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THE
BOLD

2015

QUARTERLY

**HOW CAN THE
BRITISH CYCLING
TEAM HELP US
BECOME WORLD
BEATERS ONLINE?**

**A MORE
MEANINGFUL
EXPERIENCE
FOR BRANDS**

**LEARNING TO
LOVE THE ELEPHANT
IN THE ROOM**

**DESIGNING
FOR ADDICTION**

INSIDE THE SCREEN



A LEITH AGENCY PUBLICATION

IT'S ISSUE 3 OF THE BOLD QUARTERLY AND WE'RE LOOKING AHEAD TO NEXT YEAR. WRITERS FROM EVERY FLOOR AND CUPBOARD OF THE AGENCY HAVE GIVEN THEIR PREDICTIONS, RESOLUTIONS, AND WHAT THEY'RE MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO IN ADLAND IN 2016.

AFTER ALL, WE'VE JUST CELEBRATED OUR 30TH BIRTHDAY, SO IT FEELS LIKE A GOOD TIME TO THINK ABOUT WHAT'S NEXT FOR LEITH AND THE WORLD OF CREATIVITY.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY.

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HOW CAN THE BRITISH CYCLING TEAM HELP US BECOME WORLD BEATERS ONLINE?



George Gunn,
Content Strategist
at Leith, on gaining
a competitive edge
in the digital world.
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There are two ways of becoming a champion cyclist.

The first approach was the one infamously taken by charity wristband peddler turned wrong 'un, Lance Armstrong, on the way to all seven of his Tour de France wins. Doping.

The second, practiced in recent years by Team Sky (the British cycling team that competes in the World Tour), involves cyclists washing their hands properly to avoid infection and transporting their own mattresses and pillows to each different hotel stayed in.

Eh?

Sir Dave Brailsford, Performance Director for Team Sky and general coaching visionary, clarifies this second approach as follows:

“They’re tiny things, but if you clump them together it makes a big difference.”

This “aggregation of marginal gains” – i.e. identifying and slightly improving every aspect conceivably related to cycling performance, no matter how small – saw Britain celebrate its first ever Tour de France win in July 2012.

In fact, Tour champion and mod national treasure Bradley Wiggins finished so far ahead

of the next non-British cyclist that it was as if he'd navigated the entire route on a Lambretta scooter. And yes, Wiggins' favourite pillow and thoroughly cleansed hands did contribute, in small part, to his comfortable victory.

Under Brailsford's tutelage the following month, Great Britain swept up at the London Olympics by smashing seven world records, nine Olympic records and winning 70% of the cycling gold medals available. Riders Chris Hoy and Chris Froome became the most decorated British Olympians of all time. The Queen went daff with Knighthoods and OBEs. Froome has since gone on to win the Tour de France twice.



All smiles for Brailsford and marginal gains. None for poor old Lance.

Despite a few half-hearted cries of skulduggery from green-eyed rivals, these phenomenal feats have all been achieved entirely legitimately: Team Sky has a strict, zero-tolerance approach to doping.

Before this turns into a full-blown Pro Cycling magazine eulogy though, let's apply the brakes and take a look at how marginal gains theory can apply to the digital world. Could the same philosophy that brought Team Sky all those gold medals help digital marketers to a Gold Lion?

Imagine you own a mid-ranking YouTube channel. Your videos have racked up thousands of views between them. You even have a few hundred subscribers, and a handful of these add positive comments and share your films on other social networks.

This is the kind of position that several brands and publishers find themselves in. A healthy enough position, sure, but not one that's going to see them cut through the vast digital noise and reach as many people as PewDiePie (39.9m subscribers), Jenna Marbles (15.6m subscribers) and other YouTube royalty any time soon. Consider, therefore, your mid-ranking YouTube channel the equivalent of a lycra-clad desk worker who cycles to the office and competes in occasional charity cycle races.

PewDiePie and Jenna Marbles, meanwhile, are Sir Bradley Wiggins and Victoria Pendleton in our analogy. They've combined undisputed talent with years of hard work and a comprehensive strategy that has left no stone unturned. Their content reaches millions. Finally, Lance Armstrong is a spammy pre-roll YouTube advert. Sure, he'll also reach millions of people and might have some dubious success along the way, but he's generally regarded as a bit of a shit.



The king of the British Cycling Invasion

Good video content and campaign spend alone won't help you stand out from the countless others who are doing the same.

How then, can we transform your middling YouTube channel into a world champion one? The answer, naturally, is to think 'What would Bradley Wiggins do?' (WWBWD?) and therefore to identify and optimise every aspect of your channel.

And I mean every aspect.

For instance, agonising over your videos' titles might seem trivial, but titles stuffed with keywords and irresistibly-clickable hooks will guarantee more views. Doing this alone obviously won't turn you into a YouTube star, but it's one of many steps in the right direction.

Likewise, splashing £200 on a fancy ergonomic saddle isn't going to turn our office-working cyclist into an Olympic gold medalist, but it'll give her a noticeable competitive edge straight away.



One for the armchair Tour de France fans

The actions taken don't even need to be substantial ones; enhancing every aspect of your YouTube channel by just 1% will see each of these small gains add up to give a remarkable overall improvement. There are literally hundreds of these conceivable fixes:

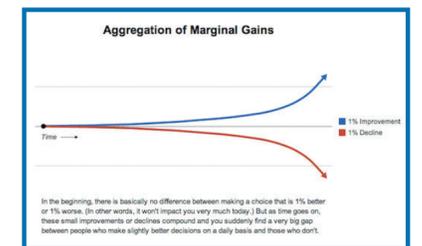
“Could you improve a video's description by just 1%?”

Yes, easy.

“Could you improve the 4th sentence of a video's description by 1%?”

Seriously?? Well yes, I suppose.

Since many of these improvements aren't obvious and/or appear inconsequential, most won't bother. Brailsford would, and this is the sort of effect he'd enjoy over time:



lifehacker.com

Applying the same method across the board – i.e. improving every area of your other social channels by 1% or more, improving every area of your website by 1% or more and even improving your product by 1% – will gradually start to result in a snowball effect.

The deeper you go and the more thorough your fixes, the bigger this snowball and the steeper your upward curve.

Before you know it, your average YouTube channel / amateur cyclist could be a pro one.

[I think I just about made that analogy work...]

And there you have it. In a ridiculously overcrowded online world, where evenly-matched brands, publishers and content producers jostle for attention, becoming a marginal gains disciple could provide your online channels or campaign with the competitive edge that makes a difference.

So, what are you waiting for? On yer bike and get started!



A MORE MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE FOR BRANDS

Brian Coane, Partner at Leith, on why events are playing an increasing role in advertising.

@coaney

The headline news from the most recent *Bellwether* survey is that optimism amongst marketers is on the wane. However we needn't be too downcast, as Paul Smith, Senior Economist at Markit and author of the *Bellwether* noted, "casting the latest data against a record run of expansion in marketing budgets, a period that includes the strongest upward revisions on record, the correction in growth seemed likely."

So a slowdown was on the cards. The sources of the uncertainty – questions over the Chinese economy, the automobile industry, volatile financial markets – are well reported. They have even slowed down the apparently unstoppable momentum of more advertising spend moving online.

Perhaps a more interesting finding in the most recent survey results is the continued growth in the Events category. It shows growth extending to a record of seven quarters, making Events the best performing *Bellwether* category (other than Internet) during quarter three. By contrast, budgets for PR, Direct Marketing and Sales Promotion were all revised downwards. Should we be surprised that spend on Events seems to be more resilient? Probably not, given recent business news stories.



HMV has gone from collapse in January 2013 to the top of the charts, taking back from Amazon the number one spot for music and DVD sales in the UK."

Helping drive this growth is rocketing sales of vinyl. When Apple Music offers subscribers over 43 million songs, opting to buy a 12-inch plastic disc seems to be quite a limited purchase. However that is to underestimate the experience of taking home a long player. People are reaching the conclusion that buying vinyl is more of an event than digital streaming.



Waterstone's has also reported similar success, focusing on the physical product rather than the digital. Having teamed up with Amazon in 2012 to sell Kindles, they are now removing them from their stores and instead filling the floorspace with paperbacks and hardbacks.

This isn't unique to Waterstone's. Nielsen Bookscan shows that sales of print books for the first 36 weeks of 2015 rose by 4.6% in comparison to the same period last year. The resilience of physical book sales is being driven by non-fiction, where actual books for reference texts and cookery titles are so popular that digital sales are a third of that of fiction.

As well as the pleasure derived from having vinyl or a hardback, people are rediscovering that there is no substitute for being in a store. Waterstone's have introduced more cafes, given back the power to store managers to tailor the book selection to their town or city and are hosting numerous events to appeal to all ages. The bookstore is a place where people want to be.



Amazon has just opened its first bookshop in Seattle 20 years since it started selling online."

At HMV, live music and band signings in store has also contributed to their turnaround, recently Ben Folds were playing live in London and Miaoux Miaoux in Glasgow. So, although there's no doubt that more and more of our day-to-day dealings with brands are via a screen of some sort, perhaps the strength of growth in the Events category shows that increasing spend on the Internet alone is not the answer.

It's a trend that we're enjoying making the most of here at Leith. Our events and experiential team, Leith Links, picked up the Grand Prix at the Institute of Promotion Marketing Awards in 2015. Because they are within an advertising agency it means that we've got the mix of skills to meet the needs of marketers who are looking to balance increasing online spend with activity that gives consumers a more meaningful experience. Come in for a chat and you can experience it for yourself.



YEARS BOLD

LEARNING TO LOVE THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



Leith Planner, Thea, on how confronting the bad stuff can lead to better good stuff.
@theasgarden

As ad folk, we're hard-wired to focus on 'opportunities' and 'consumer benefits'. This is great. But not if it means all the negative stuff gets ignored or swept under the carpet.

Because sometimes it's squaring up to the bad stuff – looking it in the eye – that gives rise to the most interesting and effective solutions.

When Scotland failed to qualify for the 2010 World Cup, there didn't seem any point in IRN-BRU doing anything around the event. Especially given the global mega-budgets of rivals like Coke and the fact IRN-BRU weren't even allowed to use the words 'World Cup'.

But instead of giving up and looking for a more obviously 'positive' opportunity, Leith and IRN-BRU wondered if they couldn't use the limitations to their advantage.

And so the idea of "Bruzil" was born.



"Bruzil" was an integrated campaign based on the notion of Scots meeting and mating with consenting Brazilians to breed a world-beating football team in time for a certain global sporting event in 2034.

The campaign caught the public and media imagination and, for a budget of £150,000, generated nearly half a million pounds worth of PR value.

"Bruzil" – for all its initial limitations – was named as one of Marketing Week's top five World Cup campaigns. Coke (who spent £3.4 million on their World Cup campaign and faced few, if any constraints) were not.



But what if it's not just the marketing context that's challenging? What if it's the product itself?

“Take poo. Nobody likes the idea of ‘catching’ their own poo, poking about in it with cardboard sticks and smearing samples under fiddly little flaps.”

Which explains why many 50–74 year old Scots don't do the NHS bowel cancer screening test when it arrives in the post – even though it could be a lifesaver.

When Leith began working with the Scottish Government to encourage more people to do the test every instinct screamed that we should dial up all the amazing lifesaving positives, and avoid any reminder of how unpleasant the test is to do.

But creative testing revealed a counter-intuitive breakthrough. The more overtly our advertising acknowledged that the test was disgusting to do – the more receptive people were to the idea of having a go.



"Aye, we all know it's a bit... boggin"

Acknowledging the gross nature of the test disarmed people. It got them on side emotionally. And by coupling reference to the grossness of the test, with the fact that half a million people a year successfully do the test, we made people realise that maybe they could (and should) overcome the yuck-factor too.

“The bottom line, (if you'll pardon the pun) is that sometimes the most effective solutions come from being honest about your biggest limitations.”

Because once you're honest about them you can start to think around them. To outwit them.

It's an idea that Adam Morgan puts across brilliantly in his latest book, 'A Beautiful Constraint'.

Morgan tells the story of how Audi focused their racing team on the 'propelling question' of "how do we win the Le Mans race, without building a faster car?"

Squaring up to this huge constraint led Audi to develop a radically lateral solution. And they went on to win the race for six consecutive years.

I won't steal Mr Morgan's storytelling thunder by revealing the secret of Audi's success here – but I do heartily recommend his book.

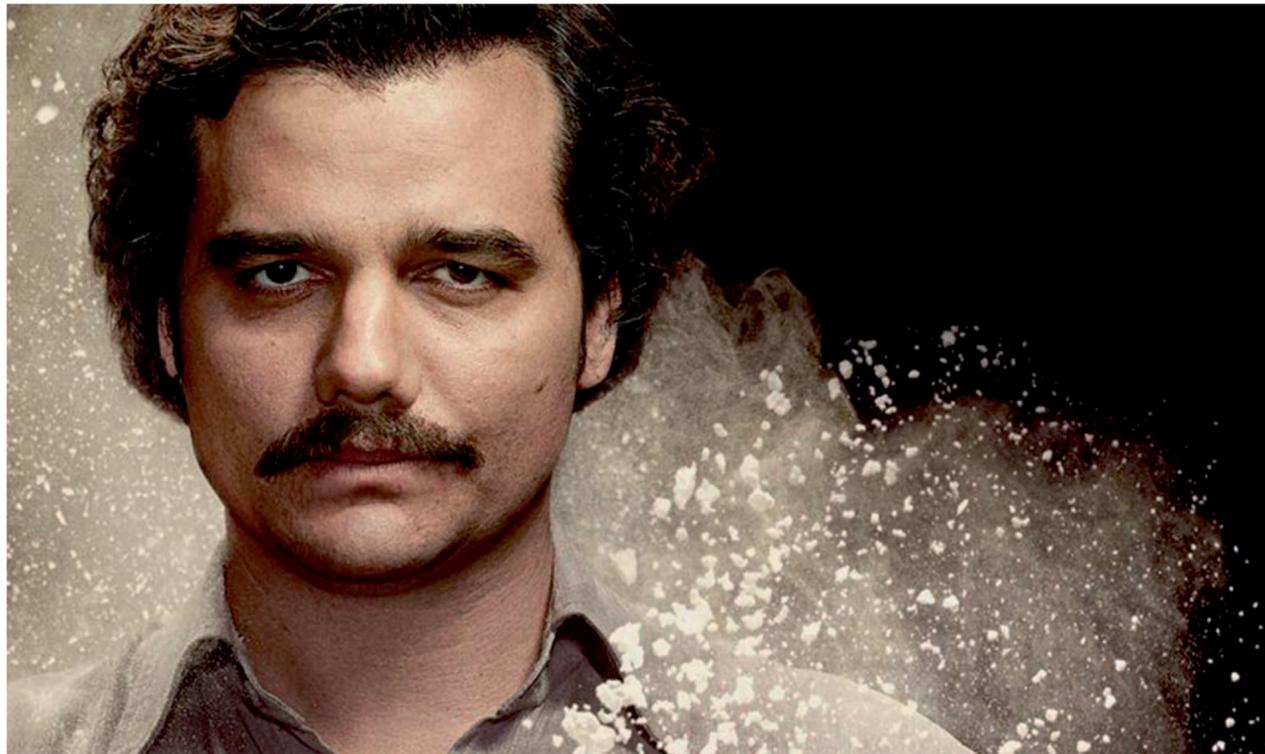
So when you next start work on a project brief, try asking yourself this question:



What's the single biggest thing that makes achieving our goal bloody difficult?"

Because once you've been brutally honest about that, you'll be a whole lot closer to spotting the real opportunities.

DESIGNING FOR ADDICTION



Jim Wolff, Head of Digital, on how to make people even more addicted to media than they are already.

@jimwolffman

I'll admit it. I'm an addict. I'm hooked. To Netflix. To Facebook. To Instagram. To iPlayer. To Spotify. To Twitter. To media. And I'm not the only one. This seemingly endless access to information, to social media, to news, to entertainment is, in the words of Super Hans from Peep Show, "just so more-ish".

The fact that it's kind of my job to be on this stuff helps. But even when I'm not "working", I'm off binge-watching box sets (word of the year 2015 for good reason), on a 'netflixathon' of Narcos, or OD-ing on 4OD. If it's not Homeland or Humans, it's an obscure Canadian comedy (Trailer Park Boys is my current fix), switching off from my media-saturated day job with, yup, more media.

So instead of penning a sanctimonious piece on

how the end of the world is nigh because most of the developed world are rotting their brains with a never-ending stream of infantilising entertainment, I thought I'd look at what makes this stuff so addictive, for anyone wanting to design even more of it.



In the interest of moral balance, if you'd rather challenge media consumption head on, then go and read Amusing Ourselves To Death, by Neil Postman, who convincingly argues that TV has had a cataclysmic effect on the way our society absorbs information, effectively making us shallow-headed goldfish that struggle with deep thinking. And if you're concerned about how big shiny internet businesses like AirBnB, Amazon, Uber and Spotify are affecting small businesses, then settle down with The Internet Is Not the Answer, by Andrew Keen.

But if you temporarily don't care about the long-term effects of media addiction, or how these services affect society, and just want to create and share more of the good stuff, then turn on, tune in and read on...

1.

Make Your Stuff Available

This is an obvious one. If people can't get hold of something, they can't have more of it, so your market can't grow. Which is why Facebook put so much effort into redesigning their service for mobiles five years or so ago. Not only do you get access to new users (see Africa), but you also put your product in everyone's pocket, so that they can get their fix the moment they wake up to the moment they sleep, and even when they're sitting on the loo (allegedly).

It's nothing new to say "you must be on mobile", but it can still feel like an afterthought, even when you set out to be mobile-first. But a mobile strategy is, to steal from an excellent piece on Adage by BuzzFeed's president Jon Steinberg, "like having a side dish of steak". And that was from three years ago. As in, mobile is not just another channel, it's the channel, stoopid. Because it's always available. And feeds the always-on addiction like no other.

2.

Massage the Ego

Ping! You just got another like on that Instasunset you posted. Ping! There goes another. And another. Another couple more and you'll get to that comfort zone of 10 likes, where your post doesn't look lame any more with only a paltry handful of people liking it, most of whom you're related to anyway. The endorphins rush. The serotonin kicks in. Another ping! 11 likes. You've practically gone viral.

Sound familiar? Or maybe I'm just that sad. But it's not for no reason that Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have grown into such big media powerhouses. Who doesn't feel buoyed when some pithy wisecrack you've taken all day to think of gets a retweet by someone you've never met (probably a p0rn spambot)? Who doesn't get a warm glow when someone in Azerbaijan starts following you? What these media platforms do so well is giving you a good feeling for contributing your media. Likes, followers, stars, favs, stats, friends, etc. They all give you the sense that what you're doing is valued, that it makes a difference. So you do more of it. And more. And more.

So if you're creating content, ask why someone might think they're clever / funny / cool by sharing it on. Much of the time people share things to make themselves look good. And if you're designing a platform or channel to support media content, think about how you can feed the egos of the media creators you rely on. Sometimes a like is all it takes.

3.

Make it Personal

Content may be King, and [insert latest buzzword trend] may be Queen, but relevance is the Prime Minister that they both have to report to because they're an outdated monarchy that no one really listens to anyway. Simply put, if it's not relevant to me or my life, then why would I care?

Buzzfeed know this better than any other media channel right now, and it goes a long way to explaining their meteoric rise. They've mastered the art and science of appealing to every nuance of human character. Whether it's tapping into an affinity with location (44 Reasons To Choose Edinburgh Instead Of London), age (48 Reasons '90s Kids Had The Best Childhood), or a certain feline animal (Yes, Obama And Putin Met, But Did You See The Cats?), they know that we're much more likely to share something we feel speaks closely to a tribe we feel part of. It's how, in the words of their Head of Brand Strategy, they "optimise for the share, and not the click". And how they keep rolling out 'listicles' that you just can't help yourself from sending on.



4.

Remind People You're Here

Marketeers and media platforms know that it doesn't take much to get someone back to something they might like.

So there's a multitude of ways to feed a media habit – from the humble email (1% of opens is still traffic), to the push notification, to countless ad formats. Reminding people you exist is often overlooked as a strategy. And the more other brands, products and services get in on the game, the better, smarter and more creative you need to be. Which is why ad agencies exist. (Stuck for one? Try Leith.)

5.

Make it Entertaining

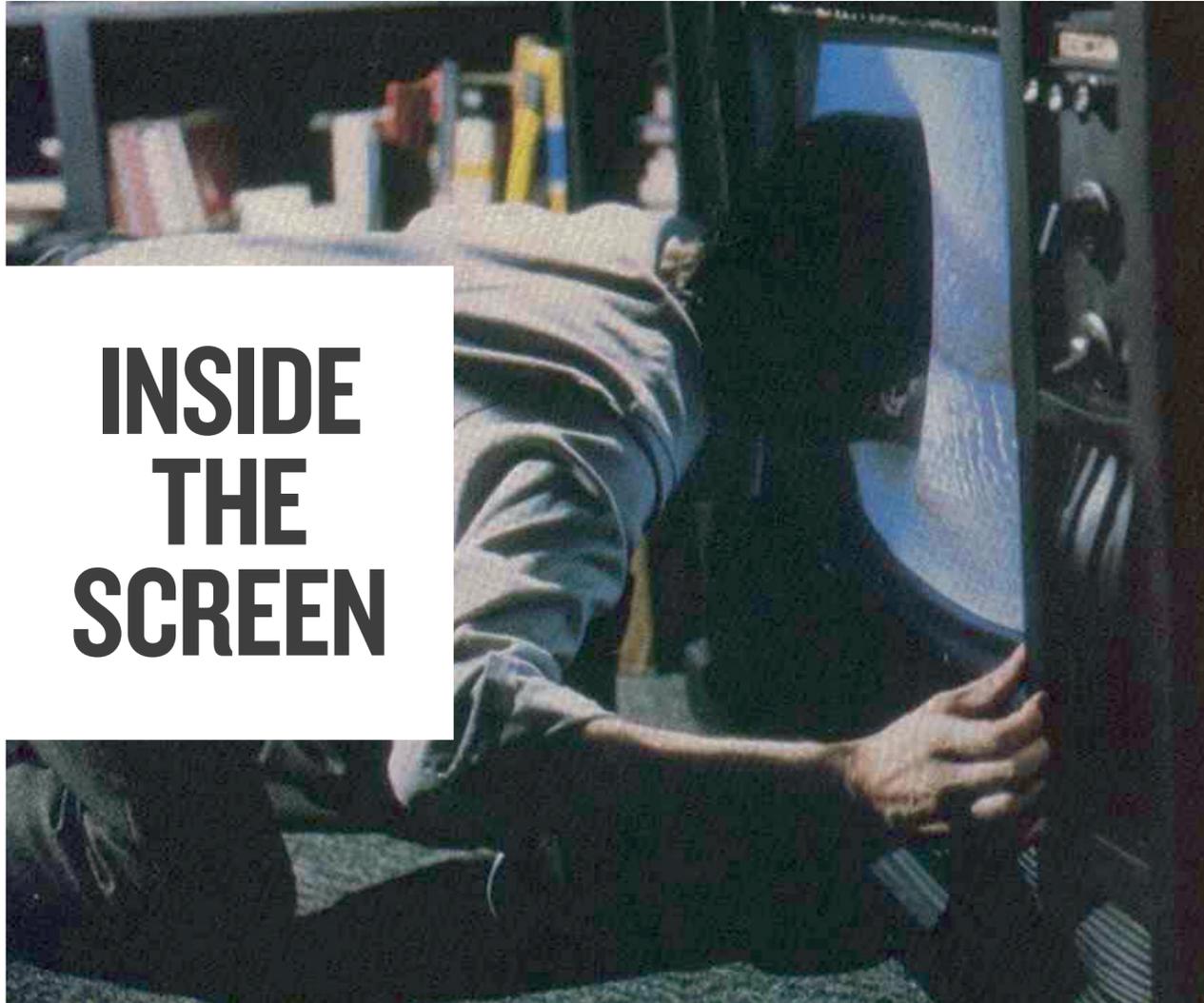
Finally, nothing is so infectious as humour. It can make even the dullest topic or the most serious issue seem accessible and interesting. It's why Mailchimp's done so well. And why a chipper song can help encourage people to smear poo on a piece of card and pop it in the post to test for bowel cancer.



So if you want to hook people for good on your content or service, make them smile as they succumb to your fiendish masterplan.

Now if you'll excuse me, I've got five episodes of Fargo to catch up on...

INSIDE THE SCREEN



Leith copywriter, Brian Tonner, looks ahead to Virtual Reality ads.

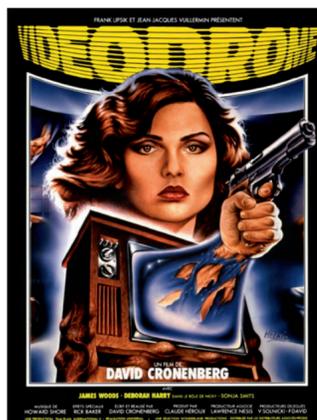
@thereisabrian

In 1982, David Cronenberg's weirdo body-horror, Videodrome, came out.

It's notable for two things. Debbie Harry's in it, and James Woods shoves his head into a telly. The message is that videotapes are evil, or something. Once his head's inside the rest of his body follows. Technology and physiology merge. Woods slowly loses touch with reality, suffering strange violent hallucinations.

Watching a screen wasn't enough for him, he had to get inside one. And we have all this to look forward to, when Virtual Reality headsets hit the shelves early next year.

VR will be mostly for games, but some filmmakers are getting in there too. And that means VR ads are coming.



THEY MAKE A VR FILM BY PLACING A BIG BALL OF CAMERAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ACTION.

Then they stitch those sets of images together so that when you put on the big VR helmet you can turn your head any way you want and experience what is known as 'presence.' The gadget section in the metro doesn't mention evil videotapes or spongy tunnel televisions, but these headset devices are the next best thing. There are some available now, including the joke product that works, Google cardboard. The mass market ones made from nice plastic, due in early 2016, are the Sony Morpheus, HTC Vive, and the Facebook owned, Oculus Rift.



Imagine being onstage with Mick Jagger and getting an extreme close up of his big mouth while he sings right in your face."

Or being in the penalty box during the Tennent's Scottish Cup Final, as a corner is flighted into the back post. Or stepping into the Honda Cog ad and looking back at all that mess.

Classic ads will be remade as VR versions. Ads won't be the same because we'll be in them choosing our own perspective.



No one will say, "Did you watch it", they'll say "have you been there?"

THE THOUGHT OF GETTING AN OCULUS RIFT FOR CHRISTMAS IS TROUBLING.

While I'm supposed to be taking pictures of my daughter opening her gifts from Santa, I'll be on

a virtual Mars, partying with Keith Richards and Ming the Merciless in the new Jack Daniels advert.

I won't waste any time reading the manual either. Press the virtual play button and I'll be in the new John Lewis Christmas ad.



If watching Monty the Penguin made you tear up, imagine actually being there. It could trigger a nervous breakdown."

Christmas Day will be weirder than ever. Playing Wii Sports with your Mother in law was an odd experience. Competing with her in VR Wii Sports will be bizarre.

By Boxing Day evening you'll begin to lose touch with reality. Going back to work after the festive break will be tough and you may find that you've used up all your annual leave by February. Then you'll start using sick days to spend more time in the virtual world. Home alone, just you and your headset. Strap it on and you're in a rubbish advert for Ragu that you start to prefer over real life.

Maybe take the thing back to Dixons and just get a normal telly. But there will be no turning back. Once you've chosen the Old Spice man as your avatar, the thunk back to reality will be harsh. Your only solution to this digital pickle will be to watch more ads.

Which is good news for me and Leith because we want to make brilliant ones, like, a week long experiential thing sponsored by Fiery Irn-Bru, set in Hell, with Miley Cyrus, and Satan.

THE SCREENS WE WATCH HAVEN'T CHANGED MUCH SINCE THEY FIRST CAME OUT.

From the first cinema screen to your iPhone 6S+. They're all rectangles. No matter how impressive and fresh the content is: 360 tours, 4K resolution, Gopro films and FPS games; they're all held back by corners. Not anymore.



ARE WE BECOMING DESENSITISED FROM WHAT WE WATCH ON OUR SCREENS?

Cronenberg thinks so. The villain in Videodrome is the television. Our daily feeds are filled with Gopro videos of people dangling off cranes in Russia, shootings from the Ferguson riots, and bright and bold Nicki Minaj bum videos. Critics say, experiencing these kinds of videos, as virtual experiences, are going to distance us further from human contact and make us less empathic. This could be a problem. Solution? VR Andrex ads.



Hugging cute virtual Labrador puppies will restore our humanity."

The most positive virtual experience you will have will be inside a big TV ad. The logic adds up. Video games will be terrifying and movies don't need to have a positive message behind them like an ad does. Would you rather go inside the Borstal in Scum or jump into a pub in a beer advert?

WE GET USED TO NEW TECH SO QUICKLY.

Mary Poppins was the Avatar of the 1950s. Silent movies to talkies. Fixed camera to the steadicam. Black and white to colour. 2D to 3D. Martin Scorsese was interviewed on Radio 4 when his film, Hugo was released. They asked him, "Should we allow audiences to step into stories and experience them any way they want?" The director replied, "Why not?"

We spend so much time looking at screens the next logical step is to go inside them. We should embrace it, but also be wary at the same time. Or we might just go nuts like James Woods in Videodrome.

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