

"Self-Regulation in The New Media World"
(Panel presentation 6 September, 2011)

Good morning.

I would like to set the stage for our panel discussion today, from a slightly different angle of social responsibility, "Self-Regulation in The New Media World."

In 1949 George Orwell wrote about a future of new media. His 1984, is a story about a guy at the "Ministry of Truth" thirty-five years into the future, in 1984. The equivalent perspective for us today, would be to consider a person who works at the "Ministry of Truth" in the year 2046.

Then, 35-years later in 1984, this is how Apple portrayed the "new media world."

(Show: Apple "1984" video)

Amazing work, that video. It actually only aired one time; yet, its impact has been legendary.

The concept of self-regulation has always been an issue, with each new media world, where freedom of speech is at stake. From the ham radio operators in the 1930's, came the "Code of Good Practices", as that new media grew into radio. Over the years this "code" was updated several times, as radio evolved into the new media of television.

This year, self-regulation of national advertising in the US celebrated its 39th anniversary with the National Advertising Review Council. And, today, my industry finds itself examining self-regulation in an altogether, whole new world of media.

It would be helpful for this discussion to consider whether Globalization has ended. Have we not reached a point of borderless transparency of information access that puts individuals more in control of information? Are not we globalized, already?

We are a world of 7-billion people, where 5-billion are connected by mobile phone, and of these, half are able to connect to the internet without a desktop, laptop or land line. We are looking at a very different world emerging for consumers and choice. New media technologies are creating a global economy of inclusion. This has changed the environment brands, or any other organizing concept functions. Let's stop asking about the analog to digital transition and just accept that our i a post-digital world of communications.

(Slide: Wires)

More than ever before in human history an idea, a claim or an opinion is more transmittable, more broadly perceivable, more able to be compared with other opinion or imitated. Today, the first media is people. Actions, ideas and behaviors can no longer remain shielded from being perceived. As control shifts to consumers their

increased word-of-mouth power renders corporations and brands more accountable than ever before.

(Slide: Map)

Advancements in communications technologies have become “extensions of man”. We are seeing these technologies release greater individual freedom of information. Technologies with universal compatibility are allowing different cultures to engage without losing their identity. This new generation of individual freedom allows more comparisons between the social and economic dimensions of an individual’s interaction with ideas and, with values.

The shift in control of information is dramatically altering the communications landscape. It is a landscape where content can be created by anyone and perceivable by virtually everyone. It is a world where borders and nations are less distinguishing factors.

(Slide: Top 100 Economies)

In fact, of the world’s top 100 economies in the world today, 51 are corporations. So, more people are being touched by corporations and brands than any single nation’s government. Some people think this is good. Some think this is bad:

(Show: AOL “Bad/Good”)

(Slide: Eyeball/Globe)

The ability to find truth and accountability for information is up for grabs. The issue of responsibility between editorial versus commercial content is challenged in whole new ways.

At the core of this, is how to regulate content. As was the case in the past, most fundamental are the issues of freedom of speech and freedom of choice.

Multinational corporations, industry organizations and governmental entities are engaged in this and looking for answers. Marketers who are increasingly looking for growth from international markets where they are facing new hurdles as they seek to navigate through the new media context.

Regulatory restrictions are becoming an increasing consideration to the effective execution of brand-building. European markets and the EU have led the way in creating communications restrictions for advertisers. For example, France and Sweden have restrictions on ads that place women in subservient roles. Greece and Sweden put in place strong guidelines on advertising to children.

Developing markets are at an earlier stage in the evolution of these considerations. Thailand, Australia, Japan and Russia have introduced a number of communications restrictions. We are also seeing these issues being taken up in South America and some African nations. This past April, the People’s Republic of China adopted a “Code of Responsible Marketing.” This is a big deal. China is acknowledging the difficulty of regulating information and marketing practices. Just like any culture, freedom of information access, creates a fertile garden for quick-change artists, shabby real estate practices..... and, snake oil salesmen. Even in China.

The EU is now seeking ways for governments to work collaboratively with the advertising industry. There is a growing group of people involved in these issues, who think that more legislation may not be productive.

Where does the rule of law fit? What effect does this have on institutions like Ministries of Information and content creators, broadcasters or narrow casters?

How does leadership respond to the challenge—to self-regulate in a world where individuals increasingly create content?

On the issue of who discovered the water, we are pretty sure it was not the fish.

The old mantra of "Think global, act local" becomes obsolete in this context. We need a tool that helps us step back from our fishbowl and see the world as a richly diverse collection of individuals. I call this tool "Think like the Sun." It helps me contextualize information, to step outside my fishbowl. And, like the Sun, this monitoring of perception is always on.

In the stream of communications technology which is ever flowing, all information flows into and out from individuals, with an undertow of misinformation that has never been stronger. And, we all come to the stream with our own beliefs and misunderstandings.

Our panel today is specially designed to engage in the intersections of this new world – a world where the context, social responsibility and definition of self-regulation takes on new meaning.... And, a whole new consequence.

Thank you.

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