

1. BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL

A new global understanding that Sustainability—in every conceivable meaning—is critical to our future well-being means that companies will have to do more than just embrace the notion of being a good corporate citizen. To keep customers and win new ones, you must:

- Display greater transparency and honesty
- Have conversations as opposed to one-way advertising
- Champion collaboration instead of an “us versus them” mentality
- Demonstrate generosity—not greed
- Be edgy and daring as opposed to safe and bland

2. URBANIZATION

The numbers* speak for themselves:

- By 2008, 50% of the world's population lived in cities, compared to 5% a century ago.
- In the last twenty years, the urban population of the developing world has grown by an average of 3 million people per week.
- By 2050, 70% or 6.4 billion people will reside in urban areas.
- Most of this growth will take place in Asia with 63% of the global urban population, or 3.3 billion people, living there in 2050.

Where will this lead us? The compact, wired and wealthy urban communities that develop will spawn accelerated innovation in goods, services, and experiences and will influence which ones are quickly adopted. This creates fertile grounds for B2C brands keen on pushing the innovation envelope and, as a result, the B2B businesses that serve the B2C brands.

*Source: the Global Report on Human Settlements 2009, October 2009.

3. LIFE IN REAL TIME

It's not news that more people than ever are sharing, in real time, everything they think, do, and experience. The race to further imbed online access into devices is driving much of the growth in real-time information.

What IS news for 2010 is the birth of numerous services that will capitalize on this real-time content avalanche. Look for more search engines and tracking services that will make it easy to find and group these live dispatches by theme, topic or brand. If you thought social media was a fad, think again! It's time you figured out how to make your company the hot topic.

TOP 10 TRENDS FOR 2010

4. FRUGALITY: THE NEW STATUS SYMBOL

Luxury brands will struggle over the next few years. In the not too distant past of limitless spending, a shiny SUV complete with V8 engine and whopping 18mpg might have impressed the neighbors. But today it just might be cause for egg throwing.

It's important to understand that what constitutes luxury is closely related to what constitutes scarcity. Luxury doesn't necessarily equate to high prices. It's about understanding the status triggers for your audience. From small electric cars to growing your own food to sewing your own draperies, folks are proud of their new found frugality and flaunt it like they once did their BMW's.

5. POWER TO THE MASSES

In 2010, expect more impromptu, temporary meet-ups of strangers, mobs and crowds with similar interests, hobbies, political preferences, causes and grievances. Many of these will revolve around generating public attention or getting something done. And Twitter will lead the way.

The mobile web has bridged the gap between either being offline in the real world or being online but in one location—mostly living rooms and offices. It will dominate 2010, and will fuel new opportunities to help customers plan and communicate meet-ups. Any company that helps people to get and stay in touch, move from A to Z, or communicate before, during or after meeting up with others is sure to benefit.

6. ECOFORCE

While the current good intentions of corporations and consumers are helpful, serious impact on our environment will depend on making products and processes more sustainable without consumers even noticing. No longer relying on customer opt-in to environmentally friendly products and services, the brands that will make huge inroads in 2010 are those that don't leave much room for customers to opt for less sustainable alternatives to begin with.

Whether driven by government intervention, serious corporate mandates, or brilliantly smart design— anything that by default leaves no choice, no room for complacency, and thus makes it easy for customers to do the right and necessary thing, will see growth in the future.

One example: San Francisco began banning plastic bags back in 2007 and now its legislation is a model for other US cities. From New Haven, Connecticut to Seattle, Washington, cities, states and local townships can and are initiating their own actions to enforce alternatives to non-biodegradable plastic bags.

7. TRACK AND FIELD

Once again, technological development has created a monster. Tracking and alerting saves time, makes it impossible to forget or miss out, and ultimately provides yet another level of control. And we're not just talking UPS here. Count on everything being tracked and alerted on—from friends to fuel prices to flights to authors to pizzas to, of course, any mentions of oneself.

The real opportunity in 2010? Tracking and alerting is something that customers actually need and want (as any online catalog operation knows). They are quite literally asking for relevant information and giving you permission to provide them with more. Isn't it time you figured out how to start adding to the current information overload?

8. G IS FOR GENEROSITY

There's nothing like the holidays to bring out the news clips on how one small act of kindness resulted in an avalanche of good. It was big in 2009, and it will be even bigger in 2010—particularly all things that make giving and donating painless, if not automatic.

With collaboration being such an integral part of the Pay It Forward movement, expect lots of innovative corporate giving schemes that involve customers by letting them co-donate or co-decide on how much and where to give. Here's one great example:

TOMS Shoes donates a pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair they sell online. As of August 2009, TOMS has given over 150,000 pairs of shoes to children in need. TOMS shoes plans to give 1 million shoes by 2012. And you know what that means, right? They plan to **sell 1 million** shoes by 2012, too.

9. PRESERVATION NATION

Now that hundreds of millions of consumers maintain some kind of online profile or presence, who's going to protect and serve? Personal profiles, representing an ever-greater emotional and financial value, will produce a burgeoning market for services that protect, store, and—in case of emergencies or even death—arrange the handing over of one's digital estate to trusted others.

For consumers and businesses eager to keep confidential information out of the wrong hands, secure digital data storage is imperative. And it's not just about digital afterlife services. How about profile scrubbing? There has to be opportunity for the firm that can offer services to erase every trace of those drunken spring break photos.

Swiss DNA Bank, which launched in August 2009, offers ultra-secure DNA storage that meets Swiss banking regulations. For a one-time fee, customers can store both their self-swabbed DNA and up to 1 GB of digital data, forever. The DNA and the web servers are held in a former Swiss military underground nuclear shelter and customer's heirs can buy access to their relatives' shared data. Really.

10. FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY

As if reality TV hadn't gone far enough. Audiences who are, by now, thoroughly exposed to anything and everything, can handle much more quirkiness, daring innovation, exotic flavors and shocking communications than traditional marketers could have ever dreamed of. Don't say you haven't tasted bacon-infused chocolate!

Closely linked to most, if not all, of the trends highlighted here, mature society will simply not tolerate being treated like uninformed, easily shocked, inexperienced, middle-of-the-roads. So, in 2010, the challenge your business faces is how to be a tad more daring and diverse in order to keep up with culture—without being rude, nasty or inconsiderate.

The trends in this report all touch on doing things differently, driven by changing consumer preferences and desires that will impact every business in one way or another. And while no one has a crystal ball, we can all rest assured that future developments will occur unevenly and irregularly. Now is the time to study and learn from those brands that are already mirroring today's more diverse, chaotic, networked society, and then—outdo them!