

A year to be bold and other digital marketing predictions

 By [Roan Mackintosh](#)

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Preparations for privacy changes have consumed the minds of marketing leaders in 2021 and those who have put in the work will reap the rewards come 2022 and beyond. But perhaps the biggest winners this year will be those digital marketing leaders who pay attention to their people, and who muster the courage to try new things.



Roan Mackintosh, Incubeta MD, MEA

Incubeta has curated eight strategic predictions for digital marketing leaders for 2022.

1. Tech upgrades and loyalty programmes dominate privacy response

Last year saw the dawning of the privacy-first era and brands are rushing to lay the groundwork for when we go cookieless. We've already done 20 GA4 upgrades just in South Africa and upwards of 60 globally. While GA4 is not the single version of the truth just yet, it's well on its way, although we are still running Google Universal Analytics and GA4 in tandem for the moment as we iron out the data discrepancies.

Other moves to better understand the customer through first-party data include brands implementing loyalty programmes and upgrading CRM technologies. How we handle and track customer data within the new legal boundaries imposed by POPIA and other privacy legislation will remain top of mind throughout the year.

2. Consumer habits have changed and they won't go back

As we predicted in 2020, people flocked to online channels. A year later we can safely say this behaviour will not revert. Not everything has gone smoothly, however, and while security can never be compromised, some poorly designed versions of two-factor authentication have negatively impacted useability. Going into 2022 we believe finding ways to reduce friction will be high on the agenda of digital marketers. However, to make a real difference, this issue should be viewed in conjunction with the overall user experience as well as conversion rate optimization (CRO).

3. People will impact your 2022 agenda more than you anticipated

Work-life balance, productivity and skills shortages will dominate the agendas of marketing leaders in 2022 and we expect it will get worse as the year progresses.

The advantage of playing in the digital space is that you can work from anywhere. It's also one of the biggest risks for companies hoping to attract and retain digital talent. As 2021 progressed and global brands relied more heavily on digital marketing, our already fragile skills pool got smaller. Working for companies paying Dollars and Euros while living in Rands is a big drawback and South African companies understandably haemorrhaged skills, particularly senior and niched technical skills.

4. Check your purpose

For those concerned with skills, it's worth noting that people are no longer happy with just a paycheck and a steady job. We are all searching for a purpose when it comes to our work, and the winners in 2022 (and beyond), will be brands that can clearly define their purpose and values. Not only will they be able to hold onto their skills, but customers will also reward them with their loyalty.

This latest shift in the zeitgeist of a connected, virus-vulnerable global community is a wakeup call for brands. We need to be doing better - socially, environmentally, ethically, and those leaders and brands that can show that they are making changes, will be the ones to emerge stronger.

5. Move fast, move smart

As we predicted for 2021, agility will still be key in 2022. Responding very quickly to social issues and changes in the marketplace can set brands apart and a good example is how some well known global brands quickly reacted to promote social distancing. We can expect this to continue and brands that design their operations and their thinking to embrace agility will win.

6. The rise of Amazon

Amazon was nowhere to be seen locally in 2020, but its ranking in the media plays and brand equity is now definitely in the top five. At the moment Google and Facebook are the advertising powerhouses, but we can expect to see Amazon eat into that dominance going into 2022 and brands will need to look closely at how they will respond to this. In fact, we went so far as to acquire Maze-One which is a full-service Amazon marketplace specialist.

7. South African budgets reflect the growing importance of digital

In a big step away from the past where digital was the poor cousin in the marketing department, more and more brands now have five-year digital strategies with budgets to match. However, there is still a disconnect when it comes to apportioning budget for production, media and above the line. We are still seeing unrealistic performance expectations from digital without the proper budgetary support. Hopefully, this will change when 2023 planning starts later in the year.

8. Don't be timid, fortune will favour the bold in 2022

The final prediction is that those companies that try new things in 2022 will be the winners. Too many brands are resting on their laurels, relying on tried and tested methods and tech they have used for years. How will you ever reach new pockets of customers if you stick to the platforms you are used to? Do you even know the competitive advantage you could enjoy by applying new tech? Let 2022 be the year for innovation and growth.

We are all still off-balance due to the Covid disruption, use this time to try new things - it could very well pave the way for a real performance revolution come 2023.

ABOUT ROAN MACKINTOSH

Managing Director - Africa at Incubeta. Roan joined Incubeta in May 2019 after spending 11 years at WPP's global digital marketing technology and consultancy arm, Acceleration, where he was group business director. Roan's extensive experience as well as his insatiable curiosity have helped hone his skills in digital strategy and mobile advertising, making him a valuable industry commentator.

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