

Brands need to stop thinking like brands and become more human

By [Dean Oelschig](#)

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Disruption is dead. Permission is everything. Disruption worked for a while but, at its core, it interrupts. Brands need to become more human and create work that receives permission to communicate with their audiences. These are the four ways that I see this happening in 2018.



Dean Oelschig, founder and MD of Halo.

Micro-influencers will grow

Consumers see through celebrity influencers like new sunglasses. Micro-influencers are everyday people who have greater influence on a smaller group and, naturally, arouse less suspicion. It's difficult for a celebrity to say no to R1 million to promote an insurance company, but a micro-influencer won't sell out and promote anything disingenuous. I foresee marketers raising teams of micro-influencers than paying fortunes for celebrity influencers to promote products they've clearly been paid to promote.

Definition of video quality has changed

Smart people in LA just launched an Instagram agency. 50 million more people use Instagram Stories than ever used Snapchat. 92% of mobile viewers share videos. Desktop and TV viewing increased only 2% in 2017, while mobile video increased 35% and is forecast to grow by 25% and 29% in 2018 and 2019.

[Michel Gondry](#) has directed an 11-minute movie filmed only on an iPhone – just to prove it's possible. The importance, integrity and quality of great ideas won't change, but the production of those ideas will ramp up. Agencies need in-house video production capabilities and clients need to be prepared to publish original, authentic but less-polished videos.

I'm talking 15 second clips, in portrait mode, made by 24-year-olds. And while this doesn't mean quantity over quality, the definition of video quality has changed and it's time for marketers to produce quantity and quality.

Stop with the brand selfies

Social media consumers respond to relevant and authentic content; content that 'tickles their fancy', reinforces their personal values and entrenches their relationship with their followers. Brands need to understand social media isn't about them, it's about their followers.

The micro-production of content, tailored to niche audiences, is becoming possible thanks to the sophistication of AI and smart data. Augmented reality (see: iPhone X) will form part of the mainstream content production landscape. I also expect to see a rise in live streaming and video sharing across WhatsApp for Business (launching in 2018) and Instagram Stories, which already has 250 million users.

The four core factors of customer experience design

Customer experience design must include confidence, value, convenience and personal ideals. Discovery, as an example, is one of few brands that ticks at least three of these boxes. I have confidence that when I need them, they'll be there. The value I receive from Vitality is immense. They've improved convenience by enabling clients to log claims and exercise points via their app. And I think the company aligns to my personal ideals.

Uber answers the first three, but not the fourth. OrderIn ticks all four boxes. Woolworths ticks most. These are brands that win, albeit quite personally, because of their customer experience design and largely, despite their marketing. There isn't anywhere for brands to hide if they don't get these four pillars right.

What agencies need to do

Keeping up with these trends means we, as agencies, need to act fast. At Halo, we already have certain production capabilities in-house, and we're aiming to grow this significantly. We employ 'design thinkers': talented creative people who can solve product, experience and communication problems. And, we've just completed our first VR campaign.

Ideas do still come first though. Whether producing mobile film, VR, AR, product design or animated content, only relevant, insightful and brave ideas can connect with an audience and that's one trend that will never change.

ABOUT DEAN OELSCHIG

Dean Oelschig is the founder of Halo, an indie communication design agency that creates ideas for business growth. Halo is setting out to make below-the-line sexy again. Whether it's design, digital or direct, below-the-line communication based on a brave idea can give business incredible returns.

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