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Strategic Insights On:

Home Building

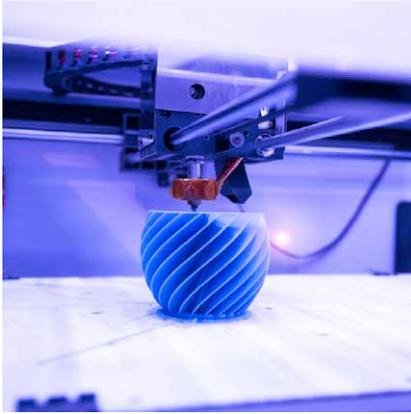
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Home Building

Constructing sturdy relationships between architects, designers and builders and those looking for their dream home, we've shaped strategic, innovative campaigns from the ground up. From open houses to model tours, warm leads, contracts and closings; the ethnography of the homebuyer is evolving rapidly from off to online.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to the residential real estate industry. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at info@evokad.com.



HOW 3D PRINTING IS CHANGING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

If you look up 3D printing on the Internet, you will see that just about anything can be printed, from shoes to cars, prosthetics and, in the near future, they will print human organs for transplants. So, why are we not printing houses?

In his Ted Talk, University of Southern California professor, Behrokh Khoshnevis, creator of Contour Crafting, said, "If you look around yourself, pretty much everything is made automatically today—your shoes, your clothes, home appliances, your car. The only thing that is still built by hand are these buildings." Several companies around the world are working tirelessly to change this.

The Basics of 3D Printing

The process of printing in 3D starts with an electronic model of what you'd like to print, accomplished by creating the model with special software or by scanning an object and then printing a copy of it. Google and Microsoft are working on technology that will allow you to take a 2D photo, which will then create the model for a 3D printer.

Building one layer on top of another layer until the object is completed is the simplest way to explain 3D printing. And, since high-quality 3D printers can use almost any substrate, from plastic to soil or even concrete, many envision bringing a large 3D printer to a job site one day in the near future, plugging it in and printing out a house.

Current Changes to the Building Industry

Every part of a construction project is custom made to meet the needs of the end user and the constricts of land being built on. Sometimes, a particularly shaped part is needed, and a 3D printer makes it easier and less expensive to produce. Some engineers estimate that using this technology will reduce the cost to build a home up to 50% due to reduced costs for construction materials and lower labor costs.

These printers are very accurate and can produce items with lower materials usage and little to no waste. Green construction can be realized by using less lumber and less resources. Project planning is greatly improved by using the 3D printer to create models of the structures before actually swinging a hammer, saving time and avoiding delays, minimizing problems before the build.

Limitations of 3D Printing

The largest limitation of using 3D printing in the construction field is the cost of building a printer that can print very large structures, cost prohibitive to most contractors. The printer is often used to print items offsite like walls and floors, transported to the job site and assembled by hand with other materials.

The printer also only prints with one material, so other materials must be assembled by hand to make it all work. The printing makes the most sense currently by printing small items, custom pieces, special materials and one-off projects that otherwise would be cost prohibitive in the traditional way. Regulations are hard to control and it is hard to pass inspections — because there are so many ways and materials to print with, quality control is an issue and could end costing more in the end.

Not So Distant Future

Currently, engineers and architects see this technology as another tool they can use to make the building process easier for them for specific portions of their projects. The industry isn't quite ready to utilize a 3D printer to build an entire structure at this point; however, all new engineers and architects should be learning 3D programming processes to keep pace with the evolution of the building industry.

The largest building made using a 3D printer is located in China. In their modern construction, they use 3D printers to print the core materials and assemble the pieces on site by hand. Still, they claim the 3D construction applications are saving both time and money. In Amsterdam, they have been researching utilizing a 3D printer to fabricate a steel bridge, and construction is set to begin this year.

In Australia, they recently unveiled a tree house that was created fully using a 3D printer — they claim there is no reason they could not also print a full-size home. The thought that 3D printers could help under-developed countries all across the world and provide housing for so many that have never had it before exemplifies that the future for the construction industry holds great possibilities that we never thought possible before.



WHAT DO MILLENNIALS WANT IN A HOME AND HOW DO I SELL IT TO THEM?

Millennials are currently the largest group of home buyers in the market and are changing the industry. If you want to sell your homes you need to understand what millennials want in a home.

This generation is growing up. They are beginning to start families and want to invest in a home. Most in this age group will be first-time buyers and are very financially savvy—they want to keep their payments within their monthly budgets. They most likely grew up with parents that were affected by the home crash and are wanting to buy a home that will not break the bank.

This generation has also grown up with smart devices, so they are shopping for home choices on the Internet prior to seeking a professional's help. Once they find something they like, they will contact a real-estate professional mostly for help in completing contracts and negotiations—less for finding the house and more to facilitate the transaction. Real estate agents can also expect that the millennial will negotiate their commission rates and ask for it to be discounted on both sides. This generation is looking to stretch their dollars in any way they can.

Where Do They Want to Live?

Millennials are working from home, so commuting times are not as big of an issue as they once were. They are looking for a location in the suburbs—moving away from the city due to wanting to start a family and the cost of city living seems to be the trend. Prices in the suburban areas tend to be more affordable for this generation, so this is where they are choosing to live.

Realtor.com analyzed search data from August 2016 to February 2017 and found that the top 10 cities for millennial home buyers were: Salt Lake City, Miami, Orlando, Seattle, Houston, Los Angeles, Buffalo, Albany, San Francisco, and San Jose.

Home Buying Trends for Millennials

Millennials are looking for certain things in home ownership. Here are some of the most popular trends:

- Buying homes to make room for their dogs and their growing families. They are looking for outdoor spaces and homes with four bedrooms.
- Entertaining is important. Outdoor grills, decks, pools, and an open floor plan are all important features. This generation no longer wants the formal dining rooms and living rooms that their parents did. They want more open and usable space. Large windows that open and overlook nice views and large doors that open to let the outside in are great selling points.
- Technology is very important. Lots of outlets to charge devices, strong cell phone service, and wireless Internet are major factors in their home decision.

- Preference for homes that are ready to move in. They work a lot and do not have time to make changes and remodel a home. This is good news for new home builders.
- Waiting longer to enter into home ownership. Often times they are skipping the smaller starter home and buying a larger, more luxurious home later on.
- Community is very important. They want to socialize and interact with their neighbors. A community that has shared spaces like parks, gyms, club houses, and community pools is a great selling point.
- Energy efficient, “green” homes that help the environment are a huge plus.

Design Characteristics

This generation is looking for different things than older generations. They want more basic, low maintenance homes. They do not want a lot of work at home, so they look for fake fire places, faux wood floors, and smaller yards. They do not have rules on what is proper and do not want formal spaces—a more open concept is more appealing.

Industrial and farm house looks with splashes of color are most popular design looks now. Comfortable and functional furniture are more important than just stylish looks. With the help of websites like Pinterest, Houzz and Etsy, this customer is looking for what they want and getting ideas from these sites. When they meet with their designer, the decision-making process goes quickly. They just want the designer to guide them and make their vision happen.

Millennial Home Buyer Statistics

The millennial generation is representing about 45% of all home loans currently being processed, so home builders should find creative ways to attract this generation. Starter homes are in short supply, and the prices on homes are rising. When a home goes up for sale it is not on the market for long.

Millennials will be looking for different options for their home buying experience, and this is where new home builders can attract them with the right home. The challenge that millennials have right now is that the home prices are rising, and rents are rising, too. It is harder and harder for millennials to save for a home. The best news for millennials is the low interest rates being offered. These low rates will open up more possibilities for this new home buyer.



IS YOUR HOME HURTING YOUR HEALTH? THE IMPACT OF GREENER LIVING ON YOUR WELLBEING

A shift towards non-toxic, green or more sustainable living has caused many of us to re-evaluate everything from our bath and beauty products to the kinds of cars we drive. But, what about our homes? Could the place we spend so much of our time in be hurting our health? Today, countless Americans live in “unhealthy” homes with no idea how their living environment is affecting them and their families.

What is a Healthy Home?

At its most basic level, a healthy home is one that is free of toxins, free of safety hazards and energy efficient. Homes that are not dry, well-ventilated or free of pests can cause health issues like asthma, lead poisoning and injuries. Homes that are not properly insulated use excess energy to keep temperatures at comfortable levels, costing homeowners money and negatively impacting the environment.

So, what can you do about your home’s health? Here are a few ways homes are growing greener and healthier today, as well as things you can do right now to improve your home’s healthy score.

New Home Building Trends

Home builders are projecting that by 2020, 60 percent of all homes they build will be green, healthy homes. This includes homes with improved air flow, reduced chemicals, better A/C filters and whole home water treatment systems as an answer to consumers looking for healthy options. With Millennials entering the home buying market in larger quantities in the next few years, these features are likely to become even more in demand.

Interior Design

When it comes to creating a healthy home, interior design features including indoor gardens, metal roofs and efficient kitchens are a few key areas of focus. Many would agree that a healthy home starts in the kitchen. In fact, people that had a kitchen remodel were surveyed and, once their kitchen remodel was completed, over a third of them said they started living a healthier life after their new kitchen. This is because they started cooking more and getting more excited about healthier options, filling their new kitchens with organic foods and produce.

Affordable Housing

Fannie Mae recently started the Healthy Housing Awards Initiative to provide financial incentives for investors buying homes that include healthy options in multifamily rental properties. These incentives are for better air quality, encouraging physical activity like playgrounds and gardens in the common areas, an attempt to decrease health issues and create more sustainable communities.

HUD also started a healthy home initiative to protect families from health and safety hazards in affordable housing. They are offering grants to organizations that help create healthy living in affordable housing communities.

Non-Toxic Cleaning Products

There are countless harmful toxins hiding in your favorite home cleaning solutions. One of the most basic, yet most important steps you can take in making your home healthier is to switch out your cleaning products for greener options, or even make your own cleaning agents from baking soda and vinegar.

Water Filtration

Although about 90 percent of homes in America have safe drinking water, it is always a good idea to get a water purification or filtration system to remove contaminants like lead and radon. The system will also improve the taste of the water, which would promote more consumption. People with low immune systems would greatly benefit from a water filtration system to lower the amount of chemicals they ingest.

Air Purification

Toxic Fire Retardants are a big problem in homes due to many products being treated with these chemicals, including mattresses, furniture and electronics. This fire retardant is a carcinogen and is in the air that we breathe and can be absorbed through our skin. A good air purifier in your home will help to reduce these and similar toxins in your home. You can also choose to replace your mattresses and furniture with organic options.

No step is too small when it comes to making your home greener and safer for you and your family. For a comprehensive list of easy measures you can take to create a healthier home, be sure to read through the Surgeon General's checklist.



SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING – A STRATEGY FOR BETTER RESULTS

When a user searches a term on Google, they expect the search engine to deliver the best and most accurate results possible. More importantly, Google wants to provide the best experience for the user, so there's a lot that goes on in the backend of that search in less than a second. To compute the results for "flight to New York," Google has to consider which keywords are most important and produce results based on a website's content, authority on the subject, usage data, and much, much more.

It would be a behemoth of a task to go through every time. Luckily, Google employs search engine marketing tactics to find, and even predict what terms users are seeking. Search engine marketing is what advertisers engage to increase their site's visibility on the search engine results page (SERP) for more traffic, hopefully leading visitors to buy. But how does Google sift through millions of pages to find the one you're looking for? Digital marketing separates the lower quality links from the higher quality ones through two main categories: search engine optimization and paid advertising.

The Difference Between SEO and Paid Advertising

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is using unpaid methods to have a higher rank in search engine listings. Otherwise known as organic search, it largely relies on the use of relevant keywords and html tags in a content-rich site for a high search results ranking. Other ways to gain credibility include getting other websites to link to your site (backlinks) and making your site navigable across all devices (responsive development). The downside to only using SEO is that it can take a long time for changes to take effect, and you're also up against all the other sites vying for attention in the same keyword space.

For businesses willing to invest in more immediate results, paid or pay-per-click advertising is the way to go. According to Wordstream, Google earns approximately \$32.2 billion in advertising revenue, which is roughly 97 percent of its total revenue. Many advertisers view it as worth the extra bump in competitive and noncompetitive phrases in return for more traffic. Google AdWords implements the most popular pay-per-click model. Once Google validates your site as relevant, with the keywords you've chosen, and your ad is useful for users, advertisers compete in a bidding auction for position in the paid advertising space. Then, once your ad has been accepted and clicked, a small fee is paid to Google. Done effectively, this is a small price to pay for the higher possibility of a profit.

Should You Use SEO or Paid Advertising?

Understanding the effectiveness of each search engine marketing tactic, this brings the question: which one should you use? In general, organic SEO is a must for all businesses to start building a presence across the web and to be indexed by search engines. Depending on the type of industry your business is in, it may be virtually impossible to compete for attention without the use of paid advertising.

Using the “flight to New York” example from earlier, the first page yields pay-per-click advertisements at the top, a location based widget box and finally organic search results ‘below the fold’. With more aggressive methods reserved for crowded categories like travel and shopping, pay-per-click can make even more of noticeable difference in more niche categories. That being said, organic SEO and paid advertising, when used together, can be powerful tools. For businesses first attempting search engine marketing, working with Google’s complex and ever-changing algorithms can be a tricky field to navigate. Having an advertising agency like evok on your side, with knowledge of the ins and outs of search engine marketing, will make rising up the search engine results page easier.

Evok and Effective Search Engine Marketing

At evok, we employ a holistic SEO approach and paid advertising tactics tailored to our clients in a variety of industries every day. When Google changes their algorithm, we’ll be one of the first to know, as we consistently hone in on what is successful for our clients. Our client NMEDA (www.nmeda.com) is a great example of how we have our finger on the pulse of the ever-changing search engine marketing landscape.

NMEDA Responsive Website

In April 2011, NMEDA averaged 34 organic visits per month. After an overhaul of their site, that included a strong and constantly monitored SEO strategy and renewed focus to its audience as well as a mobile-friendly design, the numbers improved impressively. As of March 2015, the NMEDA site now boasts an average of 5,900 organic search visits per month. Our robust content marketing strategy, with monthly keyword optimized blog posts and improved social media presence for NMEDA, has made for successful, results-producing work.

The Keywords to Know

Pairing the best, most helpful sites to users is what keeps Google the number one search engine. Taken in August 2015, Google’s comScore is a cool 64 percent while others trail behind by 20.3 and 12.7 percent. When your site offers valuable information and is easy to navigate for visitors, both your business and Google benefit from that positive user experience. But, to have the best chance at high visibility, you should employ both SEO and pay to play with pay-per-click advertising. In the time you read this blog, you can be assured tweaks have been made to Google’s algorithm, changing the way the results return. Rather than going through the steps by yourself, unsure of which options will yield the best results, trust an advertising agency that has grown with digital marketing and knows how to implement it well. With evok, you have an agency you can depend on that understands your business needs and has what it takes to make it thrive.

Sources

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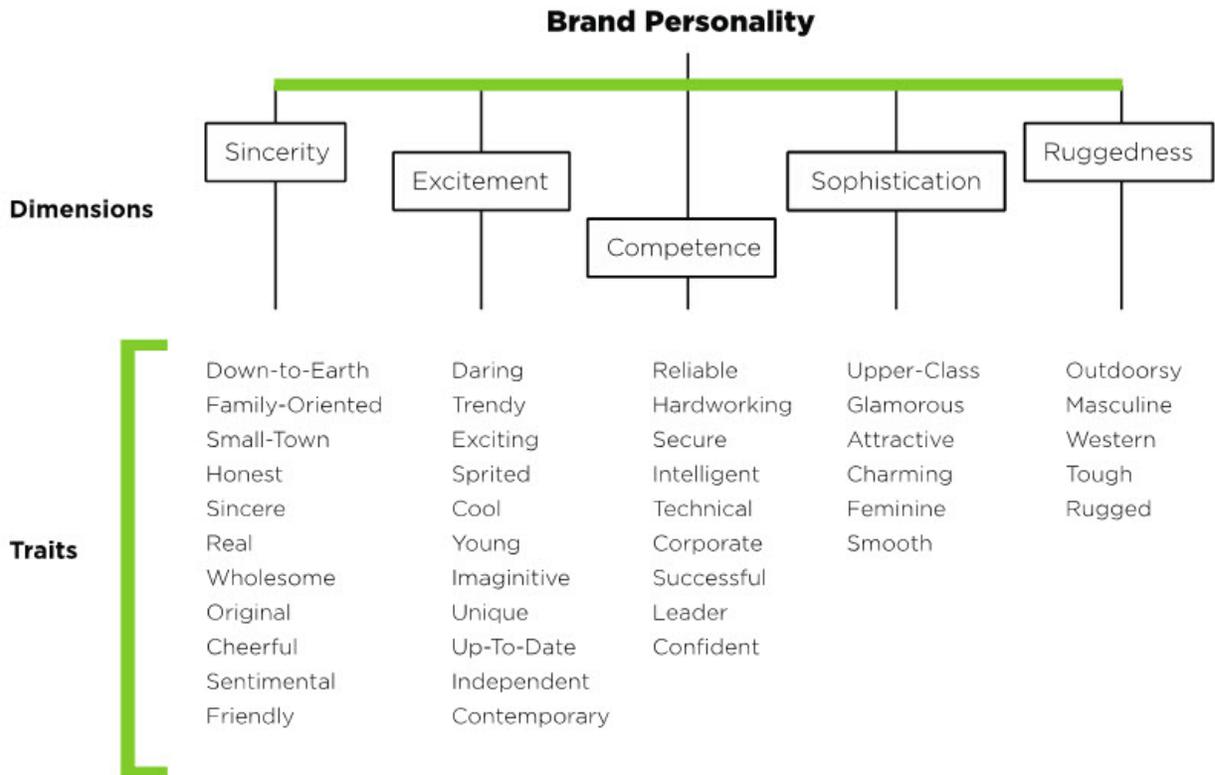
BRAND PERSONIFICATION: HUMANIZING THE BRAND

Since the start of modern advertising in the late 1800's, the method of persuasion has been at the core of all commercially communicated messages. The evolved marketing landscape and a technologically advanced society have made a significant impact on how people are persuaded by brands today. Once persuaded only by rational factors invoked by advertisers, today people are persuaded emotionally through immersive marketing that employs consumer behavior modification.

With a massive increase in brands competing for premium visibility and adoption in a variety of industry categories, connecting with their intended audience requires more than a “features and benefits” sort of approach. Moreover, people are savvier and more socially connected than they ever were before. They are able to easily tap into their peer influencer network of friends or various online resources to gain valuable and real-time insights and data on a brand. Successful brands understand this quite well and are willing to invest in developing relationships with their audience through two-way brand conversations. The result is brand adoption, advocacy, loyalty and evangelism.

In sales, it is often stated that people do business with people they know, like and trust. With marketing being the gateway to sales, it makes sense that the same truism would apply. Today, people connect with brands they know, like and trust. According to Business2Community, 80 percent of social media users prefer to connect with brands through Facebook, and 77 percent of business-to-consumer companies acquired customers from Facebook. However, to accomplish this, a brand must develop new and personally relevant ways to be known, liked and trusted by their audience.

This more personal and emotive method of marketing requires a foundation of deep research using demographics, psychographics, ethnographics, technographics, SWOT and PEST analyses in order to deeply understand the audience. Qualitative and quantitative research is an important starting point, but many marketing and social marketing experts also subscribe to the theory that brands must harness their human characteristics in order to connect with their human audience. This is accomplished by breaking down the brand DNA to several sections, which together form its personality. Stanford's Professor of Marketing, Jennifer L. Aaker, suggests that brands have five dimensions of personality – sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness, each one with their specific traits.



Once a brand is clearly personified and a foundation of research established, the process of connecting it with its intended audience is much akin to matchmaking. Modern marketing dictates that successful brands deliver on the needs of society as opposed to convincing people they need a product or service they don't. Brands should also make the audience feel something beyond what it communicates in literal form. Using brand to consumer matchmaking techniques, brands first define their human characteristics then create a strategy, which ultimately allows them to target and emotionally connect with their audience through a creative vehicle.

Here are some basic steps in establishing brand personification:

Take your brand's mission and values into consideration. How do they shape the framework of this humanized brand?

1. Is your brand tough or gentle, male or female?
2. If your brand were a celebrity or well-known figure, who would it be?
3. If your brand could speak, what would it say and how would it say it?
4. Use key research data and insights to determine the personality of the brand's target audience.
5. Determine multiple levels of compatibility and incompatibility.
6. Make any necessary adjustments to the brand personality.
7. Build a targeted strategy, which first identifies the brand's compatible counterparts and makes a match.
8. The second part of the strategy is to communicate the brand personality creatively and effectively so as to elicit and positive emotional response.