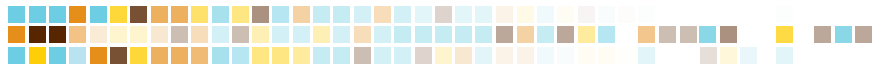


# PERSPECTIVES



A monthly look at what's happening in the ever-changing digital world and beyond.

## From the Editor

Hello and welcome to the February issue of *Perspectives*! Our theme this month: the digital stuff that make us happy, or: things we ♥. In this issue we take a look at how our favorite brands use digital tools to engage their audiences. The entries also provide a glimpse into the personal preferences of the Digital Integration and Innovation team writers: the digital lanes and alleyways they walk in their off time, their guilty pleasures (*Gossip Girl*) and secret weapons. So here we are in full digital nerd regalia — some digital trends, why we like them and recommendations on what you can learn from them.



Lindsey Morel has jumped the cubicle wall from the Strategy and Insights team to join us this month. Her essay offers interesting insights into the rather creepy Justin Bieber phenomenon in *Lessons from Bieber Fever*. Welcome, Lindsey!

We are available to discuss or delve deeper into any of the topics presented here. What you will read in this format of short articles is just a taste of the thought leadership going on at RTC Relationship Marketing. To engage us you can join the conversation online on our website's Sparkblog and on SlideShare (contact info listed below), or send me an email letting me know your thoughts. Additionally, custom briefings are available on any topic in this edition. If you're a client, just contact your Project Manager or Account Manager; otherwise, contact me and we'll work something out. For an ongoing conversation with loads of personality, visit *Treffpunkt*—RTC Relationship Marketing's Digital Integration and Innovations team blog—at <http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com/>.

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Photos courtesy of Flickr Creative Commons: P.1: *LOL Hearts 33* by Windell Oskay, 2009  
P.2: *LOL Hearts 30* by Windell Oskay, 2009



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# Fan-Engaging Approaches to YouTube Copyright Infringements

**Summary:** More Americans visit YouTube than watch the Superbowl, and while the majority of videos are original user-generated content, people do upload videos that are not their own. In the past, YouTube has pulled this copyright-infringement content, usually at the request of the content owner. However, for businesses and networks with older video content, there are alternative strategies to handling copyright infringement that may be better suited to meeting viewer/fan needs and can provide innovative marketing opportunities that are successful and lucrative.

**Rebecca Johnson**

*Strategist*

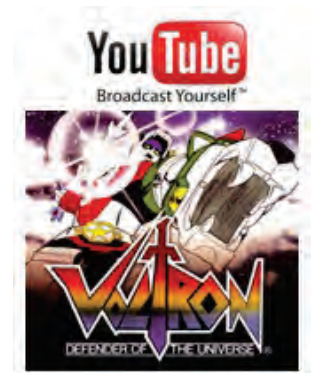
Digital Integration and Innovation

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## Key Information

Inspired by Patton Oswalt's "Wake Up, Geek Culture. Time to Die" piece in the December 2010 *Wired*<sup>1</sup> and bored by holiday season reruns and "there's nothing on TV" doldrums, I decided to discover and rediscover quality shows from the past. My investigation began with a simple YouTube search for *Voltron: Defender of the Universe*.<sup>2</sup> To my surprise, YouTube offered a robust amount of Voltron content, including the entire 59-episode series. Inspired by this find, I searched for more off-the-beaten track cartoons (e.g. *King Arthur and the Knights of Justice*,<sup>3</sup>) older Masterpiece Classics series like *Sharpe's Company*<sup>4</sup> and '90s cult classic remake series *Land of the Lost*.<sup>5</sup>

My searches produced free videos posted in disregard of copyright laws. They had robust levels of views and comments and in most cases users were having intense conversations about the video.



## Implications and Action Items

These rich and engaging YouTube viewing experiences led me to question the current status quo of simply pulling copyrighted content from YouTube, and to develop some alternatives. I wonder if these instances could potentially be turned into marketing and money-making opportunities for brands and companies.

- **Search, find and analyze:** Perform a thorough search of the brand's YouTube inventory: Document viewing statistics, number/quality of comments, the user's other videos, number of subscribers, etc. Understanding how YouTube users are interacting with the content will help you decide how to move forward with instances of copyright infringement.
- **Assess your content's value/demand:** Do YouTube users want to watch your content for free, or are they seriously interested in buying a licensed DVD?
- **Advertise next to the videos:** If users want to buy high-quality editions of the content, then create and deploy "Promoted Video" ads to run on the YouTube pages that already contain your content. The users viewing these pages are already highly engaged with your product and are primed to purchase it if shown how.
- **Join the conversation:** Start an official YouTube profile for the show and begin participating in the video's comments section. Be sure to identify yourself as an official show representative; post relevant, meaningful comments and include links to your official site, where users can purchase the show or related merchandise, or to sites that would be of interest to fans.
- **Create a YouTube channel:** If users want to watch your content for free, create a channel where enthusiasts can watch high-quality versions and share experiences. A good example is World Events Production (WEP), the license holder and distributor of Voltron. WEP tapped into the Voltron YouTube groundswell and created a space where Voltron fans could watch the show, post comments, find out how to purchase Voltron merchandise and share their love for the series.
- **Sponsor existing content:** If a user uploads your content to YouTube, then it's fair to assume they're a fan, and potentially a strong advocate for your show. Instead of "punishing" them by pulling the content, why not reward/empower them by sponsoring or endorsing it? Compensate them for their time with special-edition DVDs, or promote their videos in your site. However the sponsorship manifests, you're sure to keep your superfans happy and potentially spawn some positive word-of-mouth within your fan community.

<sup>1</sup> *Wired*, December 2010: <http://tiny.cc/fafv9>

<sup>2</sup> *Voltron: Defender of the Universe* YouTube Channel: <http://tiny.cc/hv511>

<sup>3</sup> *King Arthur and the Knights of Justice* YouTube video: <http://tiny.cc/x14m7>

<sup>4</sup> *Sharpe* television series Wikipedia entry: <http://tiny.cc/suoq6>

<sup>5</sup> *Land of the Lost* YouTube Video: <http://tiny.cc/hjyny>

## Gossip Girl: 5 Things Brands Can Learn

**Summary:** The popular TV series *Gossip Girl* has debuted a Facebook game that smartly engages with its users. Offering cross-platform content, tying the game to real-time events and rewarding users for knowing the brand, the game is a great example of how companies can encourage users to engage with the brand, by knowing their audience and delivering exactly what that audience wants.

**Michelle Fares**

Associate

Digital Integration and Innovation

Floridian Hoya. Enhancing communication btwn companies and people thru social media, online communities, and cupcakes. Lots of cupcakes. @michellefares

### Key Information

*Gossip Girl* is a television show that follows wealthy teenagers on the Upper East Side of New York City. When it premiered in 2007, the show was an instant hit and set trends for fashion, slang, and pop culture references in its targeted demographic of teenage and young adult women. However, four years in, *Gossip Girl's* viewer base is waning. In an effort to promote its new season and take advantage of the tech-savvy behaviors of its fan base, the show launched the *Gossip Girl: Social Climbing* Facebook game in January 2011.

In the game, users attend events such as parties, club openings, and school events to win points and gain levels. These levels and points unlock new locations, badges and special clothing purchases in the virtual store. Users are also assigned special missions to compete for more points, and have the opportunity to navigate through New York City by selecting certain courses of action. Some actions let users move through events more quickly, but behaving too scandalously can result in getting kicked out and losing points.



### Implications and Action Items

My own experience with the game proved that *Gossip Girl* uniquely understands its fans' interests and behaviors. Since I frequently watch the show with my laptop in hand, creating a Facebook game encourages me to engage with the brand in a medium that I am already using. Offering special challenges that ask me to pull in my other Facebook friends encourages the creation of an online community. The game also ties its events to happenings on the show each week – when one character on the show started interning at a fashion magazine, I began seeing internship events pop up on Facebook. This made me feel even more immersed in the game. And by rewarding me for selecting courses of action or behaviors in the game that *Gossip Girl* characters would take on the show, the game is encouraging my own knowledge of and loyalty to the brand.

*Gossip Girl's* approach has clearly made a positive impression on me and other fans. There are many takeaways for other brands looking to engage users with a Facebook game, including:

- **Offer content in multiple media formats:** Audiences that consume through multiple devices at once, such as laptops, TVs and cell phones, expect brands to be accessible across platforms. Create games that cross tactics.
- **Create urgency:** Constant changes to the point system and “Events” in Facebook games keeps consumers engaged, involved and coming back for more.
- **Tie the game to real events:** Connecting events in Facebook games to events in the real world will give users a sense of immediacy, make the game seem relevant to their lives and encourage them to play along.
- **Encourage users to create a community:** Create a game that requests users to pull in other users or friends, and design elements that makes them want to interact with others, such as team events.
- **Reward users for knowing the brand:** By propagating (hopefully imaginary) *Gossip Girl* behaviors, the game rewards users for knowing the brand. And any company that can influence customer behavior is in a very powerful position.



## Think as a Bride, Do as a Wedding Planner

**Summary:** Lately I've been loving wedding websites and magazines. Their visual layouts, detail-oriented descriptions, how-to sections and user-friendly tools make wedding planning not only easier, but more strategic. Their approach to gathering ideas and explaining outcomes is akin to strategic planning in the marketing industry. How detail-oriented brides and wedding planners approach weddings provides lessons for strategists in any industry.

**Sara Weiner**

*Associate Director*

Digital Integration and Innovation

Yrs of planning, prodding & implementing digital stuff. Philadelphia born 'n' raised. Geeky, athletic and green. Go Big Red!

### Key Information

Wedding planning is quite a process, but brides have a ton of resources at their disposal—wedding planners, fellow brides, websites and magazines. Often it is recommended to brides that they use these resources as idea-gatherers. Brides are instructed to clip magazines, save pictures and take notes on things that have come before, both things they like and things they don't like. Much like marketers, brides are always trying to outdo one another, and yet often they get their best ideas by seeing what others have done before. Two wedding websites that have really brought this approach to life for me are **projectwedding.com** and **weddingwire.com**. They are so user friendly and idea generating that I can't keep myself off of them. Their warehouses of ideas and pictures, all accessible through search and filter options, make brainstorming superbly easy. As easy as it is to find things I like, likewise I can say, "I hate that" or "that would never work with my wedding."

This approach to wedding planning reminds me of the way marketers approach strategy and campaign development. We often start by combing the Web for good ideas and things that have worked. Mood boards might be developed as a starting point for tone and feel. But what may be missing for marketers that the wedding industry has capitalized on are databases of ideas, campaigns, assets, color palettes and photos, all in easy-to-navigate sites and monthly magazines. Another thing the wedding industry does well is hosting open houses where vendors convene and create faux weddings—people can walk around and see what they like and get ideas.



### Implications and Action Items

Formalizing idea gathering in the same manner as the wedding industry might help marketers brainstorm and ideate. Some ways to do this are:

- **Spend time looking:** Each week or month, regardless of your position as a marketer, comb the medium of your choice for ideas, taking note of things you like and dislike.
- **Review existing material:** Utilize sites such as [adverlicious.com](http://adverlicious.com), [adage.com](http://adage.com), [creativity-online.com](http://creativity-online.com) and others that host assets from great marketing campaigns in order to jump-start thinking.
- **Keep your enemies close:** Use competitive monitoring tools to keep an eye on competitive campaigns, offline and online, to continually evaluate ways to differentiate.
- **Save, save, delete:** When gathering things you like, save them all in one place and over time return to the pile and remove items that don't spark ideas anymore or that no longer fit with the "theme" of a product or campaign.
- **Be like your mom:** Every time you see a marketing element you don't like, think about what you would have done differently, and maybe even re-execute it your way.
- **Be creative:** Take a stab at creating a campaign for your favorite or even a fake brand; agencies can take this further by holding event-like open houses for new and existing clients to see the work.

*Photos courtesy of [theperfectpaletteblog.com](http://theperfectpaletteblog.com)*



## Lessons from Bieber Fever

**Summary:** Bieber Fever has struck. With hits like “Baby” and “Never Let You Go” the 16-year-old heartthrob has captured the gaze of preadolescent girls. The Bieber crush allows the preteen girl to imagine her future romantic life in a safe environment, thus filling a void for self-development. Simultaneously, the brand shepherds its consumers into the next stage of maturation by offering the next, adult brand of artist. Marketers can learn from the success of Justin Bieber.

**Lindsey Morel**

*Analyst*

Strategy and Insights

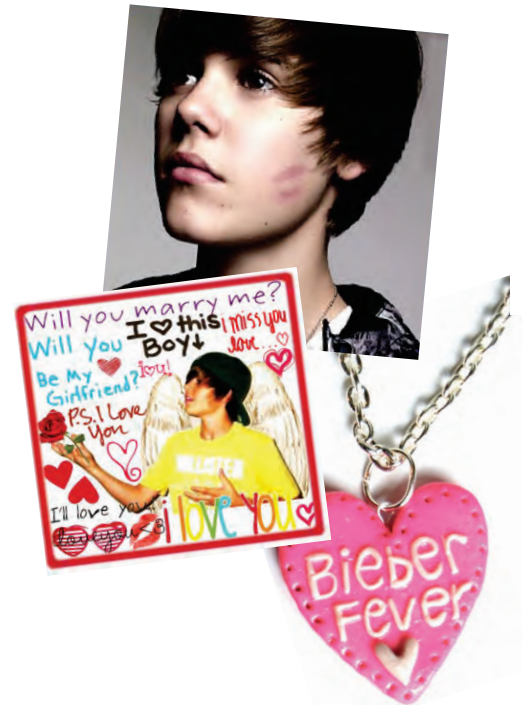
Fanatical people watcher, runner, lifter, doer.  
Eternal optimist.

### Key Information

Throng of prepubescent girls can be heard for miles screaming upon the mere mention of heartthrob Justin Bieber. His name tops Twitter’s most listed, with girls hoping for the day that he’ll reply “@bieberfan42 I love you too girl.” He has over 18 million Facebook fans, his own YouTube channel and is set to release a 3D movie this year. The 16-year-old Canadian has indisputably become a cultural phenomenon.

With each generation, “the boy” has changed: Think David Cassidy, Donny Osmond, New Kids on the Block, N\*Sync. But the cult-like following of preadolescent females remains. Why? Caught between the innocence of childhood fantasy and blunt strike of adult reality, the preteen seeks safety in her rapidly changing world. Enthusiastically belting the lyrics of “One Less Lonely Girl,” Bieber allows her to experiment with her emerging identity as a teenage woman without having the complications of a real partner. He allows preadolescent females to play the role of girlfriend without the risk of a pushy boyfriend or the interface of a Barbie doll.

What happens when these Bieber-loving preadolescent females are ready to transition fully to teenagerhood? They turn to Bieber’s mentor, friend and founder: R&B star Usher. Usher signed Bieber just days after he was discovered on YouTube. He created a sensation that mimicked his own style and mannerisms, thereby creating a brand extension of himself used to shepherd in new fans.



### Implications and Action Items

Marketers must not forget that a 13-year-old girl does not wake up on her birthday magically transformed into a teenager. As demonstrated by Bieber Fever, there is a unique opportunity to target audiences between tangible life stages. This is a particularly effective marketing strategy when employed to transition consumers to a new or extended brand.

- **Create new targets:** Brands can seek to occupy the unique spaces between life stages by listening to consumer needs.
  - E.g. Opportunity: Midlife consumers feel neglected and even offended by advertisers who treat them as if they’re old, something they certainly do not feel.
  - E.g. Application: The Skittles brand identified a similar territory in the transition between child and teen for prepubescent boys. Their work spins reality, turning a dull adult reality on its head with childish play. One commercial follows a man at a job interview as he slyly feeds Skittles to his interviewer using only his beard.
- **Create transitional brands:** Brands seeking to extend their consumer base can look to the ways in which consumers come to know and accept a brand as part of their lives. If it is an emotionally challenging transition, the brand should consider offering a safe brand introduction.
  - E.g. Opportunity: Drug treatments that require consumers to step out of their comfort zone to treat (injections, infusions) could benefit by preparing treaters to move from their current care (a daily tablet) to the more aggressive care.
  - E.g. Application: Victoria’s Secret Pink Collection ushers in teenage girls to its more risqué corsets and lace by introducing the brand to them at a younger age with cute, flirty wear. The bright collection allows the teenage wearer to celebrate her body for herself rather than a man. It is a safe and age-appropriate introduction to the Victoria’s Secret core brand, one that has effectively established brand loyalty.





# The Pittsburgh Penguins: Customer Engagement from My Favorite Hockey Team

**Summary:** When it comes to customer engagement, few products can rival the loyalty that sports teams have created with their fans. The Pittsburgh Penguins are a highly relevant example of how teams build loyalty by using technology to connect with customers (fans). The Pens use mobile, video, Web and social media to surprise and delight their fans, seed demand within their future fan base and inspire fan devotion by humanizing their players.

**Kara Reinsel**  
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Digital Integration and Innovation

Digital marketer and online business strategist. DMV local. Art, food and fashion enthusiast, diehard Pittsburgh Penguins and Steelers fan.

## Key Information

The Penguins won their third Stanley Cup in 2009. According to *Forbes*, the Pittsburgh Penguins are the ninth most valuable franchise in the NHL, valued at \$235 million.<sup>1</sup> When it comes to merchandise, three of the top five bestselling jerseys belong to Penguins players – Sidney Crosby (#1), Evgeni Malkin (#3) and Marc-Andre Fleury (#4).<sup>2</sup> In addition, Pens fans have been ranked as the most fanatical based on regular season home-game attendance, television ratings and merchandise sales.<sup>3</sup>

One of the reasons behind the Pens' devoted and sizeable fan base is the strategic use of digital tools. The team focuses on using technology that humanizes the players, makes games more accessible and capitalizes on technology their fans already use.

For the past four years, the players have hand-delivered tickets to 30 season-ticket holders. Every player is accompanied by a film crew and the videos are posted on the Penguins' website. The Pens' use of video offers a way to surprise and delight their fans and allow everyone to participate virtually in an experience that is in reality limited to a few people. In addition, the ticket delivery videos offer the opportunity to humanize the players, which fosters even more fan loyalty. According to player Sidney Crosby, "This is something we do every year; since we started doing it, it's been enjoyable to meet some of the fans and thank them personally... it's a chance to say thank you."<sup>4</sup> The ticket delivery and accompanying video establish a personal and deep connection among the fans, the players and the team.

As a way to connect with the large student community in Pittsburgh, the Penguins partner with American Eagle (AE) to offer the American Eagle Student Rush ticket program, which uses mobile technology to offer discounted tickets to students for every home game. The program capitalizes on young adults' propensity to text; students text "RUSH" to 32623 to receive ticket alerts and to be entered to win two free tickets. The tickets are priced at \$25, which helps the Penguins build demand within a fan base that would normally not be able to afford to go to a game. Tom McMillan, Penguins VP of Communications, said, "The most important part of Student Rush is building a connection with young fans. The program has been a tremendous success and has helped us build a consistently strong fan base for the years to come, not to mention it helps enhance the crowd inside the arena."<sup>5</sup> Finally, Penguins players often deliver pizzas to the students as they wait in line for the tickets.

## Implications and Action Items

Successful use of technology to build customer engagement depends on two key factors.

- **Leverage the right digital tools:** Avoid using technology that your target customers don't use or have not adopted in large numbers. The Penguins capitalized on students' heavy texting behavior with the AE Student Rush; as a result, the program has been a success. Marketers can use tools such as comScore to identify customer technology usage.
- **Offer unique value:** The Penguins make robust use of video on their website so that fans can build a connection with the team by watching a full spectrum of content that is not available elsewhere, such as the ticket delivery videos, an encyclopedic collection of player and coach interviews and feature stories about the players' lives off the ice.

<sup>1</sup> *Forbes*, "NHL Team Values 2010," December 1, 2010

<sup>2</sup> Yahoo! Sports, "Top 20 best-selling NHL jerseys: thanks, Winter Classic," February 13, 2010

<sup>3</sup> *Forbes.com*, "The NHL's Best (And Worst) Fans," December 17, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Penguins.NHL.com, "Pens Make Special Delivery to Season Ticket Holders," September 10, 2010

<sup>5</sup> *The Pitt News*, "Student Rush offers kids a chance to attend Penguins games," October 6, 2010





# NPR Digital Media: A Model for Digital Innovation Strategy

**Summary:** Everyone talks about using less-expensive digital technologies for innovation, but few brands act on it. National Public Radio (NPR) has made incredible use of blogs, podcasts and other apps to increase reach and build loyalty with a whole new generation of listeners. Its podcast/Web-only offerings offer lessons for all of us in how to extend your brand through digital innovation.

**Carlen Lea Lesser**

VP/Director

Digital Integration and Innovation

Connector of people, ideas and info.  
Marketer, geek, blogger, baker, tea drinker,  
NPR junky and artist. @carlenlea

## Key Information

NPR is just not the type of organization you think of when people say, “cutting edge,” “nimble,” and “innovative” – at least it wasn’t until recently. What’s been making me happy lately are NPR podcasts. NPR was at the forefront of creating original content and releasing it as a podcast. They started in 2005,<sup>1</sup> when most media outlets were still trying to figure out what to do with podcasting. Over the past year there has been a bevy of articles about how podcasts like *Monkey See* and Web properties like *All Songs Considered* are drawing a whole new audience and changing NPR’s brand perceptions.

In addition to its efforts online and in podcasting, NPR created a stunning and unique iPad app that allows listeners to do more than just listen to stories. It encourages users to engage with the material,<sup>2</sup> and again works to shift any lingering perceptions that NPR is not a cutting-edge media outlet. In addition to the iPad app, NPR recently released this same design as a browser-based app that works with the Google Web browser, Chrome.



## Implications and Action Items

Looking at NPR’s actions in utilizing digital media to expand its reach and shape perceptions with an entirely new audience without alienating the core, one could easily think of the Kanter Innovation Pyramid.<sup>3</sup> This is where others can learn from what NPR has done and use them as a model for innovation in the Digital Age.

- **Determine foundations:** Even when you are trying to innovate and find new ways to extend your reach, you need to know what your foundations are and invest appropriately there. If you alienate your most loyal customers, your innovation doesn’t increase reach – it just fills a leaky bucket.
- **Leverage your talent:** Don’t assume your young intern is the key to your digital innovation success. *All Songs Considered* was based on Bob Boilen’s 18 years as director of NPR’s news program *All Things Considered*. Boilen paid attention to the fact that listeners to the news program were interested in the short music snippets that he programmed between news stories. Beyond big-ticket items like *All Songs Considered*, NPR even has its Audience Insights & Research Group sharing what they learn with the world on their blog: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/gofigure/>.
- **Build on success:** Good digital innovation strategy should be good strategically. Don’t begin by investing huge amounts of your budget in a crazy idea with no foundations. Determine what the measures of success will be, and the potential return, before investing heavily in resources or out-of-pocket expenses. When you see success, then you can continue to invest and bring things to life. Innovation should be iterative, not all-or-nothing.
- **Risk failure:** To be truly innovative, you have to be willing to risk failure. Failure is a key step in digital innovation; you have to be able to learn from it. The key is to recognize when things are not working and quickly determine if additional investment will bring success. If not, then move on to new ideas.

<sup>1</sup> <http://tiny.cc/z0445>

<sup>2</sup> More Fun Facts About NPR iPad Early Adopters. <http://tiny.cc/jvnru>

<sup>3</sup> Lessons Not Learned About Innovation. <http://tiny.cc/2pb4p>





## About RTCRM

RTC Relationship Marketing (RTCRM) is a full-service direct marketing and relationship marketing agency based in Washington, D.C., in the heart of Georgetown, with an additional office in New York City. RTCRM boasts more than 40 years' worth of innovative, targeted solutions that grow its clients' brands and help them forge lasting, valuable relationships with their customers. What distinguishes RTCRM is its unique ability to analyze data and research on both a rational and emotional level. RTCRM's clients include major brands in the telecom, technology, pharmaceutical and other business sectors, such as AARP, BlackRock, Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk.

To learn more about RTCRM, please visit [www.rtcrm.com](http://www.rtcrm.com) or follow the Twitter feed @rtcrm.

## About the Digital Integration and Innovation Team

The RTCRM Digital Integration and Innovation team is tasked with keeping track and making sense of the ever-changing digital world. It's our job to understand the nuances of how and why different types of people use technology and what that tells us about them. More importantly, it's our job to help our clients apply this knowledge to better communicate with their customers. We help clients translate business goals into marketing campaigns that build relationships with customers. In the 21st century, understanding how and why someone uses technology is as important as understanding where they live, what gender they are and how old they are. That's where we come in. From ensuring that technographics are considered in the research phase, to tactical plans that align digital, print and broadcast tactics, we work with clients and internal partners to make sure it all works.

It's not about what's cool. It's about what's smart.

**Treffpunkt**, Digital Integration and Innovation Team Blog: <http://rtctreffpunkt.blogspot.com/>

