

CREATIVITY AND DATA MARKETING



BECKY WANG

CREATIVITY AND DATA MARKETING

A practical guide to data innovation



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LIST OF ONLINE TOOLKITS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Becky Wang is the CEO and a co-founder of Crossbeat (www.crossbeatny.com), a marketing agency and creative studio that operates at the intersection of creativity, data, and technology. The best way to predict the future, according to Abraham Lincoln, is to create it. Crossbeat is one of many boutique firms helping brands and start-ups invent and re-invent themselves digitally and creatively from the inside out, resulting in enterprise transformation and new products leveraging artificial intelligence, AR/VR, and massive interactive installations.

Prior to Crossbeat, Becky Wang co-launched Sunday Dinner, focused on helping brands and agencies figure out new ways to work together, where she managed a network of creative and digital companies and provided a layer of agency services including strategy, account, and production. Before that, she launched and grew Data Strategy at Droga5, where she was responsible for infusing the creative process with data, analytics, and new technology.

Prior to joining Droga5, Becky led the insights and analytics practice at Saatchi & Saatchi NY, where she built and validated the use of data and analytics in the creative development process and led the culture change to one of being data-informed. She served as the digital strategist on several brands including Olay, Trident, and General Mills.

Becky Wang has been featured in the *Huffington Post*, *Financial Times*, and *Fast Company*¹ for championing the role of the new type of hybrid planner with the quantitative, qualitative, and creative skills necessary to plan communications for today's technology-enabled content and media environment.

Becky has led the digital, brand, and data practices in the auto, CPG, financial, digital music, technology, and retail categories. She employs a number of best-in-class insight workshop methods, research practices, and big data techniques to underpin the brand, digital, and data strategy for a diverse set of clients including Toyota, P&G, General Mills, Sony, Stand Up to Cancer, AMC Networks, Gilt, Pepsi, Samsung, and more. She has served on the executive strategy team for Cannes Lion-winning work, including for Prudential.

Becky produced an independent film that premiered at the New York International Film Festival and Los Angeles United Film Festival and has

be invited to speak both globally and in the United States at Culture:Tech UK, SXSW, OMMA Social, Social Media Summit, SANG, Voice of the Brand, NYK Brandwatch, Infopresse, and Internet Week.

Becky received a BA in English Literature with a Minor in Biostatistics. She is an iconoclast with a garnish of traditionalism and prefers to hear from all sorts of people via e-mail: bwang@crossbeatny.com or social media: @gnostica.

She loves to write, read, and dialogue. Feel free to send articles and strike up a conversation.

PREFACE

When I started my career, I did not think of myself as a data person. I thought of myself as an out-of-time journalist who, through social data, had the ability to gather more than a few stories about a community and weave a narrative based on my own understanding of how the world worked. Instead, I found I could read bits of a thousand stories and have my mind changed by the insight of many. It would allow me to tell a better, more truthful story. What I found was that by pursuing my interests in coding, strategy, analysis and storytelling, I could bridge a growing gap that needed to be filled to stay relevant and relatable.

I believe that explaining data analytics and data science around fundamental concepts can aid in developing task-oriented skills for all target audiences for this book, and facilitate communication between business, marketing and data stakeholders. It provides a shared vocabulary and enables both parties to understand each other better. It allows us to have a deeper discussion that can make a product successful and a team worth working with.

Data and creativity are ways of navigating decision making in these times of uncertainty. Continuous shocks to the market through lower and lower barriers to entry, the proliferation of devices and technology for consumers, and the 24/7 always-on programmes of marketing and media vying for our attention require a new framework for businesses, particularly marketing organizations, to help navigate. They require granular, sometimes real-time data and creativity to generate insights and to execute with swift, incisive action based on those insights. With each action, a new set of outcomes, decisions and results appears with data to help us course-correct in real time. Creativity increases our ability to respond quickly. Data increases our ability to respond with more assuredness.

This book is a study of how data and creativity work together to help marketers create and drive programmes to better understand why, how and what their customers choose, to deliver products and services that meet their needs, and to persuade by delivering the right message at the right time and place. When we marketers ask ourselves how data can be used in creative work, we must think beyond our traditional ideas of what 'data' and 'creative work' mean. Creative work is not simply a produced

output that fits into channels, but rather a holistic platform that helps create a relationship with customers that transcends the transaction.

This book is meant to focus on the relationship between the two rather than forcing one discipline to work within the another. Originally titled *Creative Data Marketing*, the book was renamed *Creativity and Data in Marketing* to reflect the ever-growing influence that each has on marketing.

Who this book is for

Data and Creativity in Marketing is intended for three sorts of readers:

- Brand marketers and chief marketing officers building teams and processes to better work with data scientists, analysts and technologists implementing data platforms to serve marketing initiatives.
- Analysts, data scientists, and other data folks who want to better collaborate with marketing and business teams and make their practice approachable and understandable to other teams.
- Chief digital officers or innovation officers who need to internally organize to help lead the internal transformation in thinking and operations to support the available intelligence and knowledge locked in good data.

This is not a book for data scientists looking for algorithms or coding tips related to their discipline. Rather, this book is meant to help cross-disciplinary interactions amongst business, marketing, operations, technology and 'data' folks in order to foster dialogue and collaboration, as well as offer practical tips to implement programmes that deliver results.

This book is meant to explain principles in data analysis, statistics, and data science that reveal the WAY in which practitioners are taught to think about their craft and therefore how they approach problem solving. This book also talks about existing unspoken assumptions (also referred to as mental models in the remainder of the book) that shape marketing points of view so that data-driven colleagues can understand the broader aims of the marketing organization and what is important to their business and marketing colleagues. *Creativity and Data in Marketing* offers a practical set of guidelines to help navigate the landscape of vendors, partners and employees to build a digitally transformed organization to deliver results. This book also provides case studies from the point of view of all major stakeholders in the process of transformation of the marketing team into a strong team of data and creative players. From each perspective, we offer an overview of how they built their teams to support a successful

marketing practice by illuminating a ‘third way’ of looking at problems – a combined creative and analytic approach to marketing and business problem solving.

Finally, this book is meant to provide marketing managers with a way to plan for the growth of their departments to integrate analytic and data thinking. This requires a marketer to be able to ask the RIGHT questions of their creative and data-oriented teams and set clear criteria to evaluate and measure the success of campaigns against the right metrics. One of my favourite presentations I referred to when researching the softer elements of the book such as team building and culture was by Rohan Gunatillake, titled ‘You Are Not Your Work’, which talked about mindfulness in business and in products.² I believe innovation and re-invention in any discipline require both a personal and interpersonal awareness to make them work.

As an agency co-founder, my job is not to sell creativity or insights, but to help solve business problems in smarter and relevant ways. I need co-conspirators on the client side who are willing to tackle uncertainty³ and who are looking to believe that the power of creativity is ‘just connecting things’⁴ (thank you Steve Jobs).

This book is also intended to be useful in discussion and in day-to-day management and interactions between marketing, creative and data teams. The data concepts are introduced with proper names and descriptions of types of analysis performed using a range of business intelligence and data visualization tools (phrases sometimes used interchangeably). For example, the ability to group entities such as customers’ behaviours, attributes or product purchases, known as clustering, is as important a concept as the ability to understand the bias introduced when only behaviours, attributes and purchases are entered into the clustering algorithm. In other words, other factors may also be important. That’s why it’s important, when discussing things like machine learning, predictive algorithms and recommendation engines, to understand the boundaries of what these techniques can do and that measures of success are not black and white, but often incremental improvement on where we were before.

The examples I’ve given in this book are all retail and/or B2C enterprises. There’s a reason for that. Retail companies have led the digital revolution and have embraced creativity and data marketing to expand their reach. Consumer-facing businesses have had to deliver exceptional service and experience. As a result, design, marketing, consumer-first and retail-led businesses have done a great job of combining the power of data and creativity. What these retail and consumer brands can teach us is that old truisms

like 'discounts boost sales' or that perception is reality aren't necessarily true. The reader may also notice that the examples in the book are from companies less than 25 years old, which coincides with the availability of the internet to the consumer, but also correlates with a cultural mindset about business, failure and progress.

I interviewed a wide range of companies beyond those that are highlighted here, including companies in telecommunications, transportation, cable, logistics, and manufacturing. Many of these companies have written off their creativity and data marketing programmes as failures and have declined to be included in this book for fear of damaging their business reputation. In the course of my interviews and drafts, however, what I observed was that these programmes were not failures, but were very necessary steps in experimentation and innovation on the journey to a cohesive, next-generation marketing organization. What made these programmes 'failures' in their eyes was based on the criteria by which they defined failure and nothing else. In other words, only they themselves have called it a failure. For example, one company I interviewed began their personalization programme by building a data infrastructure (DMP) combining first- and third-party data to understand consumer preferences and actions for better upsell and content recommendation. Once the DMP was built, they applied analysis techniques to see what factors influenced purchase. The organization expected 'neat' segmentations that grouped people by age, location and types of services (such as men like sports, women like lifestyle content). In reality, they found a number of 'long-tail' consumer segments ('long-tail' refers to the 'tail' of a distribution graph that represents fewer customers existing in the distribution of different types of behaviour). The company wrote off the investment in this programme because they felt they could not MONETIZE these long-tail groups nor could they justify the additional investment in data and machine learning to discover the necessary relationships among factors that impact purchase and loyalty. In other words, success was dependent on the ability to use the outcomes in their established marketing and business processes rather than a way to refine the approach toward personalization. Personalization, by definition, is meant to support smaller cohort groups, even if that is a group of one. By applying a traditional view of understanding consumers, the company lost an opportunity to invest in a programme that is now an expectation of any company dealing directly with consumers. The perceived 'failure' of the programme has made many of these companies reticent in sharing their stories. I respect their

concerns, and hope that once they have achieved commercial success, these companies will be more forthcoming.

Other companies such as GE, IBM and Prudential are also exemplary leaders who have embraced innovation as a marketing function. Organizations like these have 'knowledge management' groups with a large amount of consumer data already. The introduction of big data has allowed them to augment their other business functions including marketing but also operations, sales and production. In these cases, the introduction of innovation (applied creativity), a title given to the design process of transformation, did not have to originate in marketing. Those types of case studies are best provided in the *Harvard Business Review* and other popular literature such as *The Silverlake Project: Transformation at IBM* by Roy A. Bauer *et al*⁵ or *Good to Great* by Jim Collins.⁶ Instead, this book focuses in on business transformation that begins in marketing through the use of both creativity and data. *Data and Creativity in Marketing* delves into the practice of combining data and creativity in marketing, as many of these organizations have transformed their businesses by providing a toolkit for innovation.

In a keynote presentation in New Mexico, Beth Comstock, former CMO and now president of innovation at GE, noted: 'Marketing must bring a different viewpoint to tough problems. The best marketers are the ones who have both the creativity and analytical skills in the right proportion.'

It's no longer a question of if or when, but a matter of how and what.



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Notes

- 1 Wang, Becky, 'Where data and creativity meet: confessions of a quant, Madison Avenue's "Hitman"', *Fast Company*, 6 May 2013 [online] <http://www.fastcocreate.com/1682905/where-data-and-creativity-meet-confessions-of-a-quant-madison-avenues-hitman> [accessed 1 May 2016]
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