.** “It’s the little moments that count,” the saying goes. That’s more true now than ever. Teens send hundreds of text messages to their friends throughout the day, rather than saving it all up for a marathon phone conversation as their parents might have done. Facebook entices members to check their feed multiple times per day by constantly updating it with new posts and colorful photos.

Brands, too, are realizing that the sum total of small moments of engagement can be more effective than one big marketing event.

It's one reason why companies that are legendary for their creative, such as Nike and Apple, are now under new pressure. Nike, which urged consumers to "Just Do It" with classic ads featuring iconic sports celebrities, is facing challenges to remain relevant to a new generation of athletes who are less likely to respond to grandiose marketing. David Grasso, Nike's vice president of global brand marketing, told The New York Times in April 2013, "As we continue to grow in size, it's important we stay connected. If you take away the toys and the noise, it's about having a relationship."

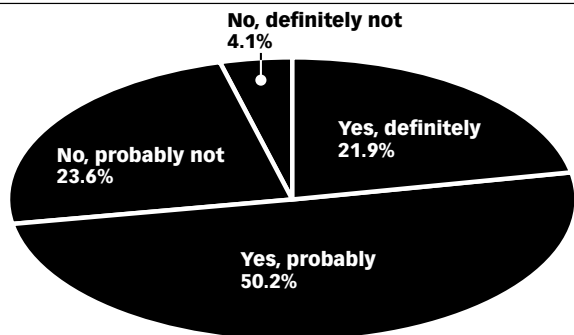
Apple, which built its brand with the award-winning "1984" TV spot and urged computer buyers to "Think Different," has struggled to find its voice since the death of founder Steve Jobs. Its ads have received less fanfare and its long-running image of fanboys waiting in line for new devices became the subject of a mocking TV campaign from competitor Samsung. In fact, Samsung used real-time social media monitoring to help develop its ads in just one week.

Taken collectively, these four changes in consumer behavior are enormous. In addition, some early surveys on consumer reaction to real-time marketing show that it is not only welcomed, but also impactful.

In a survey by AYTM Market Research in March 2013, 72% of social network users said they thought timely online ads or social media posts during big events would "probably" or "definitely" be an effective strategy.

**US Social Network Users\* Who Think It Would Be Effective for Brands to Create Timely Online Ads/Social Media Posts During Major Events\*\*, March 2013**

% of respondents



Note: numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding; \*who follow brands on social media; \*\*like the Super Bowl or Oscars  
Source: AYTM Market Research as cited in company blog, March 5, 2013

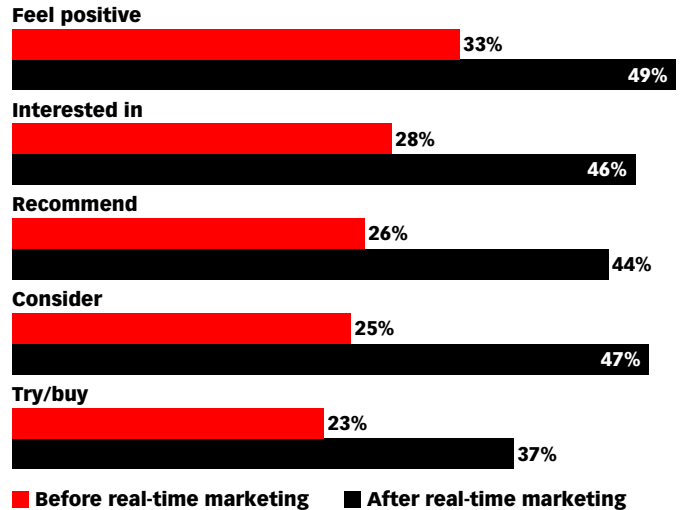
153188

www.eMarketer.com

In an earlier survey, conducted in 2012 by GolinHarris, consumers expressed more positive feelings about brands after they were exposed to real-time marketing than before the exposure. Nearly half said they would feel more positive, while 46% would be more interested in the brand. Likelihood to recommend, to consider making a purchase and to try or buy all were also significantly higher after exposure to real-time marketing.

**Behavior of US Consumers Before and After Exposure to Real-Time Marketing, Feb 2012**

% of respondents



Note: likelihood of respondent to perform the action that same day  
Source: GolinHarris, "Insights," March 12, 2012

150488

www.eMarketer.com

In this environment, the need to develop creative more quickly is clear. Echoing the classic Visa tagline, having the ability to react and respond in real time will help brands be everywhere their consumers want them to be.

## HOW MARKETERS ARE APPLYING A REAL-TIME MENTALITY

Although most of the current executions of real-time marketing take place in social media, the mindset of moving quickly is something that those in the highest levels of the marketing organization need to embrace. It is not solely the domain of those who manage social media marketing.

In this section, eMarketer profiles five marketers at varying stages of using real-time marketing:

- **Mondelez International has spent the past few years building internal organizational structures and what Bough calls “muscle memory” to make it easier to react and respond at the appropriate time.**
- **Nestlé Purina is seeing increases in engagement from its real-time creative efforts.**
- **Procter & Gamble uses real-time marketing to enhance its multichannel marketing efforts for haircare brand Pantene.**
- **Unilever’s Klondike ice cream brand has found new creative energy by trying to be the first to spot and respond to trends and memes.**
- **MINI UK is taking real-time beyond digital media, with cheeky ads in print as well as in social media.**

## MONDELEZ INTERNATIONAL



Brand: Oreo

**Background:** Oreo’s first extensive exploration of real-time marketing happened in 2012, with the brand’s “Daily Twist” effort. In that campaign, which ran from June through September, Oreo delivered a new piece of creative every day for 100 days to Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and the oreo.com website. Each piece was created based on real-time information that Oreo and its agencies gathered.

**The story:** Oreo uses a combination of agency resources, in-house content developers and analytics to develop real-time content on Twitter and other platforms. The brand received praise for its Super Bowl effort, but it has also taken advantage of much smaller moments to quickly deliver creative that is relevant and brand-appropriate.

Oreo’s success at developing creative for real-time marketing comes from extensive preparation, Bough said.

“For 100 days, we delivered a piece of real-time creative—a digital piece of creative—into the Facebook ecosystem based on what was trending that specific day,” Bough said of the “Daily Twist” effort. “We had already built out the process and we already knew how to operate. We knew how to connect. Our various agencies knew how to work together and we knew how to amplify it. We had had a huge process that we learned over time.”

When deciding when to pull the trigger on a real-time opportunity, Oreo's digital agency, 360i, considers three factors, said David Berkowitz, vice president of emerging media at the agency:

- **Is the moment that is happening brand friendly?**
- **Are there influencers online and available to extend the message virally?**
- **Is there an opportunity to "surprise and delight" the consumer?**

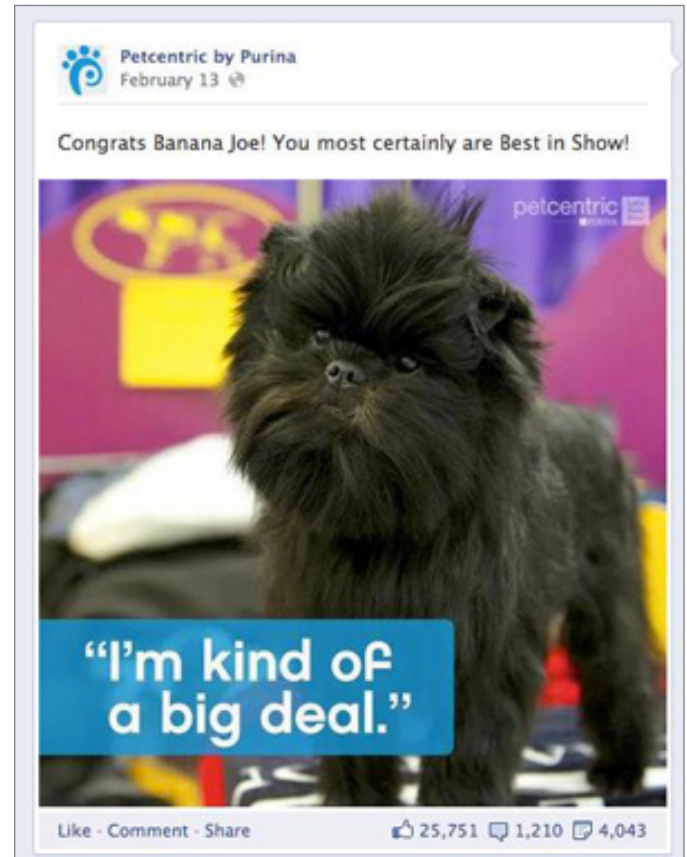
More important to Bough than the success of that one Super Bowl tweet is the real-time mentality that the Oreo brand has developed—an attitude that Bough said is shared by other Mondelez brands such as Wheat Thins, Nilla Wafers and Trident gum. While Mondelez's agencies play an important role in the creative development for real-time efforts, organizational commitment at the brand level is critical.

"If we don't have a process in-house, then no matter what the agency does, it's not going to change how we operate," he said.

Also critical: the infrastructure to gather and analyze social data. Mondelez has developed the mPulse Engagement Lab to consolidate and display social media monitoring results. The company tracks 78 different dashboards of data and used the lab during the Super Bowl, when data streams reached as high as 115 tweets per second.

"What are consumers talking about around our brand right now and what are interesting conversations that our brand might be able to participate in right now?" Bough said. "That can inform the next TV spot, the next print ad, the next tweet. It's really about building a process of continual listening."

## NESTLÉ PURINA



**Brand:** Petcentric

**Background:** Nestlé Purina was one of the first Deep Focus clients to tap the company's content development unit, Moment Studio. The Petcentric branded community uses the studio to produce material for Facebook and other social platforms.

"What we're seeing with social content is if you are more relevant with your audience, and if that relevancy includes being quick around an event—whether it's the Olympics, Grammys or something like that—then there is some real incremental power to the engagement," said Chris Padgett, vice president of marketing for digital, social and global at Nestlé Purina Pet Care.

**The story:** Purina was a sponsor of the 2013 edition of the Westminster Kennel Club's annual dog show. Petcentric wanted to be ready to tout the winner of the show as soon as it was announced, so it worked with Deep Focus to develop content beforehand that could easily be finalized and quickly posted online.

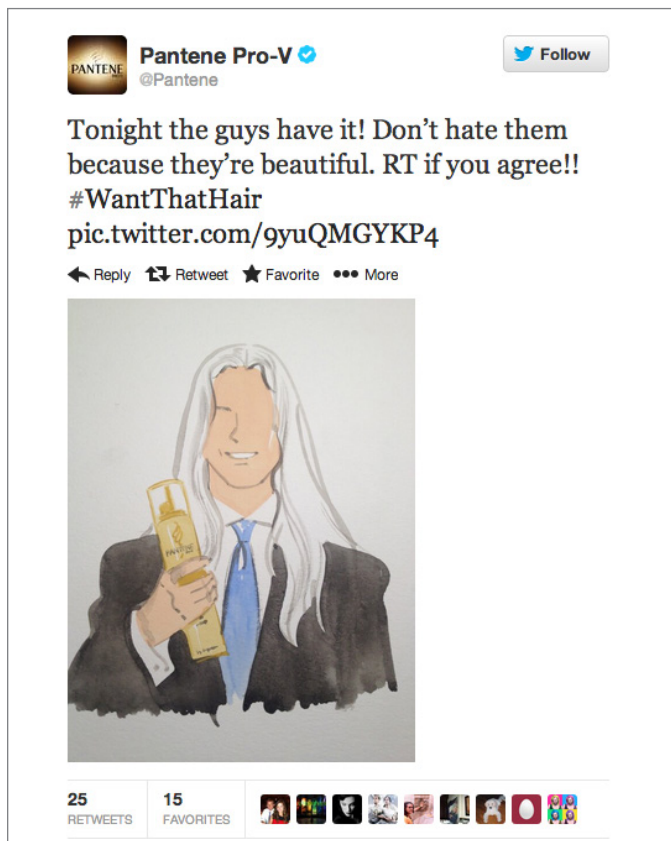
“We made sure we had good pictures of each of the seven [preliminary] winners, shots that were taken in the style that was consistent with Petcentric’s brand,” Padgett said. “When we found out who the winner was—I think it was probably within about an hour—we had a picture up on our Facebook page with Petcentric branding and an appropriate headline.”

Purina and Deep Focus meet regularly to brainstorm new creative ideas for Petcentric.

“At the beginning of the week, we talk about the things we’re going to cover and if there are any specific events to anticipate. Then we can be ready to develop creative based on what happens in the event,” Padgett said. “We also talk about whether there are any learnings from the prior week or from the last couple of weeks about what worked, from an analytics standpoint.”

Stepping up the quantity of creative that the brand produces also gives Petcentric more datapoints on which to base its media spending, Padgett said. “As we connect analytics to it, we track what works. The content that works really well we will boost with media spend.”

## PROCTER & GAMBLE



**Brand:** Pantene

**Background:** The Pantene haircare brand had a multichannel presence at the 2013 Oscars. In addition to a TV spot, the brand also developed a real-time Twitter strategy for the telecast, using the hashtag #WantThatHair to unify its efforts.

**The story:** Pantene had one thing working for it right off the bat: the brand’s spokeswoman, Naomi Watts, was nominated for a Best Actress award. “We wanted to make sure that we were supportive of her,” said P&G’s Crociata. “But the second piece is that [celebrities’] hair during the Oscars and red-carpet events is so relevant. With #WantThatHair we had an angle of, if there’s a look on the red carpet and you want that hair, we have a way to get you that hair” using Pantene products.

Working with a team of 10, including an illustrator and representatives from P&G and its agencies DeVries, Grey and Starcom, the brand developed a series of tweets and accompanying graphics. One tweet acknowledged the multiple celebrities with super-short hairstyles: “Edgy pixie, anyone? Why, yes please! RT if you’d rock this. #WantThatHair #PGRedCarpet” along with an illustration of a pixie hairstyle.

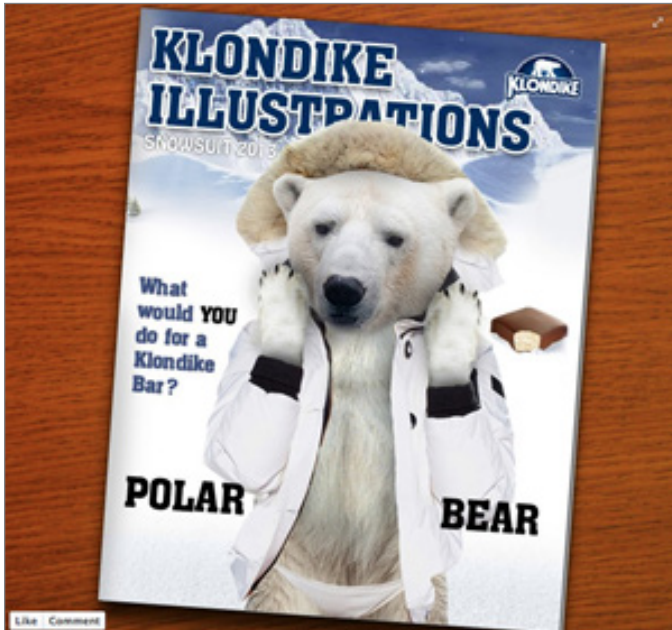
When the male celebrities’ hairstyles started getting unexpected attention on Twitter, the Pantene team changed course, posting an illustration of a man with flowing gray hair.

“We didn’t know we were going to be illustrating male hairstyles before the show,” Crociata said. “But when a lot of those looks rolled up, we had a plan to get at that in real time and create some engaging work.”

The strategy brought Pantene strong engagement; the brand and #WantThatHair received an estimated 28 million impressions on Oscar Sunday and its Promoted Tweet engagement rate of 4.7% was well ahead of the consumer packaged goods industry benchmark of 1.7%, P&G said.

Pantene’s real-time approach involves “picking moments where we can be relevant and engaging with the content we’re creating,” Crociata said. “There’s not going to be 20 of them a year, but there’s an opportunity to do a few big, impactful ones.”





**Brand:** Klondike ice cream bars

**Background:** PR agency GolinHarris creates and uploads a steady stream of content and images to the Facebook page for Unilever's Klondike brand. But when the annual Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue came out in early 2013, Klondike saw an opportunity to move quickly and link its brand mascot—a polar bear—with a cultural moment.

**The story:** The magazine's cover featured model Kate Upton in Antarctica wearing only a jacket and a bikini bottom. "At the bottom of the picture, the caption read, 'Polar Bare.' So we put our hats on and decided we were going to do our own cover featuring the Klondike polar bear," said Tyler Travitz, director of digital design and development at GolinHarris.

The agency and client took 90 minutes from coming up with the concept to posting the image on Facebook. "The creative director on the account came to us and said, 'Did you see the cover? We should do something with this,'" Travitz said. "We had about a 10-minute huddle and agreed we should definitely do our own cover to poke fun at it. After the quick huddle, the creative director said, 'Yup, that's what we're going to do. Go ahead. I'll start seeding this with our engagement folks and the client.' Then, our designer jumped in and did the Photoshop work. We sent it to the client. The client said, 'It's great. Let's post it.'"

The resulting image showed the polar bear dressed in similar garb to the magazine's cover model, and the tagline "Polar Bear."

Tapping into cultural touchpoints is part of an ongoing strategy at Klondike. "We're definitely increasing the amount of time and effort we dedicate to social mining for trends, memes and current events," said Brian Critz, senior brand manager at Unilever. "It's fun to try to be the first brand to respond."

Templates help the brand move quickly, Critz said. "Most of the Arctic characters we use are at our disposal 24/7. So, it's oftentimes just a matter of inserting those mascots into timely situations." Where the brand spends more time is in making sure the visuals "make sense to our fans and followers. We want to ensure that they get the joke," he said.

Even as Klondike looks to insert more real-time creative into its social media marketing, it is taking a measured approach. "There's currently a pretty even split between traditional creative and real-time creative in our content calendars for Klondike, but we usually leave a few holes each week that we know we'll fill with some sort of real-time creative," Critz said.



Brand: MINI

**Background:** A scandal over horsemeat in food products might cause most brands to gallop in the other direction. But automaker MINI saw an opportunity to mix humor and a brand benefit message in a marketing piece that appeared not only in social media but also in print.

**The story:** February 2013 was the height of the uproar over horsemeat being found in products that were labeled as containing beef. The UK press was full of stories about major brands and restaurants that were caught up in the scandal.

MINI UK and agency iris worldwide quickly drafted a print ad for MINI's John Cooper Works Roadster featuring copy that read, "Beef. With a lot of horses hidden in it," along with a picture of the car.

The ad ran in three daily newspapers in the UK and took 24 hours from conception to appearing in print. "We also ran the ad as a Facebook post and the response was amazing," said iris worldwide's Hunter. "It was their most shared post from the last six months and had at least five times more 'likes' than the average post on the MINI UK page." As of mid-April 2013, the post had received 4,483 "likes" and 1,788 shares.

The ad worked, Hunter said, because it meshed well with the brand image that MINI had already established. "The brand's tone of voice is cheeky and irreverent. And as a brand with British heritage, it had a right to laugh at the scandal as any self-respecting Brit would," he said. But the ad did more than just laugh; it also delivered a product-benefit message, which is tricky to execute.

In April, MINI tried a similar move, responding to the furor over UK chancellor George Osborne's car being parked in a spot intended for the disabled. On Facebook, the company posted a photo of a MINI along with the caption "You'll have no problems parking this, George."

"Brand directors should be evaluating the relevance of the idea to the brand position and the originality of the idea," Hunter said. "If it's just so-so, don't release it. It needs to have a refreshing angle that makes it stand out from the competition."

**These five brands have embraced real-time marketing as an integral part of their strategy.** Their efforts to speed up the creative process, both internally and at their agency partners, are paying dividends in the form of engagement and response in social media. But by pushing themselves to move faster, these brands are doing something even more important: They are creating models for how they will bring the real-time mentality to the rest of their marketing.

## AGENCIES ARE EVOLVING TOWARD SPEED

### The push for real-time marketing is creating new opportunities for agencies—but new tensions as well.

Several have opened real-time content studios to track real-time conversations and develop quick-turnaround marketing materials for clients. Agencies hope these efforts will help cement their position as trusted partners in this emerging marketing area.

New challengers are also emerging. The World's Fastest Agency, started in March 2013 by Floyd Hayes, a former creative at a London ad shop, uses Twitter and PayPal to take creative assignments and promises to turn around an assignment within 24 hours. "A big question is, 'Is this a stunt?'" Hayes told Advertising Age in March. "The answer is absolutely not. I'm 100% serious. WFA will provide dedication, expertise, respect and passion to each and every brief it receives."

Online coupon and deals site RetailMeNot was WFA's first client, using the agency to generate an unspecified marketing idea. "The World's Fastest Agency is an example of how the Internet is creating new business models that disrupt the status quo," RetailMeNot's CEO, Cotter Cunningham, said in a press release on the WFA website.

Regardless of whether WFA can succeed in its business model, the fact that the agency even exists points to an unsettling time for the advertising creative business.

"There's going to need to be a deeper integration between agencies and clients," said Gary Vaynerchuk, CEO of social media agency VaynerMedia. "The agencies that don't waste the client's time are going to be the ones that create more value. That's what we're spending a lot of time on now. How do we get into a place where [clients] don't feel like they have to go back and forth with us a lot to get [the creative] right?"

And within the agency, staffing for real-time marketing is a jigsaw puzzle because the day-to-day demands can vary dramatically.

"With this shift to real-time content generation, one day somebody needs three or four hours of somebody's time and the next day they don't," said Travitz of GolinHarris, which develops real-time content for clients via its unit called The Bridge. "How do you account for that in setting staffing for the creative folks?"

Marketers are looking at their agencies more closely, assessing their capabilities at developing real-time creative. "It's not a TV shoot for a commercial anymore," said P&G's Crociata. "It's content that we're going to create to engage women in a program about hair. And that's the way we're looking at studios and [agency] partners. They've got to bring much more expertise in the emerging areas ... versus just a standard 30-second TV spot."

Make no mistake, creative is still paramount to marketers. According to a survey by agency consultancy Avidan Strategies, it's by far the most important factor marketers use to evaluate their agencies. But with real-time marketing, the definition of creative has expanded dramatically.

### Factors Important to US Marketers When Evaluating Agencies, 2012

% of respondents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Quality of creative ideas and strategy | 90% |
| Understand the client's business       | 74% |
| Integration and coordination           | 56% |
| Implementation and follow-through      | 56% |

Source: Avidan Strategies as cited in Forbes, Oct 8, 2012

147624

www.eMarketer.com

Here are three examples of how digital, social media and traditional agencies are realigning their resources to support real-time marketing:

### Digitas

Digitas has opened BrandLIVE studios in four of its offices: Boston, New York, Chicago and Detroit. The format brings together creative, account and analytics resources to develop real-time content for clients including Sprint and Procter & Gamble's Tide detergent.

"The faster you get to the market, the more relevant you are," said Robinson, the Digitas creative director who is also managing director of BrandLIVE.

The guiding mission of BrandLIVE is to create something that draws attention to a brand. "At its simplest, it boils down to a team of people who wake up and say, 'How can I make my brand famous today?'" Robinson said.

Team members meet twice a day to review ideas and discuss trends. The morning is devoted to freeform brainstorming about trends that a client's brand can relate to. Afternoon meetings are more formalized, with time devoted to reviewing idea pitches and making assignments for the next day.

"What BrandLIVE does is free people up to come up with ideas that aren't constrained by so many tethers," Robinson said. "They can throw things out that the brand normally might not be receptive to."

That can often lead to frustration, Robinson acknowledged. "People go from severe highs to severe lows," he said. "We've pitched opportunities to clients saying, 'You should jump on it,' and the client gets back to us three days later. Then we have to say, 'Too late, you missed it.'"

"It is hard, it is very messy, but more and more often we find people raising their hands for these opportunities to work on these teams, versus the traditional digital creative approaches," he said.

## Deep Focus

Digital agency Deep Focus opened Moment Studio in late 2012 to offer clients a more streamlined process for developing content for social media. The studio works with brands including Nestlé Purina, Pepsi and Absolut Spirits Co.

"Historically, the agency creative model is meant to deal with multiple rounds of revisions and briefs," said Deep Focus CEO Ian Schafer. "But if we wanted to publish something and have it be good and quick, we knew that we had to have a different model," which the agency refers to as a "creative newsroom."

Clients can tap Moment Studio as an add-on to the agency's community management service, said Kraemer, the creative director. "The staff is made up of photographers, writers, designers and producers—the same talent you'd expect to see at a digital or social agency," he said.

The team meets once a day to analyze what a client's consumers are discussing online and how the brand might capitalize. "We brainstorm and we concept on the spot," Kraemer said. "It could be as simple as a holiday message, if a holiday is that day or the next day, or it could be something much more interesting or complex that has to do with something that's trending in the news or trending in culture. Or it could have to do with an event, like the Academy Awards."

Once the agency solidifies a few ideas, the creative development starts. "We talk to the client once we have a concept in hand and when we're in production for it," Kraemer said. "We say, 'Hey, we want to do this. What do you think?'" Sometimes they give feedback right there. But most of the time we just run with it and we send it over to them. Sometimes they approve, and sometimes they don't."

From concept to completion, the process takes anywhere from an hour to a day or two depending on the client's needs.

## Mullen

As a well-regarded creative agency working with brands such as Acura, JetBlue, adidas and U.S. Cellular, Mullen's experience shows that real-time marketing is not solely the domain of the digital and social media shops.

Last year, Mullen began testing a concept in its Boston office called Drumbeat. The key insight that led the agency to form the unit was that "the typical agency process was too slow to capitalize on things that could not be planned far in advance," said Eric Williamson, Mullen's senior vice president and director of digital and content strategy. "Many times, preplanned content comes off as too corporate and fails to allow for a brand's personality to come out."

Drumbeat's 22 staffers (10 dedicated and the rest spending 50% of their time on Drumbeat) operate "more like a magazine than an agency," said Williamson. "It's less about advertising and more about figuring out what all of your recurring storylines, articles and posts are going to be."

The unit develops daily and weekly content for social channels. Large-scale social media activation campaigns and multichannel advertising campaigns are still handled by the agency's regular creative department.

## TRUTHS AND MYTHS ABOUT REAL-TIME CREATIVE

Mullen believes in taking a measured approach to deploying real-time creative. Using the Grammys and Oscars as two tests in early 2013, the agency and client U.S. Cellular deployed various types of Twitter-based creative—some preplanned, others created on the fly, some with a strong brand message, others with little or no branding—and measured how each piece performed.

“The only way to think, act and operate like a publisher is through some degree of methodical trial and error,” Williamson said.

For Mullen, Drumbeat offers a way to keep close ties to clients, even as some of them develop their own in-house content-creation capabilities.

“Most brands should have in-house capabilities for community management, content production and analytics,” Williamson said. Drumbeat is “set up to be a nimble content creation group. It’s a SWAT team dedicated to each brand.”

**These three agencies are not the only ones that have embraced real-time marketing as a marketing imperative; many others have as well.** They are evolving their capabilities to help take the burden of rapid content creation off of their clients because they believe that having a real-time mentality will pay dividends in the future.

**How can marketers best embrace real-time creative? Mondelez’s Bough sums up the mindset: “It’s not necessarily about developing creative in real time. It’s about having a creative approach that allows you to operate in real time.”**

Keeping that in mind will help brands to navigate the path from rigid campaign planning to a structure that embraces the unexpected.

“It’s a massive resource shift to go from the cadence that a lot of our clients are used to, which is campaign-based and preparing the next one in its own due time, versus an always-on approach, where you basically need to be ready at any point for anything,” said Denuo’s Buczaczer.

Enduring industry criticism and debate will be among the toughest challenges for marketers. The very public nature of real-time marketing means that there is added pressure to get it “right”—even as the clock is ticking. Being subject to negative reaction will no doubt cause some brands to give up and deem the concept a fad. This couldn’t be further from the truth.

Even at this early stage, the need for change is clear. Here are the key truths and myths about real-time marketing and the creative process:

### Myth: Fast creative is bad creative

Critics contend that by trying to move more quickly, brands will make mistakes, or their agencies will put out shoddy work that reflects poorly on the brand.

While it’s true that some real-time marketing initiatives have fallen flat, and many more will in the future, it is shortsighted to assume that any attempt to move fast will automatically result in poor creative.

“Presuming or assuming that moving quickly equals bad creative is not the right approach. A great idea executed at speed that sacrifices some quality can still be really good creative,” said Digitas’ Robinson.

“We all understand that you wouldn’t look at the same production methods for making your television commercial as you would for making a photo for Facebook,” said Percolate’s Noah Brier. Better technology will help creative to work more quickly, he added.

In addition, brands need to view their work through the eyes of their audience. “What is the consumer willing to accept? If they look at something you produced, are they going to critique the lighting and the cuts?” Robinson said. “There are definitely tradeoffs, but they need to be weighed against the power of the idea.”

## Truth: Being prepared is not the same thing as being planned

Many pundits have put forth the idea that planning is a necessary step for real-time marketing. And it is true that organizations need to make preparations for how and when to react and respond. “It’s like a tennis player,” said Mondelez’s Bough. “They don’t just get on the court and happen to win grand slams.”

But there is a difference between being prepared and being planned. Prepared is having the people, assets and technology ready in order to act quickly. Planned is canned—it’s content that looks and feels like it isn’t fresh.

During the Oscars, for example, the Stella Artois beer brand used Twitter to say “Congratulations to winner of the Oscar for Best Film Editing,” without actually naming the winner and forgetting the word “the” in its tweet. Other brands have tried to tie their Facebook posts to unrelated events, too: GE Appliances wished its fans a “Happy National Peanut Butter and Jelly Day” in early April.

These attempts at linking a brand to a moment ring false to consumers. “You can prepare all you want, but sometimes the conversation moves in a different path and you have to prepare for that,” said P&G’s Crociata.

## Myth: Being first is most important

The race to be first to catch on to a meme or a trending topic can stimulate creativity and motivate marketing teams. But real-time marketing is less about who gets there first and more about being relevant to the brand *and* to the moment.

“It’s really important to us that brands comment when it’s going to be relevant for the brand, not just because it’s a real-time opportunity,” said Deep Focus’ Kraemer. “Being first to comment on something, if it’s not relevant to your brand, is going to get exhausted pretty quickly, and consumers are going to backlash against it.”

While it is true that the first marketers that tapped into the “Harlem Shake” craze (such as Pepsi and Red Bull), for example, got more attention and press than those that joined the trend a month later, there is limited reward for being so early to the punch that a brand relationship is absent.

“Quality is definitely entering the mix,” said Digitas’ Robinson. “It’s not enough to be first or fast, but the creative has to be good. It has to marry real-time relevance with a great idea and quality execution.”

## Truth: Real-time marketing and branding can co-exist

There are obvious benefits to using real-time marketing for direct response initiatives. When Twitter launched keyword targeting for ads in April 2013, the examples it cited in its announcement were ads designed to drive purchasing or shopping behavior. It is easy to see the appeal of delivering a real-time coupon or offer, triggered by the words someone uses in their social media postings.

Marketers that use real-time efforts for branding have a less linear path to success. Getting across brand attributes in quick-fire creative is difficult, but it is not impossible.

“You need to realize you can’t deliver the history of the brand and all the benefits and selling points and be engaging at the same time, in one fell swoop,” said Padgett of Nestlé Purina. “But you can certainly, over time, use engaging, quick content to give consumers a good sense of what your brand stands for.”

Wireless carrier U.S. Cellular learned from experiments that it ran during the Grammys and the Oscars that content with subtle branding worked better than content that was more heavily branded.

During the Oscars telecast, “we did one when Ted [the teddy bear from “Ted”] was presenting, and we said that a rude teddy bear also deserves a kind carrier. That was actually our highest performing piece of content. It was a really soft nod to U.S. Cellular, but it actually resonated the best,” said Sharif Renno, U.S. Cellular’s social media manager.

## Myth: It's just graphics and tweets, right?

Most real-time marketing takes place in social media because the path to publishing is much more streamlined than in other media. And the standard model that has emerged, at least in these early days, has been a tweet or status update along with an image. Some critics have said there's not much creativity in these executions.

However, it's important to remember the quick evolution that real-time marketing has already undergone—and to expect that the creative will get better over time. A timely status update or tweet (in words) used to be considered real-time marketing but now is just part of the status quo of social media marketing. The addition of visual creative along with the tweet or status update takes real-time marketing a step further, but that too will become standard procedure as more brands embrace the activity.

The obvious next step is video; as social media platforms add more video capabilities, brands will take advantage. Some have started to already, using Twitter's Vine application.

"I think creatively we haven't yet seen that breakout," said Denuo's Buczaczer. "I think we're still waiting for a few of those epic pieces" of real-time marketing. Creatives should consider developing new concepts for real-time a challenge, and not be constrained into thinking that a catchy graphic is all it takes.

## Truth: There will be more strikeouts, singles and doubles than home runs

In real-time marketing, the failures outweigh the successes, especially in these early days. For every brand like Oreo that gets months of attention for a single tweet, thousands of smaller real-time marketing efforts gain little or no traction.

This is true even for Oreo. While its Super Bowl tweet has received more than 16,000 retweets and has been favorited more than 6,000 times, other executions from the brand have not reached that lofty success. A tweet timed to the NCAA Final Four basketball tournament featuring the text "Congrats to the champs!" and an animation of an Oreo cookie spinning on top of a finger has garnered only 29 retweets.

The key is to approach real-time marketing creative development as a learning process. "Not every post gets the same engagement as the one we did before or the one we might do next," said Mondelez's Bough. "If you look at the organizations that are transforming the way that they connect with consumers, those that are learning from what they have done in the past and are challenging themselves to move forward fast are winning."

"Everybody's looking for the big moment," said Vaynerchuk of VaynerMedia. "To me, singles and doubles are just as good as home runs. The problem is nobody talks about singles and doubles."

## Myth: It's only about the big event

Many of the early real-time marketing executions happened during major events, such as the Super Bowl or the Oscars. But it will be just as important—if not more important—for brands to have an ongoing strategy for real-time marketing whenever the right moment arises.

"What's going to define doing it well is not the Super Bowl," said Berkowitz of 360i. "I'm much more curious about what happens on a typical Wednesday. Making social currency part of the brand identity—that is a bigger challenge and bigger opportunity."

Some of the blame for the big-event mentality can be attributed to that Oreo tweet—which 360i created.

"I think that Oreo propelled us into this mentality around 'how can I win big at the next big event?'" said GolinHarris' Travitz. "But the brands that I've seen do this really well are the ones that are finding ways to insert themselves into the conversation every day, not just around these big media events."

Another benefit to tying real-time marketing to lower-profile opportunities is that a brand can experiment with less fear of being called out for criticism.

## Truth: Real-time marketing will test the strength of the agency-client relationship

Digital media and then social media have caused huge changes in the agency world; real-time marketing is yet another development that will test the strength of the agency-client relationship.

Doing real-time marketing well means extending trust on both sides of the table. Brands must trust their agencies to develop and deploy creative that works. And agencies must trust that their clients will create the internal structures to review and approve the work that they create before it is too late.

“You absolutely have to have a trusted and strong relationship with your client. They need to be a true partner and part of the team if you want to get the rapid approvals you need,” said Hunter.

Echoing him, 360i’s Berkowitz said: “The biggest thing we can do to speed up the creative process is generate trust from our clients. Trust and real-time marketing are interwoven.”

**While it may seem easy to speed up the creative process, brands and agencies have much to learn to get it right.** A mindset such as the one fostered by Bough is necessary. Winning happens with practice and experience, not the first time on the court.

## REAL-TIME MARKETING BEYOND SOCIAL MEDIA

**Even in these early days of real-time marketing, some marketers are already looking past social media and are quickening the pace of creative development for platforms such as online video, TV, and digital out-of-home media. These companies recognize that the changes that are happening in consumer behavior affect far more than just their social media marketing.**

The Citroën car company, for example, created a video in spring 2013 that referenced the white smoke used to signify the selection of a new pope. The ad showed a Citroën employee purportedly turning black smoke emitting from the chimney on the Sistine Chapel to white smoke, a reference to Citroën’s clean-diesel marketing efforts.

The Johnnie Walker spirits brand has developed a content platform in conjunction with its sponsorship of the Vodafone McLaren Mercedes F1 racing team. The brand and its agency, iris worldwide, shoot, edit and deliver video content to TV broadcasters and YouTube within 48 to 72 hours of a race. The videos appear as program content, not ads, on the TV networks.

“Sign-offs from the client happen at 3am, and we have the legal department at Diageo on hand to sense-check the content,” said Hunter. “By getting it into the programming slots rather than pure advertising it gives the brand amazing reach and credibility.”

Wal-Mart is speeding up production processes and tapping a wide range of internal and external agency resources to expand a TV campaign that compares prices at Wal-Mart to those at other local retailers. According to an April 2013 article in Advertising Age, Wal-Mart plans to produce 1,500 TV ads in 2013, more than double 2012’s count. The ads will be customized to the 60 local markets in which they appear.



In the UK, the Fulham FC soccer team, faced with several thousand unsold tickets to a match with neighborhood rival Chelsea in April 2013, used digital out-of-home media company Amscreen to deliver an ad touting ticket availability for an event it dubbed “Fulham v That Other Team in Fulham.” Fulham bought the ad space in the afternoon, delivered the ad to Amscreen at 4:30pm and Amscreen deployed the ad to 40 screens in West London within five minutes of receiving it, the DailyDOOH blog reported. The game ended up coming within 700 tickets of selling out.

This year, brands turned to Twitter during the Super Bowl blackout. Next year, it’s possible that that sort of real-time marketing might take place on TV. Imagine if Energizer, for example, had the capability to develop a TV spot, deliver it to the network and place it on air before the blackout even ended. The audience for such an execution would be enormous—well beyond the wildest dreams of brand social media managers.

Of course, the infrastructure for that to happen has yet to be built; it will require not only a streamlined production process between the agency and client but rapid approval and placement on the part of the network.

“I have a dream that we will start creating some type of real-time TV content soon,” said Mondelez’s Bough. “Those marketers that figure out how to pivot in a real-time world across multiple screens have the chance to win.”

Marketers acknowledge that TV will continue to be the place where they still devote significant energy to get exactly the right creative.

“With more traditional creative there’s a different level of quality, there’s a different amount of longevity,” said Nestlé Purina’s Padgett. “We expect a TV commercial to run for a long period of time, so it’s worth the demonstrably greater amount of investment and time to do it.”

But Padgett also admits that his company’s work in developing real-time marketing for social media has made him reassess the extent of those monetary and human expenditures.

“You realize, ‘Holy cow, why does it take us six months to build a TV commercial?’ You look at those steps and say, ‘Wow, we could probably cut a lot of time and meetings and man hours out of the process, potentially.’”

Creating real-time TV commercials is one avenue, but an easier approach might be to use social conversations around TV to inform a brand’s broader marketing strategies. Monitoring the chatter about TV shows can help marketers make rapid decisions about not only where to place their ads but also what sort of creative will resonate.

P&G’s Crociata envisions having the ability to adapt marketing messages to the local weather. “If you can be relevant in a moment when there’s high humidity and she’s got frizz going on, you can give her something that she can go buy at Walgreens on the corner to help with her look.”

In the push to speed up the creative process, apparently even the sky is no longer a limit for marketers and their agencies.

“There are opportunities to move real-time content generation away from social media where, in my opinion, it’s been kind of stuck,” said GolinHarris’ Travitz. “If we saw something that happened to be trending around Central Park in Manhattan, would it be possible for us to hire a skywriter and have them skywrite a message related to the trend while it’s still trending? I would love to see that happen.”

## EMARKETER INTERVIEWS

### Real-Time Creative the Mondelez Way Requires Long-Time Preparation



**Bonin Bough**  
Vice President of Global Media and Consumer Engagement  
**Mondelez International**

Interview conducted on April 4, 2013

### Real-Time Content Creators Need to Be Real-Time Content Consumers



**Noah Brier**  
Co-Founder  
**Percolate**

Interview conducted on March 20, 2013

### P&G's Careful Planning Led to Pantene's Powerful Twitter Program



**Kevin Crociata**  
Marketing Director, North American Haircare  
**Procter & Gamble**

Interview conducted on March 21, 2013



**Rotha Penn**  
Communications Manager, Haircare  
**Procter & Gamble**

Interview conducted on March 21, 2013

### Capture the Moment to Make a Meme



**Grant Hunter**  
Regional Creative Director, APAC  
**iris worldwide**

Interview conducted on March 15, 2013

### Purina's Dabbling in Real-Time Creative Delivers Timeless Lessons



**Chris Padgett**  
Vice President of Marketing, Digital/Social/Global  
**Nestlé Purina**

Interview conducted on March 13, 2013

### U.S. Cellular Shares Successes and Mistakes of Real-Time Social Marketing



**Sharif Renno**  
Social Media Manager  
**U.S. Cellular**

Interview conducted on March 11, 2013



**Sonny Gill**  
Social Media Manager  
**U.S. Cellular**

Interview conducted on March 11, 2013



**David Berkowitz**  
Vice President of Emerging Media  
**360i**

Interview conducted on February 20, 2013



**Dan Buczaczer**  
Managing Director  
**Denuo**

Interview conducted on March 12, 2013



**Linda Piggot**  
Executive Vice President, Account Management  
**Digitas**

Interview conducted on February 20, 2013



**John Robinson**  
Senior Vice President of Creative and Managing Director, BrandLIVE  
**Digitas**

Interview conducted on March 12, 2013



**Ian Schafer**  
CEO and Founder  
**Deep Focus**

Interview conducted on February 22, 2013



**Guy Slattery**  
Executive Vice President of Marketing  
**A&E Network**

Interview conducted on March 7, 2013



**Tyler Travitz**  
Director of Digital Design and Development  
**GolinHarris**

Interview conducted on March 13, 2013



**Gary Vaynerchuk**  
Co-Founder  
**VaynerMedia**

Interview conducted on March 4, 2013



**Eric Williamson**

*Senior Vice President and Director of Digital and Content Strategy*

**Mullen**

*Interview conducted on March 6, 2013*

**Brian Critz**

*Senior Brand Manager*

**Unilever**

*Interview conducted on March 28, 2013*

**Ken Kraemer**

*Executive Creative Director*

**Deep Focus**

*Interview conducted on February 22, 2013*

## RELATED LINKS

[Avidan Strategies](#)

[AYTM Market Research](#)

[GolinHarris](#)

[Janrain](#)

## EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION CONTRIBUTORS

Cliff Annicelli

Senior Editor

Kaitlin Carlin

Copy Editor

Joanne DiCamillo

Senior Production Artist

Stephanie Gehrsitz

Senior Production Artist

Dana Hill

Director of Production

Nicole Perrin

Associate Editorial Director

Allie Smith

Director of Charts



## The world's go-to source for information on digital marketing, media and commerce.

In the fast-paced digital world, it is neither prudent nor professional to make business decisions based solely on a single source. eMarketer helps companies minimize risk and maximize opportunity by providing...

### COLLECTIVE WISDOM

#### COVERAGE

See all aspects of what is happening today in digital marketing, media and commerce.

#### COLLECTION

Information is gathered from thousands of research sources around the globe and hundreds of interviews with industry professionals a month.

#### CURATION

eMarketer sifts through the clutter, vets data for accuracy and distills information to its essential intelligence – to save you time.

#### COMPARISON

Side-by-side source comparison charts display all relevant information on a topic in one place.

#### CONTEXT

Focused, clear and concise, eMarketer reports provide a quick, complete picture of fast-changing digital trends to make sense of complex issues.

#### CONVENIENCE

The information you need is accessible 24/7 from your PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone—and downloadable in PDF, Excel, JPEG or PowerPoint formats.

#### CONFIDENCE

For 15 years, eMarketer has been recognized as the standard for media coverage of the digital world—cited more than 4,000 times in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal alone—and relied on by major brands and advertising agencies around the globe.

#### COMPETITIVENESS

No one in business wants to be surprised, so see the trends coming and make certain your organization always has the latest, most accurate and comprehensive digital information available—with an eMarketer Corporate Subscription.

**To schedule a conversation or customized demonstration,** go to [eMarketer.com](http://eMarketer.com) or call 212-763-6010

