



orange

Issue Four

SIMPLICITY

CLARITY

TRANSPARENCY

Orange

Consumers — particularly American consumers — are a fickle bunch. Consider the last five years' dramatic swings in preference: from Hummer to Prius, MySpace to Facebook, BlackBerry to Android.

It's easy to wax philosophical about the rise and fall of brands. Pundits are a dime a dozen. It's a lot harder to become one of those growing brands.

Just look at the Detroit automakers. Not long ago, General Motors, that iconic American brand, was left for dead. Two of its showpieces — Hummer and the Cadillac Escalade — were the laughingstock of the automotive world, bloated emblems of an embarrassing era of excess. Ford's gas-guzzling Explorer had barely changed in more than a decade.

Not even two years later, GM's Volt is capturing America's attention, drawing our collective imaginations toward the notion of an entirely gas-free car. Just as remarkable a feat, Chrysler's recent TV ad campaign has romanticized Detroit — Detroit! — playing up the beleaguered city's grit-glam aesthetic at the exact moment when Americans long for homegrown turnaround stories. And isn't rebirth quintessentially American?

That doesn't mean it's easy. Capturing, and capitalizing on, the cultural zeitgeist is harder than it seems. For companies today, chasing trends doesn't cut it.

**Stop
trying
to be
something**

Here at Imagination, we talk a lot about companies that “get it.” Companies that get it understand that consumers are smart. They don't talk down to their customers or blindly push an agenda. They listen when their customers talk, basing innovation on the wants and needs of the customer. And, companies that get it are transparent and authentic. Brands that don't feel authentic, that seem like they're pushing an agenda, will be publicly pilloried by the plugged-in, networked consumer class.

We put this issue of **orange** together with transparency top of mind. Publishing an entire issue in black and white forced us to get to the basic themes of each story, without hiding behind a shroud of flashy color. Indeed, many of the stories you'll read come down to basics: reclaiming the inspiration that comes from a blank sheet of paper, the rise of transparency in corporate-produced content and the newfound appeal of generics, once forgotten among shinier, better-funded consumer products.

As always, our goal with **orange** is to challenge conventional marketing wisdom, to lead marketers to tomorrow. Sometimes, that means getting back to basics.



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you're not.



brands, companies & personalities in this issue

Jason Rabbino of Tyco International, Annie Zipfel of Target, author Larina Kase, Jewel-Osco, Wal-Mart, up & up, Walgreens, Jasmine Bina of JB Communications, Pepsi, John Faulkner of Campbell Soup Co., Andrew Bennett of Arnold Worldwide, Erik Assadourian of The Worldwatch Institute, Zipcar, S.C. Johnson, Ben & Jerry's, Lululemon Athletica, Kashi, Stonyfield, BP, General Motors, Poland Spring, Johnson & Johnson, Procter & Gamble, Jennifer Pelka of Gilt Taste, Raymond Roker of Red Bull, NBC Universal, Mr. Magazine Samir Husni, Camille Kubie of General Electric Co., Andy Clark of R/GA, Nike, Inc., Leslie Bradshaw of JESS3, Samsung, Intel, Sprint, data visualist Kennedy Elliot, Teri Schindler of Fathom Information Design, Wesley Grubbs of Pitch Interactive, David Rock of the NeuroLeadership Group, Google, Gabrielle Hamilton of Prune restaurant, Starbucks, Apple, BlackBerry, Bing, J.Crew



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To compete with the rise in private-label sales, national brands are going retro. We show you five products' "new" packaging.

Listen to Tyco International's Jason Rabbino reveal secrets of good leadership in the corporate world.

Of artists and ideas: Find creative inspiration with these seven (addictive) design websites.

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Should You Be? pg. 6

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lives in Princeton, N.J. :: *secret to leadership* passion :: *admires* Ed Catmull, president of Pixar

A lot has been written about leaders throughout history. Society is sort of obsessed with them, really—who's been effective, who hasn't. Who was well-liked, and who wasn't (but succeeded anyway). Abraham Lincoln. Napoleon Bonaparte. Pope John Paul II. Vince Lombardi. They knew how to corral people to work toward a common goal, whether achievable or misguided.

In marketing, good leaders are first and foremost strong relationship builders. Their ability to get people to do things is rooted in those relationships, whether that's customers buying products or employees working as a team. Your organization undoubtedly knows this. But how much does it know about leadership?

Jason Rabbino knows a thing or two. No, he hasn't written a book or taught a seminar. Simply, as senior vice president of enterprise sales for Tyco International, an \$18 billion manufacturing company in the building security industry, he is tasked with forging relationships both inside and outside his office walls.

And he's pretty damn good at it.

Q: How do you build solid relationships, both inside and outside of your company?

The first area I would highlight is investing time into relationships. Building relationships is a lot of hard work, and I think a lot of people mischaracterize acquaintances for people they have real relationships with.

Within my own organization, I have built into my calendar "walking around time," which is to spend time, whether it's 30 seconds or 10 minutes, with people on the spur of the moment. I think you find out a lot more about motivators and things that inspire people when the conversations are more informal, more open than when they're around structured, business interactions.

Outside the company, I identify people who I think are good people for me to know, personally and professionally, and work very hard to maintain those relationships. It can't just be an occasional e-mail or a holiday card; it's much more about maintaining a common rhythm of staying in touch with people and finding a way to advance a relationship.

Frankly, even in cases where it's not obvious the person is as interested in a relationship as you might be, I've found that when you want to actually draw on that relationship, done properly [your attempts to stay in touch] actually build a much, much deeper relationship than you might sometimes realize. And it does pay off.

At the end of the day, even if you spend a lot of time on it, there are only so many relationships that you can build that are substantial. And for me, it's much more about having a small number of meaningful relationships than a huge number of professional contacts. ■

Listen to the full interview with Jason Rabbino at **orange.imaginepub.com**.



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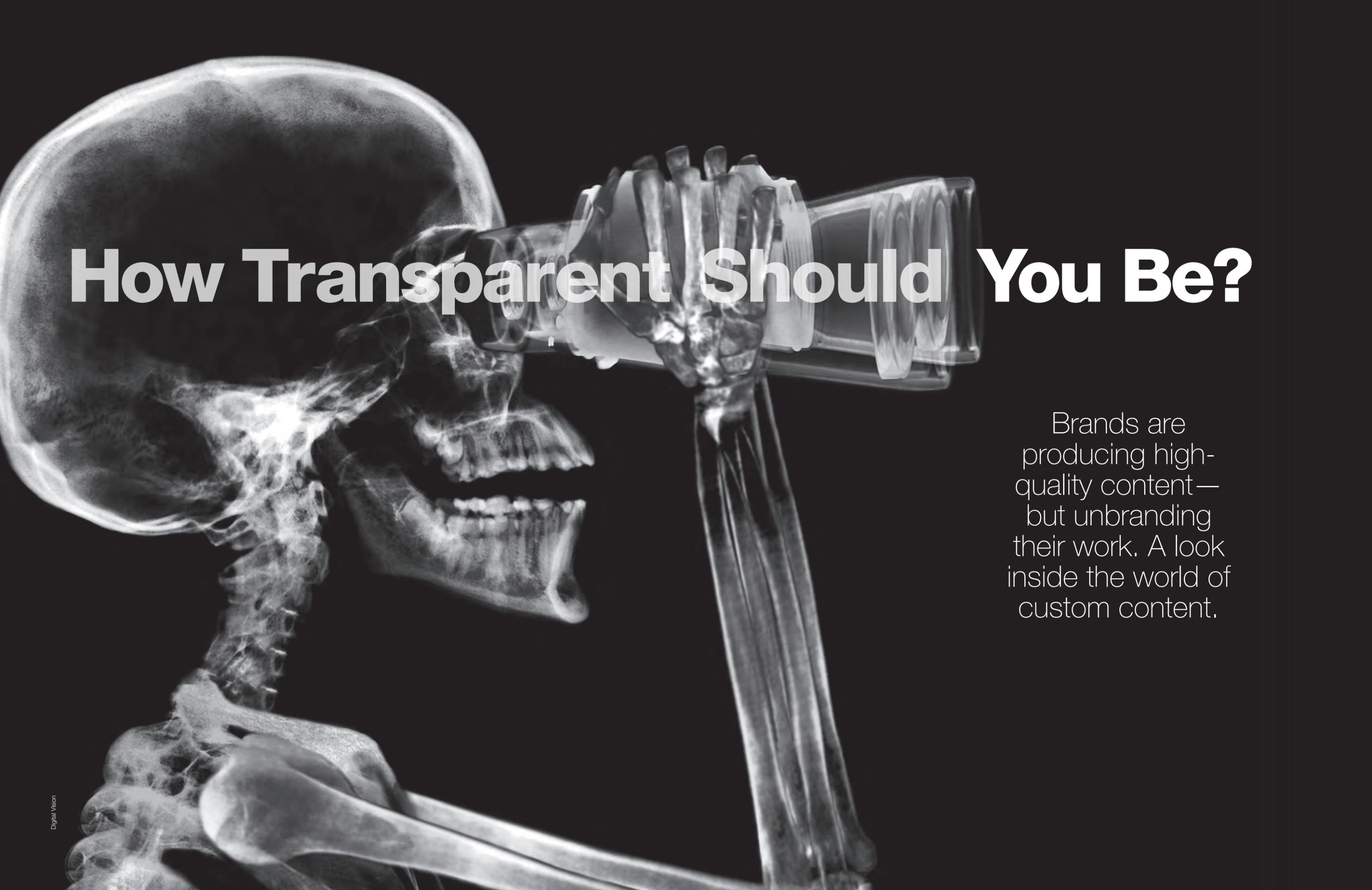
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A grayscale X-ray image of a human skull and upper torso. A hand is holding a magnifying glass over the eye area of the skull. The text "How Transparent Should You Be?" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

How Transparent Should You Be?

Brands are producing high-quality content— but unbranding their work. A look inside the world of custom content.



**“We want
to inspire
people to
use the
product
we are
selling.”**

**—Jennifer Pelka,
managing editor of
GiltTaste.com**

Last year, more than three-fourths of all expectant moms in the United States trusted BabyCenter.com to provide reliable information on everything from health issues to reviews on baby products. What most of these women probably don't know is the information they're consuming isn't provided by a traditional media company but by Johnson & Johnson, the leading manufacturer of baby care products.

Welcome to the new world of custom content. Providing content is now a natural and perhaps necessary extension of a brand's effort to stay relevant and in the spotlight. But this isn't your typical marketing copy, coming via direct mail brochures and advertisements. It's not a shameless advertorial, and the producers aren't corporate drones. Rather, the content is sleek, well-crafted and channeled through magazines, e-zines, websites and social media, and is driven by editorially minded "creatives"—often journalists and designers who in the past would have scoffed at corporate-sponsored work.

The question is, do savvy consumers trust content that is blatantly sponsored, or do they tune it out as a run-of-the-mill marketing message?

Slap a Logo On It

Sponsored content, as a concept, is far from new. Procter & Gamble, the manufacturer of Ivory soap, started producing its own content in the 1930s with a radio soap opera that morphed into the daytime television shows we know today.

For consumer brands in the 21st Century, providing content usually means promoting a certain kind of lifestyle that fits with the product. Energy drink Red Bull launched *The Red Bulletin* magazine in June, covering "life in the fast lane" and pushing boundaries of physical and mental limits, themes that likely resonate with Red Bull drinkers. "*The Red Bulletin* honors those who don't play by the rules, who push the limits and have a passion for adventure," says Raymond Roker, associate publisher of the monthly magazine, which has so far profiled an Olympic pole vaulter and covered extreme sailing. At \$4.99, the magazine is available in nearly 20,000 retail locations nationwide, including Barnes & Noble and Safeway, and via subscription. It also has a website and an iPad app.

Red Bull has created a separate corporate division called the Red Bull Media House to push more custom content. "We're a global lifestyle brand that has created compelling content from hundreds of sports and culture events and athlete projects for nearly 25 years," Roker says. "In 2007, we formalized this content production, collection and distribution process and launched our biggest line extension: Red Bull Media House."

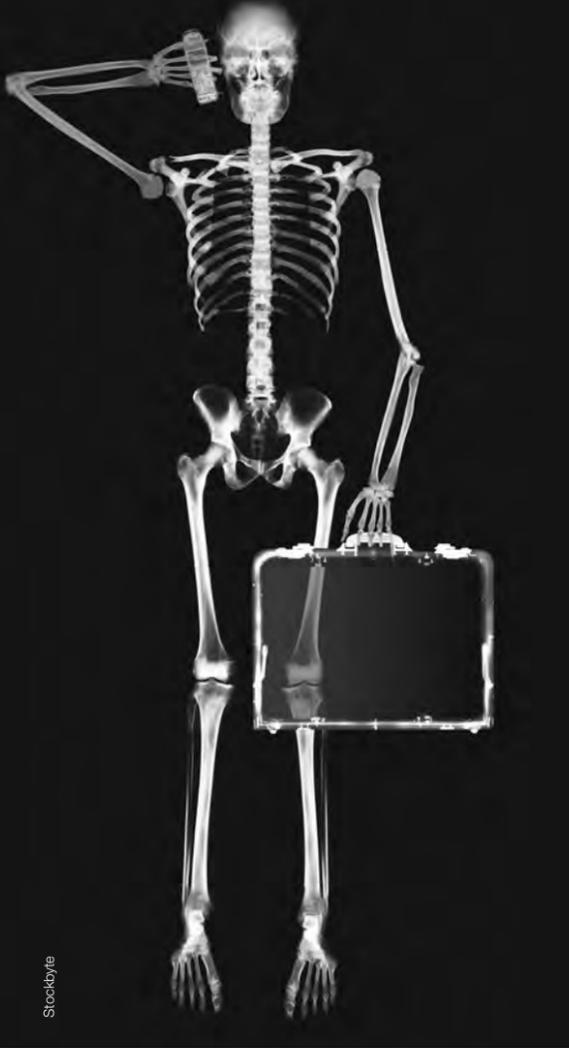
Apart from publishing *The Red Bulletin*, the media house produces sports and lifestyle content for major television networks. Some of its most successful programming in recent years include TV specials "Red Bull New Year No Limits" (ESPN) and "Red Bull X-Fighters" (ABC), which are extreme sports competitions.

GiltTaste.com is another recent custom content launch and the latest offering from luxury brand discount e-tailer Gilt Groupe, founded in 2007. The site, Gilt's most recent addition to its luxury portfolio, sells artisanal food and wine but also provides editorial content that includes recipes for the food it sells, features on restaurants and foods, and even cooking videos. The result is artfully presented content with beautifully photographed food that looks and feels like an online magazine.

Gilt Taste is putting equal emphasis on its editorial and e-commerce sections; the content on the site revolves around the products sold in the online store. Likewise, each piece of content, whether a profile of a restaurant or a recipe, is paired with complementary products sold in the store—links to these products are conveniently positioned in an adjacent column.

For Red Bull and Gilt Taste, the content is remarkably transparent: "We want to inspire people to use the product we are selling," says Jennifer Pelka, managing editor for Gilt Taste. That means branding the site, or the magazine, in a way that ensures readers know where the content is coming from. (Red Bull's logo is displayed prominently on every page of its magazine.)

It also means hiring true editorial talent, not just corporate teeters, to instill trust among consumers. Ruth Reichl, former editor of *Gourmet* magazine and a household name in the world of food writing, serves as editorial advisor for Gilt Taste, for example.



Stockbyte

It doesn't matter where the content is coming from as long as it is adding value to people's lives.

To Brand or Not To Brand

Gilt has tapped into a new cultural zeitgeist. People these days are less picky about where they get their information, says Rebecca Rolfes, executive vice president of Imagination Publishing in Chicago. (Imagination publishes **orange**.) "People are concerned with getting high-quality editorial content. The source is not important," she says. "People don't have the same sense of separation between traditional media and branded content."

In other words, it doesn't matter where the content is coming from as long as it is adding value to people's lives. However, consumers are constantly being bombarded with content and have learned to tune it out when the quality is low. That leaves an opening for companies that are willing to invest in quality.

Consumer goods giant P&G is well-positioned (and well-funded) to take advantage of that trend. Its current content strategy includes a beauty-focused print and digital magazine called *Rouge*, launched last year and distributed free via subscription, with older issues available online. *Rouge* features P&G product-focused content and is taglined "Inspiring ideas by P&G Beauty."

P&G also produces websites *petside.com*, a resource for pet owners; *LifeGoesStrong.com*, entertainment and lifestyle news for 45-to-64-year-olds; and *DinnerTool.com*, a meal planning and recipe website. P&G launched all three websites in partnership with NBC Universal in the past three years but, unlike *Rouge*, decided to not make it obvious it owns the websites. The only mention of P&G on these sites is in the privacy policy's legalese.

P&G, for its part, says it is in the business of making people's lives better not just through the products that it makes, but also by providing quality family entertainment. "The one thing that hasn't changed is P&G's belief in the power of entertainment to make people's lives better,"

Marc Pritchard, P&G's global marketing and brand building officer, told *Forbes.com* last summer. The company's hope: If you trust their content, by extension you'll trust their products.

Although P&G sites like *DinnerTool.com* are not branded, some (but not all) of the ads served up on the site are for complementary P&G products, like lams dog food on *petside.com*, and Olay skin products and Crest toothpaste on *LifeGoesStrong.com*. It's also worth noting these sites accept advertisements from P&G competitors, such as Purina dog food and Colgate toothpaste.

Johnson & Johnson is another brand that likes to remain behind the scenes. The company bought informational website *BabyCenter.com* from eToys in the dotcom bust of 2001, and since then has let the site operate pretty much independently of the brand. That's likely not an accidental decision. (BabyCenter declined to comment for this story.) Today, *BabyCenter* is the most popular parenting website in the country with an astonishing 78 percent of all new and expectant moms in the United States visiting the site.

Johnson & Johnson doesn't try to make an overt sales pitch with *BabyCenter*. In fact, visitors to the site have to dig down pretty deep to find out that it is owned by J&J. And it also accepts advertisements from competitors, which makes J&J look much more like a media company than a soap manufacturer.

The country's leading authority on magazines, Samir Husni, says people should be given credit for knowing where they are getting their information. "I am smart enough to know whether to take it with a grain of salt," says Husni, a journalism professor at the University of Mississippi. Likewise, Husni thinks brands that are not upfront about their content are doing themselves a disservice. After all, they are in the business of selling products. "Why bother putting out good content if you are not going to say it is yours?" Husni asks. "If I am proud of my content, I have to be up front and center about it."

Which is exactly what Red Bull has done with *The Red Bulletin*. "We don't shy away from our brand, our athletes or our stories. That's why it's called *The 'Red Bull'-etin*," says Roker.

Rolfes believes part of Red Bull's motivation for launching a branded magazine has to do with the energy drink's target demographic. "Red Bull has a very fickle audience that jumps from one trendy thing to another. Right now Red Bull is trendy so the brand has to solidify its position before people move on to the next trendy thing," she says.

This is something Red Bull seems to be aware of. "In this launch phase, we're paying close attention to how our new audience is interacting with and discussing *The Red Bulletin*," says Roker. And Red Bull's Media House is creating more than just a magazine. His vision sounds like a media empire. "Globally, we have a 360-degree platform approach to cover every screen: Red Bull TV, Red Bull Mobile, *The Red Bulletin*, *Redbull.com* and Red Bull Records," he says. "We never intended for *The Red Bulletin* to only be seen or absorbed as a print magazine, and our hope is that readers and viewers find their way to us across whatever medium they choose."

For custom content sponsors that are taking a subtler branding approach, their strategy revolves around deepening relationships with consumers by providing strong editorial content that resonates. A strategy called a "deep sell."

Measuring Custom Content Success

Brands still struggle to prove the success of their content strategy. Content will only be successful if the audience feels it has something of value for them.

The rule of thumb: Custom content has to meet four basic requirements.

First, the brand has to know its consumer, know their needs, socio-economic base, and lifestyle interests. Gilt Taste, for example, has narrowed its customer base to food and wine aficionados willing to pay a premium price for gourmet food. The website's content revolves around that premise.

Second, the brand should understand what the consumer expects and needs from the brand. Red Bull knows energy drink fans expect highly charged and exciting content, so it delivers on that expectation by sponsoring sports competitions.

Third, the brand should be able to track its readers' preferences so it can make both hard and soft sells down the road. *BabyCenter* does this by asking expectant moms (and dads) to create an account on the site and enter in their baby's due date. The site tracks where the mother is in her pregnancy, or how old the child is, and sends her relevant information in a weekly newsletter. "It's about understanding what's in their hearts and minds so that ... your messaging ... is in sync with where a mom is in her life," Tina Sharkey, *BabyCenter*'s chairman and global president, told *Hub* magazine in its spring issue.

Fourth, there has to be a reward for the consumer; something that he or she gets in return for their loyalty. And rewards don't have to mean monetary or material rewards, though this is common: P&G showers its custom magazine, *Rouge*, with coupons.

Red Bull measures success in terms of the level of engagement the audience has with its content strategy, whether through print subscribers, newsstand sales or "enthusiastic *The Red Bulletin* recipients of the Sunday metros we partner with," says Roker. (In its launch phase, *The Red Bulletin* distributed more than 1 million copies to subscribers of the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Miami Herald*, *Houston Chronicle* and the *New York Daily News*.)

Similarly, Gilt Taste wants to provide a space for people to learn about the food sold on the website. Gilt Taste tracks its success primarily through the total number of readers it attracts to the site, as well as which products the company sells through its online store.

"We're focused on building a dedicated daily following of readers who regularly check in on our content," says Pelka. "The website serves as a resource for people to uncover different foods ... and the content is there to teach and inspire people to use them in ways they haven't before."

Husni, the magazine expert, says the quality and value of the content being delivered is what ultimately determines success. "Good content confirms the goodness of a product," he says. "It is a brand extension, and it has to have the same addictive value, lifestyle and vision as the product." ■

Johnson & Johnson's BabyCenter.com is the most popular parenting website, with 78 percent of all new and expectant moms logging on.





The New



Generic*

Meet your new competition.



Plain-labeled generics used to sit meekly on shelves next to their bright, well-branded counterparts. Now, generics are dressed up and strategically marketed to capture market share. Can major brands adapt?

In marketing, loyalty is everything. Loyalty turns consumers into repeat customers, brand ambassadors and lifelong patrons—all things a brand needs to stay on top for the long haul.

But in the consumer packaged goods industry, loyalty is changing.

As big-box stores, national supermarkets and pharmacy chains have overtaken small neighborhood stores and targeted specific groups of consumers, shoppers have shifted their loyalty away from branded products and onto branded stores. Consumers today are more likely to identify themselves as Target, Kroger or CVS shoppers than buyers of Kraft, Tylenol or Tide.

The result for packaged goods companies is troubling: Loyalty to branded products is down, and private-label sales—those “generic” products manufactured and sold by the stores themselves—are up. Over the past decade, sales of private-label products have increased 40 percent in supermarkets and 96 percent in drug chains.

Historically, private labels perform better during recessions. But this time around, national brands are competing with more than a price point: Generics are using marketing methods that only premium brands have employed in the past, such as TV ads, social media and targeted Web marketing. Previously, these awareness and engagement activities provided an edge to national brands. Now, they’re fueling lower-price competitors’ success. Today, 80 percent of consumers judge the store brand to be equal to or better than national brands, according to a 2011 study by GfK/Roper for the Private Label Manufacturers’ Association.

It’s created a tough environment for CPG companies. ComScore research shows national brands are bleeding market share in every consumer packaged goods category, from toothpaste to dairy products to apparel. So what’s a national brand to do? How can brands start to recapture customer loyalty and regain ground on their private-label counterparts?

Five words: It’s time to get creative.

Rising Up, and Up

Not so long ago—say, in the 1980s—generic products were pretty, well, generic. The packaging simply read “beer,” “milk,” or “formula” in plain black lettering, and when shelved next to colorful brands like Budweiser, Prairie Farms and Enfamil, they held little appeal other than price. That changed once discount stores and supermarkets recognized the influence of their brand on a growing customer base.

“The core reason private-labeled products are becoming popular is consumers’ relationship with the store—if we know, like and trust Target, we will trust their products as well,” says Larina Kase, a marketing psychologist and author of *Clients, Clients and More Clients: Create an Endless Stream of New Business with the Power of Psychology* (McGraw Hill Companies, 2011).

Chain stores then began stamping generics with their brand name—Safeway, Walgreens, Wal-Mart. They expanded the type and number of products they sold and, over time, started treating these “generics” more and more like professional brands, with logo development, strategy, internal brand managers and agency-designed packaging.

Today, private-label products are brands in their own right. They’re no longer generic, but individually named and marketed according to product category.

And there are lots of them. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., for example, carries dozens of store brands at each of its 9,700 locations worldwide: George for apparel, Equate for pharmacy items and Parent’s Choice for baby products. Jewel-Osco, a Midwest grocer, carries Wild Harvest for organic foods, Culinary Circle for prepared foods, and an entire brand, Stockman & Dakota, just for beef. Each has its own identity, look and target market.

Retail giant Target provides one of the most poignant examples of the evolution from generic label to store-marked packaging to separately branded and marketed product lines. In 2009, Target, which has 1,750 stores nationwide, launched a complete rebranding of its private-label products, most significantly converting much of its CPG

line to a new brand, up & up. The store switched out the Target name and bullseye trademark for a colorful arrow and lots of white space.

“We wanted up & up to stand out on our shelves and capture the attention of both our current Target brand guests as well as guests who have never tried the brand,” says Annie Zipfel, director of owned brands for Target. “The name up & up reinforces the core qualities our guests believe about Target—an optimistic brand that’s always looking up.” (Read an expanded Q&A about up & up with Target’s Zipfel at orange.imaginepub.com/target-interview.)

The up & up brand now spans more than 900 products and 45 categories. What’s more interesting, though, is how Target and other stores like it are turning their brands into household names.

Turf Wars

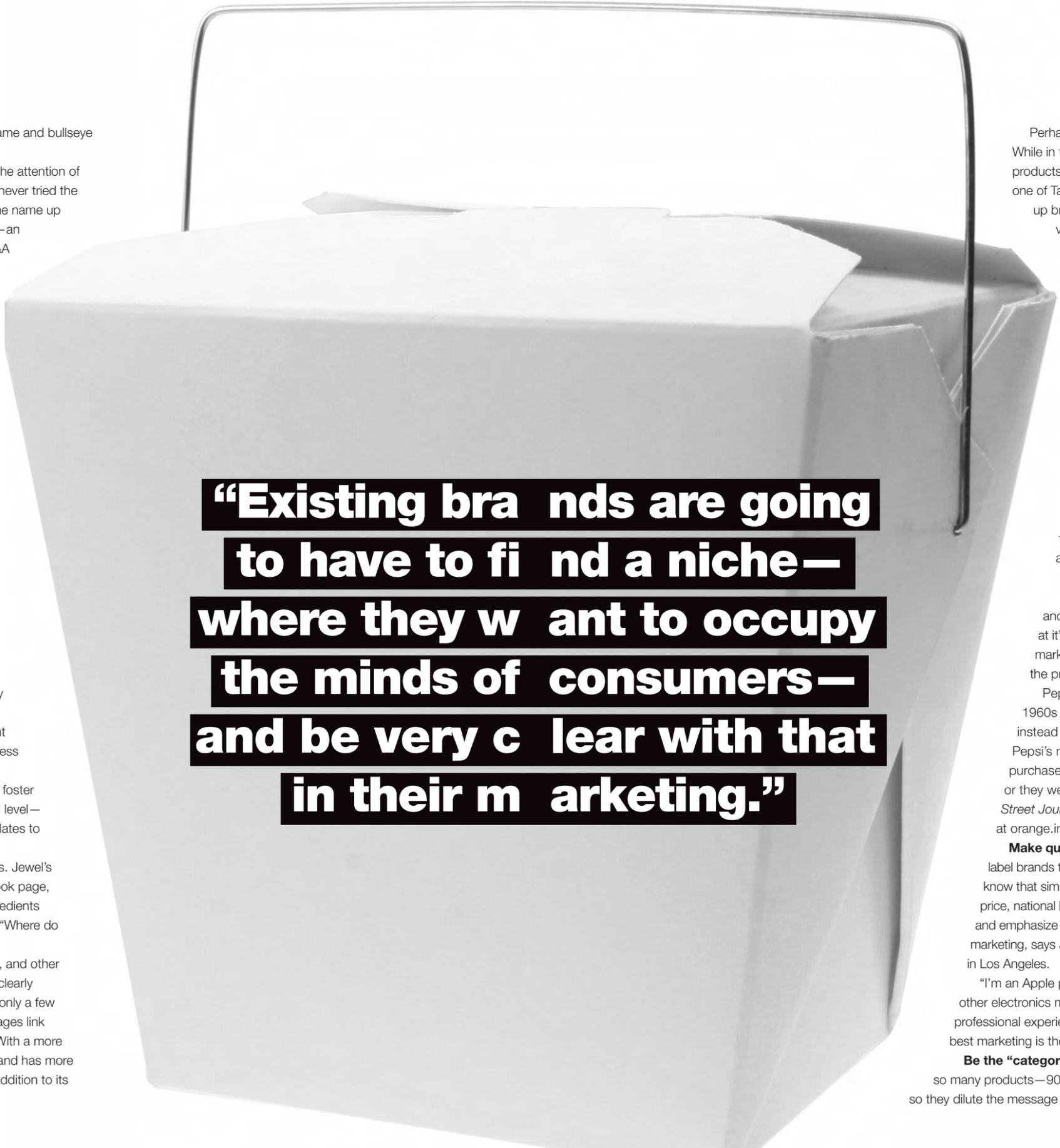
While the ad spend on private-label marketing is not surveyed or measured, there is at least anecdotal evidence that stores are increasingly pushing their own products through marketing. In July 2009, Target’s private labels started showing up in its TV commercials. One such commercial showed products (next to low price points) solving a mother’s problems throughout her day, from \$1 Vitamin Water to \$1.99 Orbit gum to—and here’s the point—\$3.29 up & up toilet paper.

A year later, Target started airing commercials exclusively on its store-branded products under the “Life’s a moving target” campaign. In one commercial, a husband walks into his kitchen with dozens of jars of barbecue sauce—the wife stands in shock, wondering what she’ll do with all that sauce, when all of a sudden a bag of Market Pantry boneless chicken breasts appears on the screen, next to a price tag of \$6. (Market Pantry is Target’s primary private-label food line.)

Walgreens too has launched TV advertisements, as well as print and online banner ads, to push its store-branded health and wellness products. Some of the ads even compare, side by side, prices of national brands vs. the Walgreens brand. All of this, arguably, is to foster loyalty among consumers and connect with them on an emotional level—advancing the idea that spending less on everyday products translates to more money in their pockets.

And generic brands are echoing that mantra on social networks. Jewel’s Wild Harvest brand has more than 13,000 fans on its own Facebook page, which takes informal polls, provides recipes with Wild Harvest ingredients and answers shoppers’ questions about products. (A recent one: “Where do you obtain your concentrate for your apple juice?”)

Kroger’s Comforts for Baby line, which covers diapers, formula, and other baby items, has its own Facebook page and Twitter feed that are clearly professionally designed and managed. Though each channel has only a few hundred followers so far—the campaign launched in June—the pages link back to a robust microsite with an online community for parents. With a more established social media presence, Wal-Mart’s Parent’s Choice brand has more than 19,000 Facebook fans and nearly 1,000 Twitter followers in addition to its microsite.



“Existing brands are going to have to find a niche—where they want to occupy the minds of consumers—and be very clear with that in their marketing.”

Perhaps where store brands have more of an advantage is circulars. While in the past chains collaborated with national brands to showcase their products, stores are now devoting entire spreads to their own brands. In one of Target’s February circulars, for example, an entire page pitted up & up brands next to their nationally branded counterparts—Jergen’s lotion vs. up & up lotion, for example—and noted the cost savings to customers. Target labeled the page “Side by Side Savings.”

And circulars are very, very important: 84 percent of shoppers say circulars affect their purchasing decisions, according to a survey by Acosta Sales & Marketing.

Standing Out

If you’re a brand manager or marketing executive, now’s the time to take a deep breath. Yes, private labels are turning into a new breed of competitors and they have clear advantages in pricing, distribution and access to consumers. But national brands have weathered recessions, fads and competition before.

They’ve done so by adapting their own marketing.

“Existing brands are going to have to find a niche—where they want to occupy the minds of consumers—and be very clear with that in their marketing,” says Kase, the marketing psychologist and author.

Here is the strategy to accomplish that.

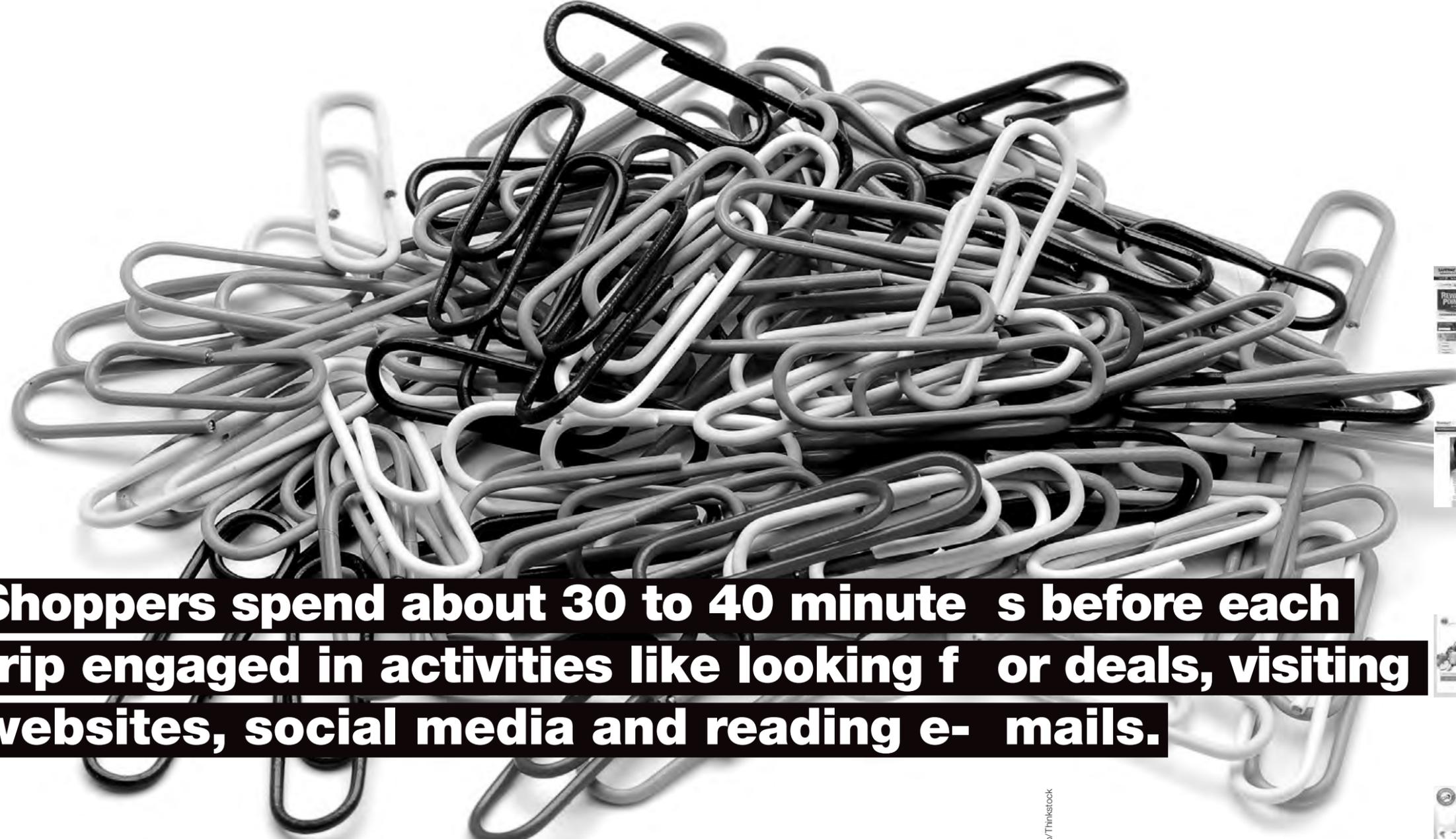
Go retro. Big brands are still around for a reason, Kase says, and can boost sales by reminding consumers which brand “has been at it” the longest. For many brands, retro packaging and “historical” marketing campaigns have helped rekindle consumers’ feelings about the products their mothers (and grandmothers) used to buy.

Pepsico, for example, recently repackaged its Doritos chips with a 1960s design and introduced Pepsi Throwback, which uses real sugar instead of corn syrup, as the product was made pre-1990s. In 2009, Pepsi’s market research showed more than 50 percent of people who purchased the retro product bought more than they normally would have, or they were new customers, a Pepsi marketing executive told the *Wall Street Journal* in May. (View our slideshow of products that have gone retro at orange.imaginepub.com/retro-packaging.)

Make quality matter. While most shoppers consider the quality of private-label brands to be on the same level as national brands, many CPG companies know that simply isn’t true. To convince consumers quality matters more than price, national brands should invest in creating newer and higher-quality products—and emphasize how much time and effort goes into product development in their marketing, says Jasmine Bina, owner of public-relations agency JB Communications in Los Angeles.

“I’m an Apple person, and though their products are more expensive [than other electronics manufacturers], they’re frankly more superior,” says Bina, whose professional experience includes managing brands for national CPG lines. “Apple’s best marketing is their crazy, die-hard fans.”

Be the “category captain.” Private labels may reach more consumers by spanning so many products—900 products at Target fall under the up & up label—but in doing so they dilute the message of quality. National brands, on the other hand, can own a niche.



Shoppers spend about 30 to 40 minutes before each trip engaged in activities like looking for deals, visiting websites, social media and reading e-mails.

"Huggies needs to show how they're purposely not trying to do 5 million other things, because they want to be the best at what they do," says Kase. Adds Bina, "It's about owning your territory and never letting anyone get near—private labels that mainly compete on price have little recourse if you approach it that way."

Offer the widest variety of products within your category. This is a strategy employed by Campbell Soup. "In the soup aisle, Campbell is clearly the category captain—no other soup maker offers such a wide array of products," says John Faulkner, director of brand communications for Campbell Soup Co. "[Stores] offer their shoppers a much more limited set of soups that compete primarily on price. Given the recent economic condition, there is a lot of price sensitivity among consumers, ... but our answer is to provide greater variety, higher quality and added value."

Make up consumers' minds before they get to the store. According to Matthew Egol, partner at consulting firm Booz & Co. in New York City, shoppers spend about 30 to 40 minutes before each trip engaged in activities like looking for deals, visiting websites, social media and reading e-mails. That means it's more important than ever to connect with consumers before they step foot in the store (and are convinced by in-store marketing to purchase the store brand).

How do you do that? Provide valuable content. "Social influence is really important—offer testimonials, endorsements, stories, problem-solvers, always showcasing people who fit your target consumer," Kase says. Doing so, of course, creates loyalty, which is achievable in this economy and beyond.

"I think things will swing back again," Bina says. "It might take longer this time, but people have short-term memories. People will look again to premium brands and the emotional value that comes with them." ■

Supermarkets or Supermarketers?

As store brands have become less generic, so have stores' marketing strategies. Here's how five supermarkets and big-box stores are pushing their private labels.



Safeway uses its online grocery shopping website, Safeway.com, to promote store-brand-specific recipes. Also, back in 2004 it partnered with Disney/Pixar's "The Incredibles" to provide an "incredible" room makeover. The sweepstakes were marketed through print and radio advertising, and special store-brand packaging featuring characters from the children's movie.



Wal-Mart's Parent's Choice brand for baby formula maintains a microsite where parents can compare Parent's Choice ingredients with national brands, determine which Parent's Choice formula is best for their baby and calculate potential savings if they switch to the Wal-Mart brand. The site also drives parents to Facebook and Twitter, where Parent's Choice offers coupons and more information about the product.



Jewel-Osco's microsite for its organic food brand, Wild Harvest, offers a behind-the-scenes look for consumers. For example, chocolatier and Wild Harvest partner Karlo Flores explains his standards for organic product selection on the site. The brand's Facebook page and Twitter stream are yet another way the brand engages consumers, offering recipes and coupons to fans and followers.



Kroger's Comforts website, ComfortsForBaby.com, features articles for parents and products specific to the age and needs of their baby. Plus, consumers can exchange parenting tips in Comforts' online community and on the brand's Facebook page or Twitter stream.



Target launched its up & up brand in 2009, offering more than 900 household cleaners and health and beauty products. To build hype around the brand, Target.com offered consumers printable coupons for up & up wipes, which along with other promotions and sales made the wipes free. Since then, Target has featured up & up products in its "Life's a moving target" TV advertising series and has devoted entire spreads in its circulars, comparing up & up products to their national branded counterparts.



5 brands gone retro

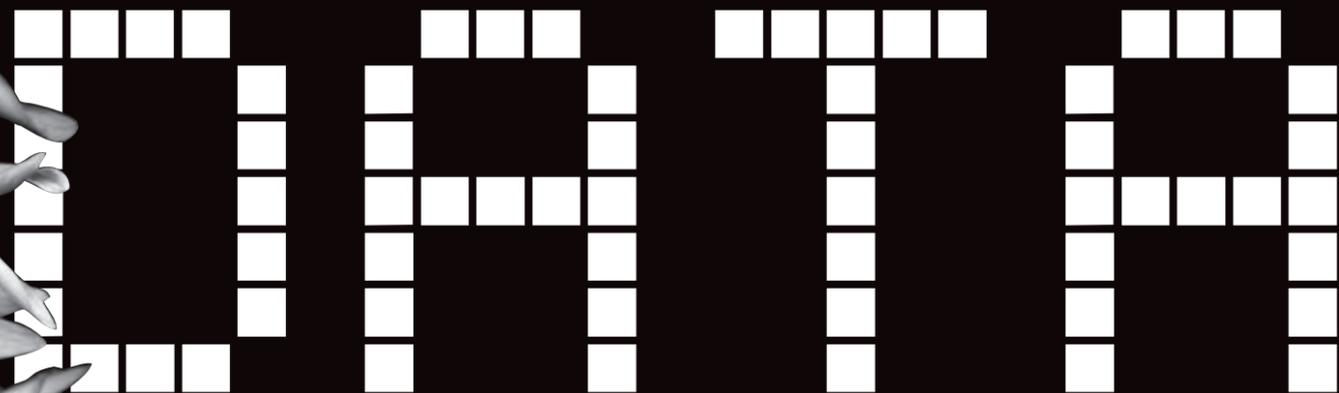


Q&A with Target's Annie Zipfel

istockphoto/Thinkstock



THE BEAUTY OF



In a bottomless sea of statistics, data visualization is helping brands — and consumers — cut through the clutter.

EVERY DAY HOURS

the world produces vast amounts of data—so vast, in fact, their sum matches the quantity of all information created from the beginning of civilization until 2003, as Google's Eric Schmidt pronounced last year.

But what good are these terabytes upon terabytes of raw, unfiltered, non-contextualized information without someone telling us what it all means? Marketers are trying to do just that, by using an up-and-coming concept called data visualization.

Formerly the province of scientists and statisticians, "data viz," as the discipline is known, is gaining popularity as a way for global brands such as General Electric Co., Nike, Inc. and Samsung to weave compelling, credible and informational narratives, throwing a lifeline to consumers caught in today's deluge of data.

"Because technology has become so pervasive in our lives, everything is being tracked, everything is being stored, and also the tools have become available to really manipulate that data," says Andy Clark, executive creative director of data visualization for the digital advertising agency R/GA in New York.

To be sure, data visualizations—rich, often interactive depictions of thousands of data points—are becoming dominant features in our digital, and even physical landscapes. We see them in smartphone apps such as Nike+GPS, which plots a runner's course and displays in gradations of reds and greens where a runner slowed (reds), and where he or she sped up (greens). We see them in publications, such as *The New York Times*, *Good* and *Wired*, which attract page views and traffic to their sites and print products. And we see them in our surroundings.

At the South by Southwest Conference earlier this year, Samsung featured a sprawling, 12-screen social media terminal showing conference-goers where other attendees were checking in on Foursquare, what panel topics were trending on Twitter and displaying photos shared on social networks.

"You're walking around South by Southwest. You're really overwhelmed by what's going on, and you want to know what's happening, what's trending, where do I need to be?" says Leslie Bradshaw, chief operating officer and co-founder of JESS3, the Washington, D.C., agency that worked with Samsung to create the display.

Bradshaw says it's the kind of problem data viz is uniquely positioned to solve. "Data visualization is a really powerful tool that solves the problem of too much information and how to make sense of it," she says.

Intel's "The Museum of Me" website is another example of how social media data can be visualized. The site connects to your Facebook account and extracts its data, assembling them into a virtual museum tour of your online life. Set to sentimental music, the site leads you through several exhibits—your friends, your photos, a map of your location, your most frequently used words in posts, your videos. For the grand finale, it weaves your friends' profile photos into a mosaic of your own. So far, the campaign has notched more than 800,000 likes on Facebook.

Data viz experts also point to Sprint as a leader in the relatively nascent discipline. Playing on the idea of what "now" looks

like, the brand's stunning Interactive Now campaign widget displays a staggering integration of up-to-the-second global data, from the number of calls made on Sprint phones at that very moment to the number of bicycles being produced to the current temperature in Seoul. Approximately 100,000 blogs have featured the campaign. The average user spent five minutes on the campaign microsite.

These examples of data visualization capture a growing trend among brands: Showing—not telling—your message to customers through what are often dazzling depictions of data. "Across the board, in every industry, it's becoming not only a means of communication," says R/GA's Clark, "but also a means of creating new engagements with brands, in terms of new products and services we can build that are data driven."

DATA INUNDATION

To say that we are a culture awash in data is a gross understatement. Just consider the nearly incalculable volume of user-generated content—YouTube videos, tweets, Facebook posts—and you have a world teeming with data ripe for depiction, says JESS3's Bradshaw. "The rise of visual storytelling has complete correlation to the prevalence and proliferation of data," she says. "The more data there are, the more there is a need for this."

In 2008, according to the "How Much Information?" study by the Global Information Industry Center at the University of California, San Diego, Americans consumed 3.6 zettabytes (1,000 billion gigabytes) of information—34 gigabytes per person, per day.

Data visualization's main value proposition is it can condense hundreds of pages of information and spreadsheet upon spreadsheet of data into an engaging, attractive visualization. "When you visualize things, it's really a means to see trends, or understand highlights in the data or findings that you wouldn't see looking at a spreadsheet or a table, or even a story about the data," says Kennedy Elliot, a data visualist hired out of graduate school by Nielsen, the consumer research firm, but who now works as an interactive producer for The Associated Press.

Colliding with that flare-up of figures are two other trends. First, consumers are becoming more data literate. Our fractured attention spans make us more inclined to toggle between Google, social networks and news sites online—all while watching a TV show, for instance. "An end consumer's ability to quickly read and then quickly interpret a data visualization as opposed to text or images is only going to increase, and rapidly so, and so I think you're going to see it as a major visual component in a lot of advertising going forward," Clark says.

Second, social media has allowed data visualizations to be shared across social networks. That's among the reasons GE waded into data viz, says Camille Kubie, the corporation's manager of brand and design. "One of the key things that attracted us to this space is [it's] so well-suited to social media," says Kubie, who has spearheaded the company's bid to position itself as a thought leader in the health and energy industries through data viz. "Our primary interest in data visualization is that it helps us simplify complexity, tell stories and

DIVE IN—BUT NOT HEAD FIRST

Data visualization is still a nascent discipline—and it's ripe to be misunderstood by marketers just dipping their toes. Here are three common misperceptions, from pros within the field.

"Data visualizations" and "infographics" are not synonymous.

Infographics are a rudimentary version of data visualizations. In a lecture last year at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Ben Fry, a leading data visualization expert with Boston studio Fathom, offered his take on the difference between the two: Fry says infographics tend to be built only from tens or hundreds of data points. Data visualizations, on the other hand, rely on thousands, often millions of points.

You need clay to make bricks.

As Fry suggests, you need tons of data to have the makings of a decent

visualization. But lots of marketers have generated very little of their own data, says Wesley Grubbs, founder of data visualization studio Pitch Interactive in Madison, Wis. "Time and time again, the problem is they don't have good data. [Marketers] want [my agency] to improvise—spin something basically, and one of the things I always tell them is we're terrible improvisers. If we have real data, and there's a story to be told, we can really do some engaging data visualizations."

Keep it credible.

Grubbs compares data visualization to a rigorous academic discipline, suggesting it takes a long time to build one that's beautiful but accurate. For data visualization to be successful, it's important to keep it objective, credible and more focused on the context than commercial advantages, says General Electric's Camille Kubie. "For example, a broad audience like ours is more likely to be interested in where our energy comes from than the advantages of one turbine over another," she says.

"Data visualization is a really powerful tool that solves the problem of too much information and how to make sense of it."

— Leslie Bradshaw, chief operating officer and co-founder of JESS3

100,000: The number of blogs that featured Sprint's Now Interactive campaign

1 million: Page views the data viz startup Visually's site gets per day

Americans consume 3.6 zettabytes (1,000 billion gigabytes) of information—34 gigabytes per person, per day.

Every 48 hours, the world produces the same amount of data created from the beginning of civilization until 2003.

In one day, we create 1.5 billion pieces of content on Facebook, 140 million tweets, 2 million YouTube videos.

advance the conversation around the issues that are important to GE. The best visualizations are inherently shareable and well-suited for social media.

GE curates a data viz blog that has garnered acclaim throughout the discipline's extended community, tackling data-laden topics, such as engine innovation, and turning them into rich, interactive visualizations. (The rotors of a turbine engine illuminate as you scroll your cursor over each one, illustrating individual innovations in engine technology, for example.)

And this spring, GE debuted

a free Stats of the Union iPad app, which allows consumers to "explore the nation's vital signs," drawing on data from the Department of Health and Human Services. Kubie says the app was downloaded 50,000 times in its first two weeks from the iTunes store. "What that suggested to us is there's a broader audience, and a more engaged audience, for data than we had even suspected—when it's presented in a compelling and engaging way," Kubie says.

ANOTHER TOOL IN THE ARSENAL

Data visualization stands to be a great equalizer for the consumer, especially when applied to products and brands. Because, after all, how do you argue with a chart? "People have this innate trust if they see a bar chart or a pie chart," says Robin Richards, information design director responsible for JESS3's data visualizations. "They kind of think, 'Well, they made a chart, so it must be accurate.'"

That is, in part, why it's catching on. "Marketers are looking at it as a potential tool in the arsenal," says Teri Schindler, in charge of business development at Fathom Information Design, the company behind GE's iPad app. It puts information in context for consumers. As Schindler says, "sometimes you want to see the forest and the trees."

As data visualization spreads, practitioners and proponents say it's key to guard against false, misleading or inaccurate data. "If there's one 'watch out,' it is that we lose credibility when we present data in a way that serves our commercial interests at the expense of objectivity," says GE's Kubie. "We're really trying to present information [accurately]—both data that's objective, and presented in a way that's objective."

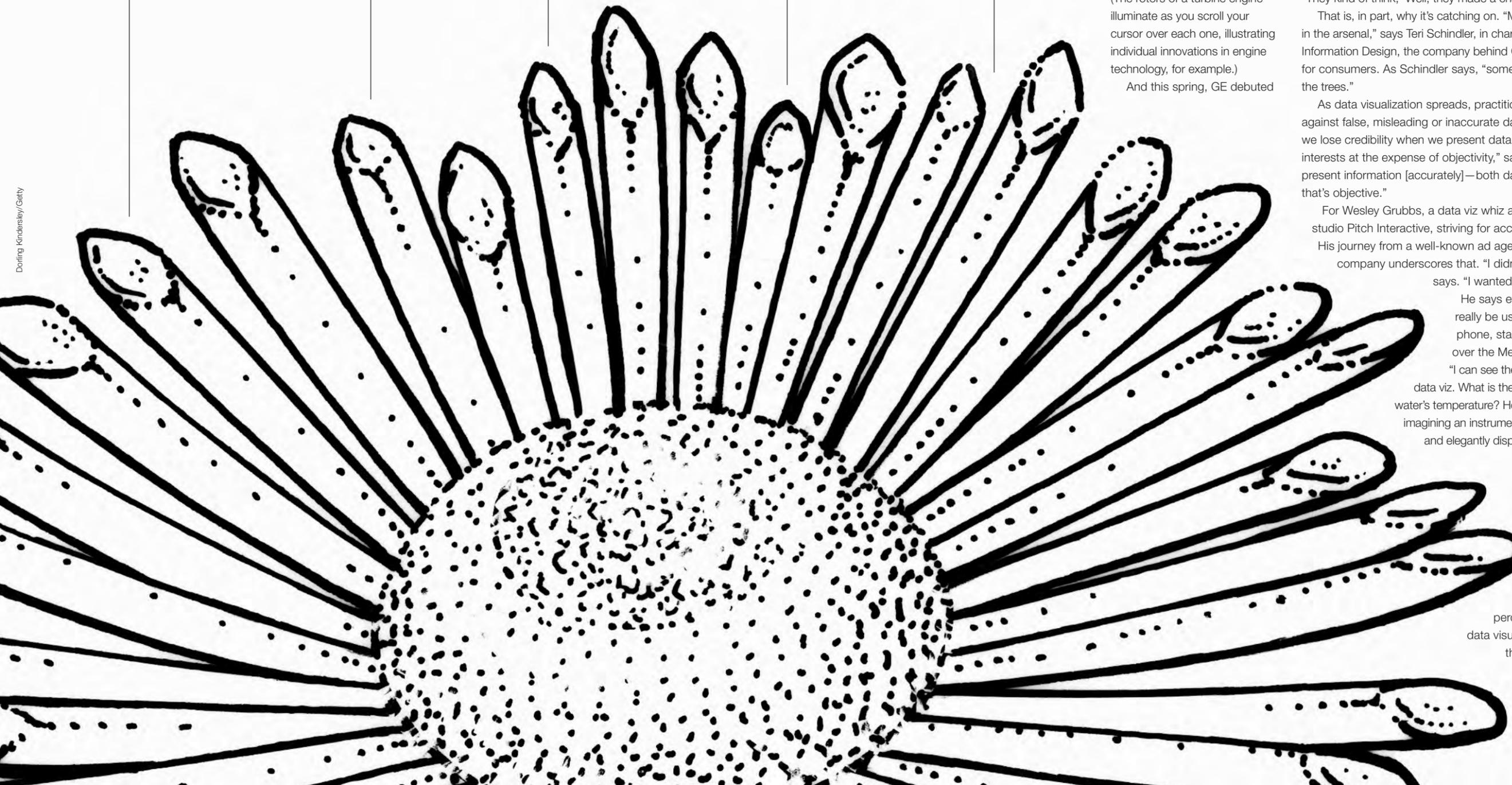
For Wesley Grubbs, a data viz whiz and the founder of the Madison, Wis.-based studio Pitch Interactive, striving for accuracy and data integrity is paramount.

His journey from a well-known ad agency in Madison to starting his own data company underscores that. "I didn't want to persuade anymore," Grubbs says. "I wanted to inform people to make decisions."

He says everyone can benefit from data viz. "It can really be used in any industry," says Grubbs over the phone, standing on the Adriatic Coast looking out over the Mediterranean Sea.

"I can see the fishermen right now. They can benefit from data viz. What is the fish level in the water today? What is the water's temperature? How deep are most of the fish?" asks Grubbs, imagining an instrument onboard their ship that could collectively and elegantly display this information using data viz.

How deep, indeed. It's everyday situations like those that foreshadow data visualization's potential to infiltrate nearly every corner of our lives. And Grubbs' example seems a particularly apt one: Just as he suggests it could help the fisherman peer deeper into the ocean, the discipline is giving consumers a new depth perception. In a sea of often-murky statistics, data visualizations—done right—are illuminating their way. ■



Dorling Kindersley/Getty

The background features several large, overlapping, curved black shapes on a white background, creating a dynamic, abstract pattern. The shapes vary in size and orientation, some resembling semi-circles or segments of larger circles.

There is a concept in science called “emergence” that analyzes how complex systems arise out of interactions between smaller, simpler components.

Think of people creating neighborhoods or fish forming a school.

In these systems, elements on one scale produce behavior that lies on a scale above them. The existence of these emergent systems depends upon the components, but cannot be reduced to them. A collection of individual people is not a neighborhood—a neighborhood is something more.

The whole is **greater** than the sum of its parts.

Design works the same way.
Design is the process of
combining elements to create

something that does not exist
when the elements are apart.

Design emerges **through** these relationships. Yet good design is as much about the spaces in between—how one image is situated relative to another—as the elements themselves. **Absence** is just as important as presence.

Less is more.

Is the future hyper or mindful?

Consumers are seeking simpler lifestyles and spending more mindfully than ever. Innovative brands have embraced this trend—and are leading the charge toward more sustainable consumption.

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hances are if you've stayed at a hotel lately, you've seen that suddenly ubiquitous little sign: "Dear Guest, Every day millions of gallons of water are used to wash towels that are only used once. You make the choice."

Who would turn down such an earnest plea to help the environment?

When they hang their used towels on the rack, guests feel good about their decision to help the environment and stay at a hotel that is interested in conserving resources. The hotel benefits from being seen as "green," even if its underlying motivation is saving on the water bill.

Not that motivations matter. The fact is, hyperconsumerism—the notion that the more stuff we consume, the happier we'll be—has become increasingly unpopular as it has taxed our resources, advanced the obesity epidemic and muddled our priorities. In the aftermath of the recession, there are rumblings of a hyperconsumerism backlash: McMansions are a tough sell, as are gas-guzzling SUVs.

That's why now is a good time for brands to woo the growing class of consumers who seek a more simple and sustainable lifestyle.

The Rise and Fall of Hyperconsumerism

Over the past 30 years, as the American economy boomed, so did our hyperconsumerist culture. People indulged in extravagant purchases, flying off to expensive destinations, driving fuel-inefficient luxury cars and buying lavish homes. Because consumers had the means and were ready to buy, "excess" was an easy sell for brands and marketers.

"When hyperconsumption was in its heyday, we were experiencing the perfect storm. Companies were able to manufacture lots of merchandise cheaply due to low energy costs, and consumers were able to buy everything fast and furiously thanks to endless amounts of easy credit," says Andrew Benett, CEO of the Boston advertising agency Arnold Worldwide and author of *Consumed: Rethinking Business in the Era of Mindful Spending*.

Indeed, consumption grew dramatically over the past five decades, up 28 percent from the \$23.9 trillion spent in 1996 and up sixfold from the \$4.9 trillion spent in 1960 (in 2008 dollars), according to The Worldwatch Institute's 2010 State of the World Report.

But over the past several years, the shift in our thinking—and more importantly, our behavior—has forced us to re-evaluate priorities. According to the recent "New Consumer" study by Euro RSCG Worldwide, a marketing communications company, about one-third of Americans agree they would be happier if they owned less stuff. Two-thirds of respondents said most of us would be better off if we lived more simply.

Tree Huggers

Brands that walk the walk when it comes to sustainability.



Lululemon Athletica, yoga apparel

- Lets customers decide which programs it should support; gives to up to eight local charities each year
- Lists on its website ways consumers can save water and energy when washing the apparel
- Is committed to eliminating six types of waste: fabric, paper, packaging, garbage, product end-of-life and store construction

Stonyfield, organic yogurt

- Partners with eco-friendly products maker TerraCycle for the "Yogurt Brigade," a program that collects used yogurt cups through schools and nonprofits nationwide; TerraCycle makes planters and vegetable growing kits from the used cups
- Partners with Preserve—maker of 100 percent recycled household products—to turn used Stonyfield yogurt cups into toothbrushes, razors, tongue cleaners and spoons

Kashi, frozen and dry foods

- Provides ideas on its website for consumers to lead a healthier and greener life—from reusing coffee grounds to sitting up straight at work. (Kashi then tracks the progress of its entire online community, recording how many members have successfully implemented the suggestions.)
- Offers an interactive map called "Natural Nearby" that helps people find natural products in their communities



Thinkstock

"In the last decade or so, people started to place a greater emphasis on living a simpler lifestyle, whether it was participating in the rise of the slow food movement (or eating locally grown, organic food) or supporting their local farmers and artisans," Benett says. "The global recession accelerated these trends, leading many to realize that rampant spending didn't bring happiness."

The Map to Mindful Consumption

Now that we're moving toward an era of mindful consumption, where both buyers and sellers are more aware we live in a world with finite resources, brands must support sustainability both in the open marketplace and behind the scenes.

"Consumerism is a dominant pattern that shapes cultures around the world," says Erik Assadourian, senior fellow at The Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, D.C., research institute devoted to global environmental concerns. It stands to reason, then, that consumers' preferences and dollars drive the products companies produce.

On the flip side, one cannot underestimate the huge impact media has on consumer behavior. "Marketing is a dominant form of communication," Assadourian says. "The average person watches four hours of television per day, and 85 percent of the world has access to a television, which is a powerful tool to cultivate desires." As such, Assadourian says marketing has the potential to set the cultural standard and normalize the idea of a sustainable lifestyle.

F

or example, Zipcar, a car-sharing service that reduces consumers' reliance on personal automobiles, has advertised its commitment to "offer a practical and actionable example of sustainable living that decreases the adverse effects of

transportation." This company appeals to consumers not only for the service it provides, but also because it markets the environmental good that it does: reducing emissions and significantly diminishing peoples' need to own cars.

Even companies that aren't green in nature have found ways to market to mindful consumers. For example, while Procter & Gamble's Pampers disposable diapers are not recyclable, the marketing message to consumers is Pampers uses less material grown in sustainable forests and are manufactured using chlorine-free bleach and less packaging. S.C. Johnson's Ziploc division started its "landfill diversion" initiative, an effort to offset the presence of its products in the waste stream, and now promotes its reward program for recycling bags from specially marked packages. And Clorox offers a "Green Works" line of products that appeals to consumers' heightened sense of responsibility to protect the environment. It's a lesson from the hotel playbook: Don't force your customer to abandon the lifestyle they value. Instead, make them feel good about their choices.

"Brands understand that corporate social responsibility is paramount to success in the future. They're already shifting their behavior and the way they do business to become more transparent," Benett says. Consumers are looking for brands that are doing more than just looking good—they have to do good, too. "More and more, consumers expect and support companies that adhere to environmental ethics, so it's important for brands to let them know what they're doing in this area," Benett says.

In other words, brands are adjusting to consumers' desire for less stuff not by offering less stuff, but by emphasizing the superior environmental responsibility of their products through marketing.

Setting Up a Dialogue

While media influences consumers, consumers' voices in turn are a force for change in corporate behavior. "Mobile phones, tablets and computers are enabling consumers to do their research to make sure they are getting the best deals for the best products," Benett says. For many, the "best" products are healthy and sustainable.

One example of this is the ongoing controversy about high-fructose corn syrup. Michael Pollan, in his book *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, cites the public subsidy in favor of corn, which became a major food additive and sweetener. An idea then percolated after the book's publishing in 2006—and public opinion followed—that the dramatic increase in obesity and diabetes stems from our excess consumption of sugar. True or not, consumer revulsion with high-fructose corn syrup has altered behavior and resulted in companies changing their recipes and the marketing of their goods: "Heinz Ketchup, no high-fructose corn syrup!"

Some businesses operate in a more transparent way, which also fosters loyalty, Benett says. Brands such as Kashi,

The Greenwashers

Brands that talk the talk.

bp



British Petroleum

Claim: BP highlights efficiency as one of its core values, emphasizing the vital role "saving energy" plays in maintaining the environment.

Fact: BP is responsible for oil spills that negatively impact the environment—in April 2010, the spill that leaked 4.9 million barrels of oil into the Gulf of Mexico, and more recently on July 16 when 2,100 to 4,200 gallons of oil leaked in Lisburne Field, Alaska.

General Motors

Claim: Its website boasts "designers and engineers work to find ways to improve the impact [GM] products will have on the environment," including "energy consumption on the road." General Motors says its 2011 Chevy Tahoe Hybrid "offers better fuel economy than the competition."

Fact: The 2011 Chevy Tahoe Hybrid gets an average of 20 city miles to the gallon—the same as Toyota's nonhybrid 2011 Highlander.



Nestle's Poland Spring

Claim: Its new bottle design uses 30 percent less plastic than similar products.

Fact: That may be true, but it fails to mention bottling and shipping the water across the country uses far more energy than getting the water straight from your faucet. Plus, most recyclable water bottles end up in landfills.



Ben & Jerry's, Stonyfield and others have "eco-consciousness built into their DNA, and customers rally behind them because of it," he says. Ben & Jerry's, which was "founded on and dedicated to a sustainable corporate concept," has more than 3.4 million Facebook fans that presumably not only "like" their ice cream, but what the company stands for.

Read the Fine Print

Unfortunately, truth in marketing is not guaranteed. Assadourian says because green marketing is under-regulated, companies can get away with "greenwashing"—when a brand promotes environmentally friendly practices or products to deflect attention away from their environmentally unfriendly activities. (Or simply, they want to capitalize on consumers seeking out environmentally responsible products.)

According to the "Seven Sins of Greenwashing" report by TerraChoice Environmental Marketing, a global environmental marketing firm, more than 95 percent of consumer products claiming to be green committed at least one of the "sins" of greenwashing. Some of these so-called sins include the "sin of irrelevance," such as labeling a product as "CFC-free" (CFCs are banned by law); and the "sin of vagueness," which is a marketing claim so devoid of specifics that it is rendered meaningless, such as labeling something "all natural."

Assadourian cites the natural gas industry as one of the worst greenwashing offenders. It touts to consumers that the production of natural gas is "clean," failing to acknowledge the greenhouse gas pollution that leaks into the atmosphere in the process. TerraChoice describes this as a "sin of hidden trade-off."

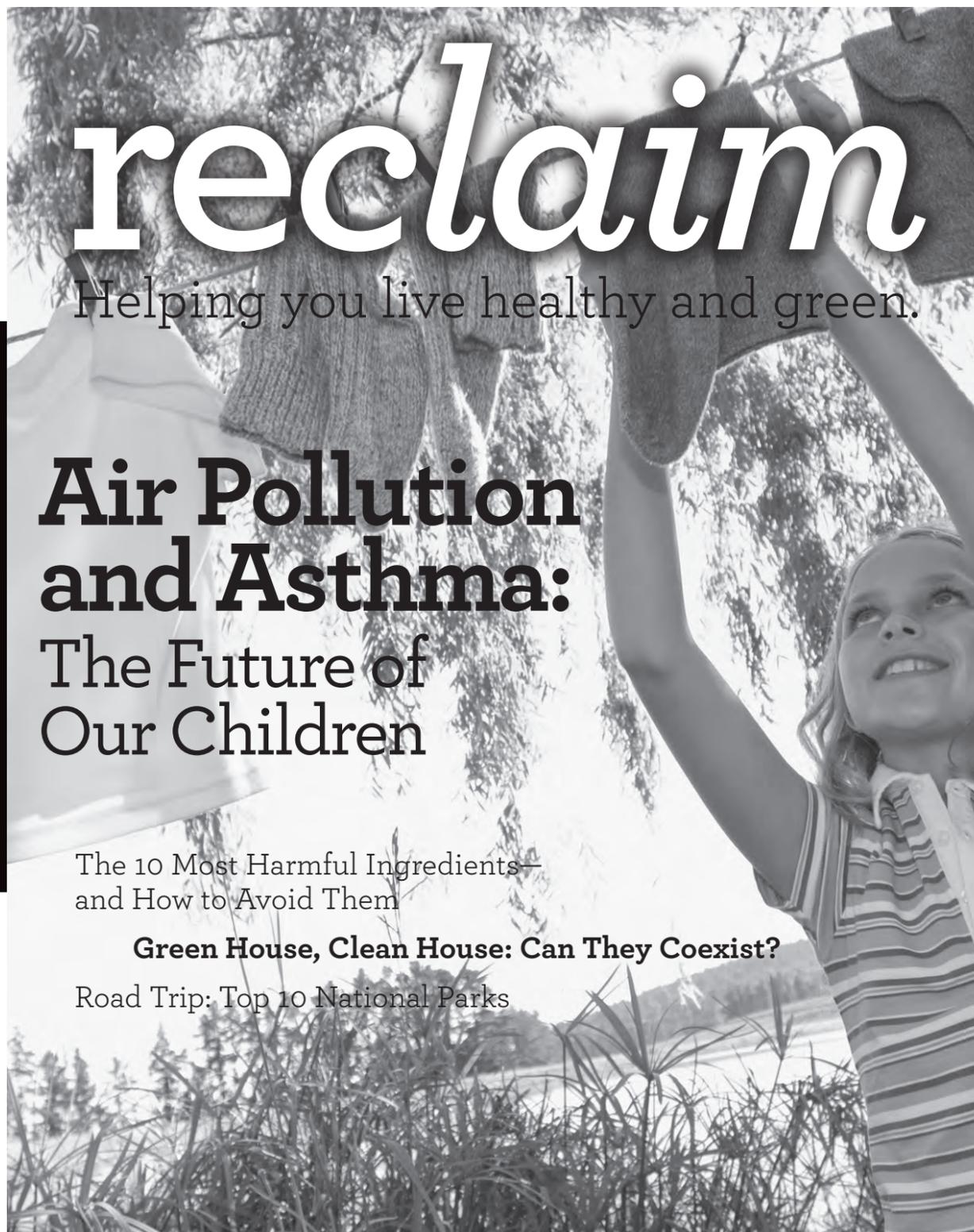
Assadourian notes that in some cases, firms can back into doing good because high energy prices force them to innovate and ultimately do business differently.

"Companies that are thinking long term will choose the sustainable path," he says. "This will be less profitable in the beginning, but they should sell the sustainable lifestyle and sell truly sustainable products. Companies that are effective in using the fewest resources will be most insulated from these changes."

Companies' products and offerings need to not only provide value, but also embody the ideals of the newly mindful consumer: sustainability and simplicity. More is not better after all. It's just more. ■

BUY THIS IDEA

When **Imagination** opens discussions with a potential client, the first step is assessing the client's goals and objectives to develop a communications strategy that will deliver ROI. We analyze the channels—print, digital, broadcast and social media—and determine an integrated strategy to achieve the client's goals. As part of our pre-work, we bring this strategy to potential clients, free of charge. Below is an idea we conceptualized. All it needs is a good home.



reclaim

Helping you live healthy and green.

Air Pollution and Asthma: The Future of Our Children

The 10 Most Harmful Ingredients—
and How to Avoid Them

Green House, Clean House: Can They Coexist?

Road Trip: Top 10 National Parks

Green Living

Research reveals consumers feel a stronger connection with brands that have a purpose, whether they help consumers connect with nature or lead healthier, greener lifestyles. *Reclaim* magazine helps consumers fit sustainability into their everyday lives—through content and community.

Ideal Sponsor: A company looking to market sustainability as part of its brand(s)

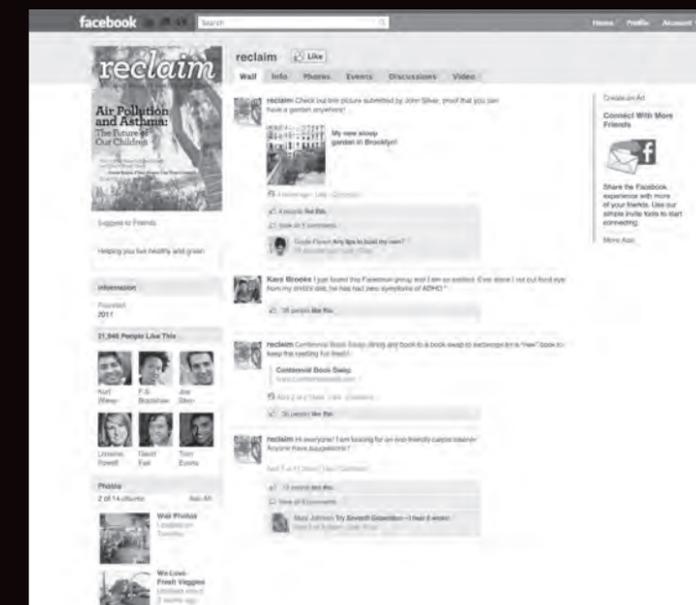
Audience: Consumers who seek out and buy green products

Content: Green living, natural products, nutrition

Media: Quarterly magazine; e-mail newsletter segmented by “green lifestage”; Facebook fan page

Distribution Channels: Targeted database, paid media campaign, blogger outreach

ROI: Traffic to media, engagement with passionate audience, business intelligence to help inform product and advertising development



“Given this increase in the environment over the past few years, nearly every segment of consumer products now offers a ‘green’ option for shoppers.”
—Chris Haack, Mintel senior analyst

77 percent of consumers purchase green products or services
—Harris Interactive, 2011

Buying green is recession-proof: **81 percent** of Americans say they continue to buy green products, despite the economy.
—EnviroMedia/Opinion Research Corporation, 2010

Want to see this program tailored to your brand? Contact Erin Slater, Vice President of Marketing and Business Development, at eslater@imaginepub.com.



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO NOT KNOWING?

In the age of Google, we have too much information at our disposal at all times. So much, in fact, that we're growing less creative by the minute.

If you started each day with a blank sheet of paper, what could you do?

We seldom start the day with an empty desk, a blank notebook, a desktop free of icons, an empty inbox. Rather, hyperconnectivity removes all uncertainty and we map our days based on incoming information. Before we leave the house, we know what the weather will be, where the traffic jams are, where and who we're meeting with, what tasks need to be completed.

But whatever happened to not knowing?

We've become so accustomed to an over-abundance of information that, even as we complain about it, it reassures us. In the process, we've lost the ability to improvise. We're more timid, less the pioneers setting off into the great unknown and more the wimp never caught without an umbrella.

If you had a blank sheet of paper, you very well could fill it with your own thoughts and ideas. Your day would be more spontaneous, more inventive. Of course, you still need to meet your deadlines, but in the absence of all that input you would have to make your own decisions, think on your feet and not rely on the collective wisdom of strangers or staff. There is a beauty to not knowing, to winging it, to having to go with what you get.



saul landall/mex / Getty

uncertainty circuitry

David Rock, founder and CEO of the NeuroLeadership Group and author of the book *Your Brain at Work*, wrote in *Psychology Today* that the modern workplace is designed to do exactly the opposite of what the brain needs to be creative. "Learning to be okay with uncertainty is part of the process of having more insights," he writes, "because the more anxious you are, the less likely you are to notice any subtle insights."

Rock says that, in many instances, we can blame our brains for our obsession with gathering information.

"The brain has an organizing principle," Rock says. "It works at the level of individual neurons: minimize danger and maximize reward, minimize pain, maximize pleasure."

We use this for more than avoiding actual physical pain—we're pleased when we see someone we like, for instance, and "punished" when we see someone who's been unkind. "When certainty increases, you get a little reward in the brain, a little dose of dopamine," Rock says. "The opposite is also true. As uncertainty increases, your pain circuitry lights up. That circuitry is much stronger, more powerful, lights up faster, stronger. When you experience more uncertainty, a whole load of circuitry lights up."

To keep the uncertainty circuits dark, we go nowhere without GPS. We don't try new restaurants unless we've seen the menu first. We don't buy until we've asked for references from Facebook friends. We don't travel until we've checked Trip Advisor. We compulsively check our devices for updates, alerts and messages. We can Google anything and sound like an expert instantly. And for absolute certainty, we can wake up to our daily horoscope.

We do all these things because they're available. Reducing uncertainty, in fact, has turned into a big business. "Huge industries are devoted to it," Rock says.

The answer for many people is to avoid uncertainty at all costs, even though that is where the best answers lie.

non-conscious resources

There is only one certainty, says Rock: that there will be more uncertainty.

Uncertainty—the blank sheet of paper, for example—makes us anxious, which in turn makes those around us anxious, which increases our self doubt. And all of that causes the pain neurons to fire, preventing us from doing much of anything. We've all been confronted with something that literally stopped us in our tracks. Overwhelming uncertainty freezes us, both mentally and physically. The answer for many people is to avoid uncertainty at all costs, even though that is where the best answers lie.

Instead, Rock advocates institutionalizing time to explore, time to embrace uncertainty and see where it can take you.

"Genentech invented the idea of 20 percent time, and Google popularized it," Rock says. In other words, let people work on anything they want using company resources for one day a week. Let them work at home. Let them design their own workspaces.

"I know CEOs who come to the office at least one day a week with no plan in mind. They claim that it's the secret to how they do what they do. Extraordinary results have come out of it. Google invented Gmail, for instance. Bring your non-conscious resources to bear; you'll see things you don't normally see."

I know CEOs who come to the office at least one day a week with no plan in mind. They claim that it's the secret to how they do what they do.



Jetta Productions / Getty

You just literally can't hear creativity because there's too much noise. Ideas are too quiet.

breakthroughs

Rock's point that you have to let your mind wander to be creative is backed up by a chapter in, of all things, *Blood, Bones and Butter*, the memoir by Gabrielle Hamilton, owner of the tiny but renowned restaurant Prune in New York City. The chapter that talks about how she came to own a restaurant, totally by accident, is interlaced with stories about her year-long wanderings as a young woman. The kind of travel she undertook—before cell phones, ATMs, GPS—"is probably not even possible now," she writes.

She had no plans, and the uncertainty of that was heavily freighted with hunger and fear. Down to her last few dollars, no one knowing where she was, not having eaten on yet another three-day bus ride taught her not only about what true hospitality means, but also about her own capabilities. It made her resourceful, independent, confident.

The leap of faith it took to open Prune was grounded in her ability to operate in unexpected situations. She ignored things like damp in the basement and leapt ahead to the delicious dishes she could serve and the sort of wonderful place it would be. "I had never heard of due diligence," she writes.

And she was totally sure that she could do it. Having dealt with the vast uncertainty of where her next meal was coming from, she knew she could handle anything. Twelve years later, Prune seats only 24 people but carries excellent reviews and does \$2 million in business a year.

To move past impasses, things like damp in the basement of your new business or the inability to solve a problem, we usually do the exact opposite of what we should do, according to Rock. We bear down, work harder on it, think about it more, gather information. "It's like 70 people talking in a room," he says. "You just literally can't hear creativity because there's too much noise. Ideas are too quiet. Being creative involves being able to quiet the brain so that you don't land on something that simply reduces uncertainty."

There are many ways to quiet the brain. Go for a walk. Stare out the window. Make your "pleasure" circuitry light up by looking at pictures of your kids. Or exercise. The repetitive nature of something like jogging or swimming frees the mind to go elsewhere, and the increased oxygen intake clears your head. "I don't really like exercising," Rock says. "I find it pretty boring. But it's good for me, and it always gives me good ideas. It gives me a huge amount of energy because ideas are energizing."

In other words, you have to think of something else to see the answer. You have to go for the blank sheet of paper rather than the mountain of data. "When you quiet the brain," Rock says, "the non-conscious ideas can come through." ■

THINKING PARTNERS

To unearth the best ideas, combine people who know a lot about a problem or project with people who know nothing about it. David Rock, founder and CEO of the NeuroLeadership Group, calls these "thinking partnerships" and they are popular in product development companies like California-based IDEO.

Every creative team should include someone who walks in with a blank sheet of paper.

"There is something about the clarity of distance," Rock says. "When we're not involved in a field or an idea, we can see the patterns better than the people who are deeply immersed. You have this clarity when you're not involved and don't have an agenda. You can teach people to ask questions, often very simple questions that identify the impasses and get to the insights."

Asking the questions we usually ask—what is the problem, what have you tried, tell me what you think—only puts us in the same mind-frame as the person trying to come up with an answer. We see nothing but the same roadblocks they see. Instead, ask about "the process, not the content," Rock says.

Ask how clear they are on the process, how much time they've spent on it so far, what they've already tried. "About 75 percent of the time, it works," he says.



7 websites that spark creativity

hit

Brand partnerships are the new black. Smart companies are pairing up to launch new products, reach untapped audiences and reclaim market share. We take a look at partnerships that hit the ground running and those that missed the race altogether.

miss

J.Crew + 45 brands

+ hit

Menswear is rarely an easy fit for fashion labels. For years, retailer J.Crew experienced flat results from its efforts to get men excited about the brand. That is, until the 28-year-old clothing company decided to partner with dozens of its competitors.

That's right—competitors.

In 2007, J.Crew enlisted popular menswear labels such as Levi's and Sperry—as well as newer, more specialty designers Billykirk and Barbour—to share retail space in their stores and collaborate on specialty items. With this partnership, which it calls “in good company,” J.Crew has broken out of the single-label march and positioned itself as the purveyor of a hip but tailored downtown lifestyle.



We think it's a hit. J.Crew not only boosted its menswear sales but also refreshed the brand and motivated the company to engage in some exciting new prospects. In 2008, it opened its first all-men's store in New York called the Liquor Store, which sells items from 31 partners. The store filled the former **Liquor Store Bar**, a historic landmark, with little revision to the interior and exterior to give it a vintage feel. The store reflects J.Crew's dedication to its male customers and helped cement J.Crew as both an iconic, yet still-trendy brand that invites “good company.”



Starbucks + Apple



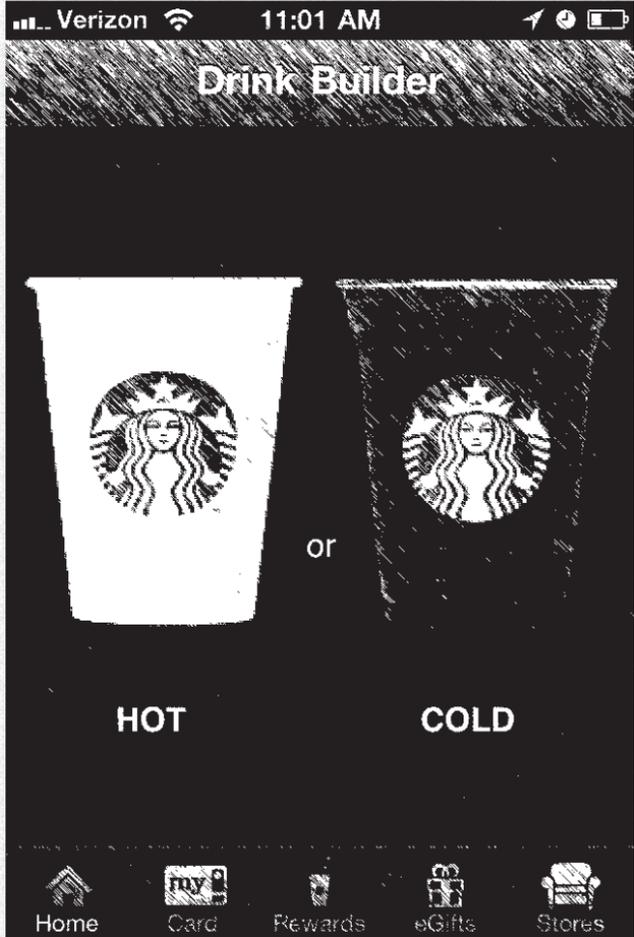
hit+

Starbucks and Apple began their partnership in 2007, when Apple began offering a free iTunes song download every week exclusively through Starbucks stores. The partnership boosted foot traffic to Starbucks' 17,000 locations and increased adoption of iTunes by Starbucks customers. (A complementary demographic, if you ask us.)



In August, Starbucks offered an app entirely free to Starbucks customers: **Shazam Encore** (normally \$5.99, iTunes). Shazam Encore allows you to identify song names by recording short snippets with your iPhone, and is an obvious choice for the Starbucks frequenter who may wonder what jam was playing when they picked up their java. The identified song is, of course, readily available for purchase from Apple.

Starbucks has also empowered its customers to purchase beverages using their iPhone: The Starbucks Card App allows users to make purchases with bar codes displayed on the screen (scanned by your friendly barista), as well as save your favorite drink order, find the nearest Starbucks and even peruse the company's job listings.



Since then, both companies have applied their successful partnership to new technologies and trends. The **"Pick of the Week"** has expanded to other media sold on iTunes such as books, TV shows and iPhone apps.



miss

Bing and BlackBerry both have stiff competition for a strong mobile platform: With Apple's iPhone and Google's Android platforms growing their market share, BlackBerry needs to scramble to catch up. However, adding Bing as the primary search provider on BlackBerry—the crux of their partnership—isn't going to cut it.

Bing's redesigned app is promoted front and center on BlackBerry's App world. (Users are also unable to delete it.) Unfortunately, with the Apple app store dominating market share, promoting Bing on BlackBerry is too little, too late.

Also, if Bing and BlackBerry are engaged in a partnership, why is Bing prominently touting "Bing for your iPad" on its website? Shouldn't Bing (owned by Microsoft Corp.) maintain an unbranded push like "Bing for your tablet" or a more BlackBerry-centric call-to-action such as "Bing for your BlackBerry Playbook"? A true partnership relies on mutual dedication; Bing seems to be talking out of both sides of its search bar.



Google+ is the shiny new social networking site that has garnered a lot of talk—everything from “oh-no-not-another-social-networking-site” to “this will edge out Facebook and Twitter.” While the jury’s still out on Google+’s adoption en masse, what’s for sure is Google is keeping a close, watchful eye on its users.

Just a week after launching in June, Google+ warned brands and businesses not to sign up for an account. Google+ stuck to its guns and kicked off every brand and company that attempted to establish a presence.

However, after using Ford Motor Co. as a “test” this fall, Google+ expects to roll out brand pages in early November. During Social Media Week Chicago in September, we caught up with Google’s Ryan Stonehouse, who led a discussion about the social networking site’s vision for brands.

Stonehouse said the initial design for its brand pages will be basic, with few tools for brand managers. But as brands begin to establish their presence, and consumers begin to interact, Google+ will incorporate new functions that mirror consumers’ preferences and debut additional tools (like metrics) for brand managers.

Below, we dive into the world of Google+ and rate its relevance for your brand in the social space.

A hangout is a video chat room, limited to 10 people at a time.

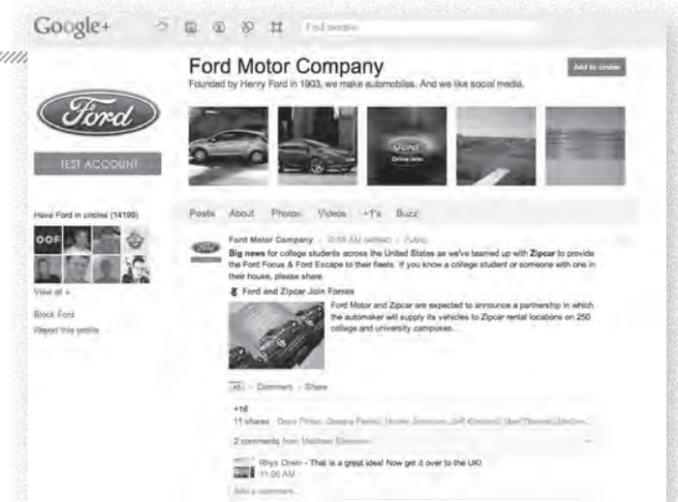
In August, Ford, the guinea pig for Google+ brand pages, live-streamed a panel discussion called “Cracking the Code on Millennials” using the hangout function: Panelists joined the discussion via the Skype-like video conference call system and followers could watch the live discussion online. Afterward, Ford posted a recording of the “hang-out” on its Google+ page.

Hit: We expect brands to fully embrace this face-to-face function and hope Google will make this a more robust tool in the future.

A post is similar to a Facebook status or a tweet.

We expect to see brands having one-on-one conversations with consumers through Google+’s post functionality. However, we hope brands will employ fully fledged content strategies for each platform. Unique content garners unique visitors.

Hit: Google+ has made it possible to edit a post after it’s published, unlike Facebook and Twitter. Thank you, Google, for recognizing brands should be able to fix a minor “oops” in the digital space.



Circles are a way to share different content with different people.

We already “categorize” people in our minds, why not digitally?

Miss: Google says that initially, brand pages will not allow individuals to decide which circle, on a brand’s page, they fall under. For example, on a Johnson & Johnson page, circles might be “expectant moms,” “infant moms” and “toddler moms.” Allowing followers to select their own group would help brands tailor their content to specific subsets of consumers.

get to know imagination

we're all consumers. we asked our staff: what's your favorite thing to consume?

Share your favorite thing to consume at [facebook.com/imaginationpublishing](https://www.facebook.com/imaginationpublishing)



Kevin A.
Free bacon. Because it's bacon and it's free.



Todd C.
Music. Live in person, on the stereo, or just in my head.



Beth N.
Design. Graphic, fashion and home, I love it all.



Paige A.
Public radio. But only for the free tote bags.



Rachel B.
Cheese. By itself, with bread, with crackers—with pretty much anything. It's always delicious.



Chris D.
Potions, but only when my health is low.



Michelle J.
College football. I bet I'm only second to Erin Andrews in hours devoted. (Devoted, not wasted!)



Kate L.
Reality TV. Real Housewives. Jersey Shore. Bachelors and Bachelorettes.



Kate N.
Wine. Prefer a malbec or a petite syrah, but if it's red and runs downhill, I'll probably drink it.



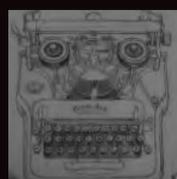
Scott R.
Sports news. I'm a devoted follower of ESPN and MLive.com, my source for the details of my beloved Detroit sports teams.



Tim S.
Diet Coke. It's like crack, but fizzy.



Aaron B.
Good honey mustard. On airplanes, and nowhere else.



Donovan B.
Buffalo wings. And long-form journalism. Often simultaneously.



Ashley D.
Words. Written or spoken—I don't discriminate—as long as they're poetic, enlightening and inspiring.



Tegan J.
The New York Times. And its crossword puzzle.



Jim M.
Glenfiddich scotch after a motorcycle ride while listening to Led Zepplin II.



Jim N.
Soldiers and Eggs.



Tara R.
Caffeine. In all its forms.



Sarah S.W.
Beer. Literal, I know, but I really do love beer of all kinds.



Riley B.
Tomato juice. On airplanes, and nowhere else.



Jacqueline C.
Ideas. Because I can never decide on my own.



Rachel F.
Reality TV. After a long day, I need a little mindless television. It usually turns into a lot of mindless television. It's actually kind of embarrassing.



Damian J.
Vinyl records. I like digging in dusty crates until my cuticles crack.



Andrea M.
Chocolate. Anytime, anywhere, or anything!



Tim N.
Documentaries and chocolate—information and sugar, a robust combination.



Rebecca R.
Books and peanut M&Ms.



Chris S.
A tall glass of Blue Milk, but only at binary sunset.



Dick B.
Lee Child novels. Jack Reacher is way bigger, badder and a better shot than Jack Bauer ever dreamed about.



Herminia C.
Shoes. It's not an addiction. It's a hobby.



Jake F.
Smooth R&B. If I could be anything, I'd be an R&B singer.



Ashley K.
Olive oil. Bread, pasta, salad—you name it and I put olive oil on it.



Cyndee M.
Words. I like to gobble 'em up and spit 'em back out.



Michelle O.
Chocolate (any kind) and *People* magazine, on the couch. Simultaneous guilty pleasures for body and spirit.



Andy S.
Baseball Tonight. Web gems. Smart ex-players. An endlessly entertaining condensation of the everyday drama of our national pastime.



Tiffany T.
Fresh air. The kind you can't get in the city.



Ed B.
Anything that is drenched in Sriracha Sauce.



Gary C.
Atlanta Braves baseball. It's my greatest source of pleasure and pain. Mostly pain.



Christina G.
Political News. O'Reilly, Meet the Press, The Situation Room—cable news is food to my soul.



Doug K.
Twizzlers red licorice (never black) and Diet Coke while driving and listening to AC/DC. And unicorns, too.



Matt M.
Oxygen.



Janet O.
Travel. So much to see, so little time!



Chris S.
Music. I love listening to music of all kinds, except country.



Joel W.
Food. It keeps me going.



Natasha B.
Sushi. It is light, full of nutrients and yummy.



Elizabeth C.
Fun-size candy bars. They're simply more delightful than the regular kind.



Jackie G.
Gummy bears. How could anyone be sad with gummy bears around?



Kate K.
Chocolate. It fixes everything. I've only known one person to disagree and our friendship struggles because of it.



Kara M.
Anything peach-flavored. Popsicles, soda pop, candies or just the regular fruit.



Ashley P.
Travel. Across the world or down a new neighborhood street.



Erin S.
Nature. Kayaking on Lake Michigan in Door County, Wis., is bliss.



Adam W.
Political analysis. Particularly from *Politico* and *Time*. If political news could be liquefied, I'd consume it via an IV.



Allison B.
Free samples!



Simona C.
Terabytes upon terabytes of data. Via my Mac laptop at work, my HP laptop at home, and my Droid at all moments in between.



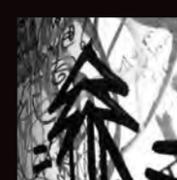
Jane H.
Baked pita chips with original hummus and a cold glass of ginger ale. Admittedly I go to it way too often.



Gretchen K.
Hot chocolate. I have it every day, whether it's 9 degrees or 90 degrees.



Chris M.
Long bike rides, and all the people-watching adventures along the way.



Shanna Q.
Old city maps to new online transits maps. I love figuring out how to get from "here" to "there."



Heather S.
Lip balm. If I go a few hours without lip balm, I get the shakes. I even get up in the middle of the night to apply it.



Matthew W.
Other cultures (metaphorically, obviously). There's no greater rush than places where people's daily lives are mind-blowingly different from my own.



Shaun C.
Rockstar Energy Drinks. I get silly, nothing gets done and I don't care.



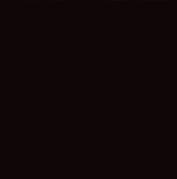
Heidi H.
Words and music, in any form and as often as I can.



Hannah K.
Books in a trilogy. Everything is better in threes.



Kelsey N.
Ben & Jerry's from the cartoon. Spoon optional, pajamas preferred.



Diane Y.
Mangos. Or is it man-goes?