

INSIGHTS

A Glimpse of Our Strategic Digital Thinking

Time Waits for No One

Technology for Good

—

Who Do You Choose to
Share Your Life With?



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Time Waits for No One

Thoughts on the 1 Year Anniversary of COVID-19

While theoretical physicist Albert Einstein taught us about special relativity by proving that time slows down or speeds up depending on how fast something moves relative to another object, COVID-19 certainly provided us with new revelations about the passage of time. It will soon mark a year since the virus surged and lockdowns began. While most agree that our digital lives have accelerated by at least 5 years, few would argue that as *human beings*, we have lost the most traditional sense of timekeeping.

Catapulting from casual Fridays to work-from-home mandates, from the manufacture of beer to an overnight transition to hand sanitizer, from the sexiness of ruby lipstick to the safety of masks, from fast delivery expectations to worries about transportation, logistics and supply chain shortages, we have stepped into a new world, framed with different concerns. If you've endured COVID on your own, these 12 months may feel like a decade—even if business has changed so quickly that 48 hours suddenly represents *long-term* planning.

According to the website goodreads.com, there are over 10,000 quotes about time from notable people throughout history. While it would be a fun parlor game to see who could cite the greatest number of expressions about time, perhaps ancient wisdom said it best: "Time waits for no one." While the earliest record of this phrase is dated at 1225, the effects of COVID-19

have certainly unsettled our notions of time and connections in a work-from-home world.

Benjamin Franklin reminds us that "Lost time is never found again," which is perhaps a profound statement about life during a pandemic. However, the ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastus, who succeeded Aristotle in 323 B.C. as the head of the Lyceum, stated: "Time is the most valuable thing a man can spend." Interestingly, that particular expression of time is at the heart of the definition of a meaningful brand and its Share of Life® with a customer.

While some dispute the scale of progress now, there's little question that technology's pace is ever forward. Of course, we all must be ready for anything in 2021. Yet, as the various vaccines make their way around the world, we can all look ahead with hope that much suffering will end, and we can get on with the business of building a thriving world for all. Keep in mind, Albert Einstein not only devised the equation: $E = mc^2$, he also said: "*Imagination is more important than knowledge.*" ✖



Sebastian Jespersen,
CEO and Founder of Vertic



Technology for Good

How the COVID Era has changed the role of tech
to unite humanity

The start of a year has historically always been a special time; a time when new ideas, ambitions, hopes, and trends for the year are laid out. The beginning of 2021 is like no other in the history of new beginnings. It is not just a new beginning but a total reset, which notably is the theme of the World Economic Forum 2021. A beginning where the world can begin to recover by rolling out vaccines. A beginning where we as human beings are united by our shared sadness and anxiety for the unknown. A beginning where sprouts of hope, just like the early blooms of spring, are once again filling us with happiness, warmth, and optimism. A new beginning

that is reflected in the start of a new administration in the United States with the re-joining of the Paris Agreement and the WHO. In this time, we are seeing an exponential acceleration in the focus on climate, and it is a promising beginning for all global goals – even when the entire world is still grappling with COVID-19.

It is reassuring to see thought leaders, like President Biden and BlackRock's CEO, Larry Fink, approach our world's issues with such urgency and ambition. In his 2021 letter to CEOs, Fink wrote "I believe that the pandemic has presented such an existential crisis – such a stark reminder of our fragility – that it has driven

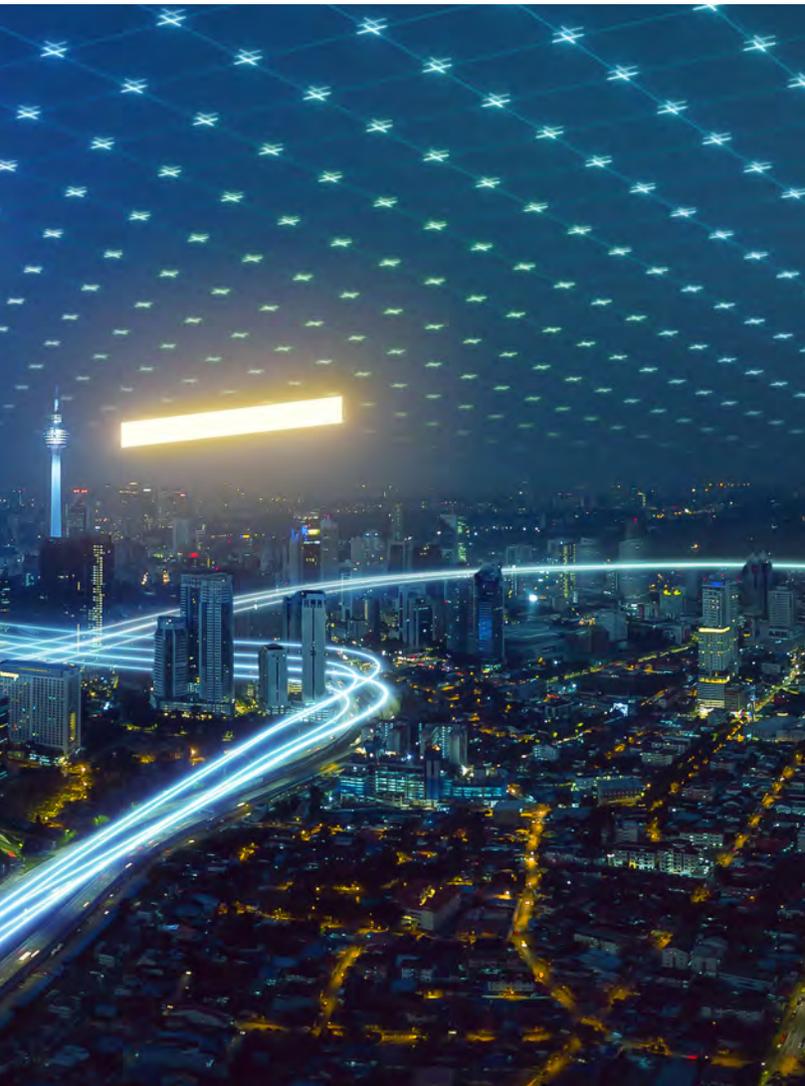


us to confront the global threat of climate change more forcefully and to consider how, like the pandemic, it will alter our lives. It has reminded us how the biggest crises, whether medical or environmental, demand a global and ambitious response”.³

It is in this environment, that ‘technology for good’ is becoming the new normal. We need to ensure in our reflections on the exceedingly difficult year that has passed that we acknowledge the opportunities which 2020 has brought to us in the way we live, work, engage, collaborate, and take care of each-other. This means that during 2020 we have individually and globally adapted new ways of living. The promise of technology has always energized the

human imagination through glimpses of what might be possible. Without question, 2020’s acceleration into remote work, telemedicine, eCommerce and stronger digital reliance has proved to be a watershed for how we all will accept and use new technologies from now on—from driverless delivery vehicles to connected medical devices. Yet, it has also caused us to consider how society can shape technology to create better lives—driven by human and humanitarian needs.

While many are concerned about the disruption new technology may bring—in jobs, in ways of life, in security, and in social change, technological innovation, guided by business leaders and policy makers, has consistently proven to make a positive



The promise of technology has always energized the human imagination through glimpses of what might be possible.

difference to our lives over the course of history. These times are no different, and the application of technology for good will have a huge role in 'building back better'. In June 2020, António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that "as we build back better from the pandemic, in an inclusive and sustainable way, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve the world's goals in a more meaningful and lasting way". This beginning will no doubt be the biggest opportunity in history to build back better.⁴

The idea of 'building back better' between now and 2030 – echoed in the words of many, including Klaus Schwabe of the World Economic Forum – is that businesses

are not ready to settle for a "return" or a "rebuild" after Covid-19. Instead, the world is striving for a "reset." This reset is a transformation to a different way of doing business, measured not only through the narrow lenses of profit and GDP growth, but through other important benchmarks that will affirm the moral strength and resilience of the private sector. This was the conversation at late January's World Economic Forum, aptly named the "Great Reset". The Davos conversations centered around five topics which were discussed in a united, inclusive, virtual setting, where the voices of people across the world, from heads of state and government, the private sector, civil society leaders, global media and youth leaders. The conversation topics include:

- Designing cohesive, sustainable, and resilient economic systems.
- Driving responsible industry transformation and growth.
- Enhancing stewardship of our global commons (the High Seas, the Deep-Sea Bed, the Atmosphere, Antarctica, and Outer Space).
- Harnessing the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (or the ongoing automation of traditional

manufacturing and industrial practices, using modern smart technology).

■ Advancing global and regional cooperation.⁵

And from a business perspective, perhaps no one expresses the values of a great reset better than Larry Fink, Chairman and CEO of BlackRock: “The public expectations of your company have never been greater... Every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society. Without a sense of purpose, no company, either public or private, can achieve its full potential.”⁶

As stated at the start of this article, 2021 has been full of unprecedented moments within just its first month. It follows that the acceleration in technology has matched

the pace of global change, and technology’s role has changed forever from just technology to technology for good. Smart automation, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things can be used to increase productivity and stimulate GDP growth, while also enabling healthier lifestyles, greater longevity, and a more habitable planet. We saw through the COVID-19 vaccine process how collaborative corporate efforts, along with public-private partnerships, could make a difference quickly and across borders. This emphasis on innovation-led growth will only continue with human goals at the center, which may become the most beneficial legacy of the COVID-19 crisis.

The world now faces the dual challenge of making public health a priority while trying to improve economic health and stability. However, the COVID-19 emergency with its social considerations for the most vulnerable, renewed awareness of environmental concerns, and the desire to “simply do good,” is driving solutions for not merely a “new normal, but a “better, new normal.”

There is a myriad of ways that technology can facilitate that highly valued “positive contribution to society” and humanity -- from jobs to education, from healthcare to living standards. Online training programs and job-matching digital platforms will enable workers to improve skills, find employment, and enhance job security in a more globalized setting than ever and with unprecedented accessibility. Adaptive-learning apps can better prepare young people for the labor market at a lower educational cost. Mobile payments will ultimately reduce the price of goods and services, while also encouraging new online marketplaces. Artificial Intelligence can power drug discovery, disease testing and diagnostic tools to create personalized medicine for a longer life while reducing the expense and time spent at medical facilities.

About WHF



World Humanitarian Forum (WHF) is the largest and most

inclusive nonpartisan forum in humanitarian aid and international development.

WHF brings together decision-makers and opinion-formers in the public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as the next generation of partnership-builders. The annual WHF advances critical global discussions and transforms conversations into action, as well as providing a powerful forum to catalyze collaboration through shared-value approaches and social impact objectives.

WHF is an international knowledge exchange platform at the intersection of government, aid, development and innovation aimed to improve the lives of millions in need.



Clinical use of AI makes it possible to do what was never conceivable before in terms of data crunching and understanding. Johns Hopkins hospital has an AI-powered demand-for-beds algorithm. This automated system foresees bottlenecks in assigning patients to beds and suggests corrective actions to avoid problems. Since the hospital launched the program, the need to keep surgery patients in recovery rooms dropped by 80 percent. The wait time in providing beds for emergency room patients is down by 20 percent. The outcome is

“Every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society.”

— Larry Fink, Chairman and CEO of BlackRock, Inc.

better care at a lower cost. These are the new ways of measuring success for a better world.

Today, we do not go online, we live online. Before the pandemic, we spent hours a day on our devices. Screen time has, of course, increased dramatically as most of our daily activities

have moved to a virtual setting. In the process, we’ve come to realize that people and technology connect reflexively, especially when we can access the same information and tools whether we are in Cape Town, Singapore, or Chicago. Searching on Google, streaming

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Ann Rosenberg, A Denmark native, but a global citizen based in New York, Ann Rosenberg has 25 years of experience in the corporate world working with technology, sustainability, and purpose. After 20 years at SAP, she has moved to Wood plc as Senior Vice President for Sustainable Development. Additionally, Ann continues to support a number of UN initiatives and non-profit organizations. She was part of founding SDG Ambition with UN Global Compact and has dedicated her life to serving as a trailblazer for the UN SDGs.



Sebastian Jespersen is an innovator, a business strategist, and a breakthrough digital thinker. He founded the independent digital agency Vertic over a decade ago; today it has a footprint on three continents and serves some of the world's best-known global marketers and brands. Both a digital guru and evangelist, he has successfully taken a start-up from the birth of the online marketing era through to the advertising world's new internet playground. All while shepherding Vertic to extraordinary year-on-year growth and profitability.



Caroline Mosimann is a strategic sustainability advisor working to pave the road to COP26 or the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference, scheduled for Glasgow, Scotland from November 1-12, 2021. She is working with Ann Rosenberg from London on various business, non-profit, and UN projects for groups including the World Humanitarian Forum and the Global Brain Foundation. Caroline is a Swiss-American with experience in project management, relationship management, and making creative solutions.

Netflix, or ordering goods with a single click from Amazon have become automatic and amazingly natural.⁷

The United Nations commemorated its 75th anniversary in a virtual summit in September 2020, which it labeled “a time of great disruption for the world.” World leaders debated pressing issues and reinforced their commitment to the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), designed to address global challenges including health, poverty, climate change, inequality, peace, and justice by 2030. The SDGs represent the most urgent problems facing our planet, and they require collective action on a global scale.⁸

However, there is a critical element missing from the UN's agenda: not one of the Sustainable Development Goals addresses our digital lives.

Why then is this digital reality left out of the UN's goals? How could we possibly build a more just and livable planet without an 18th goal that focuses on creating a safe and meaningful digital life. It's hard to differentiate between our digital lives and our “real” lives because they are one and the same. We need our digital world to be as safe and livable, as with our physical world. We need a place where global corporations are acting responsibly both online as they do offline.

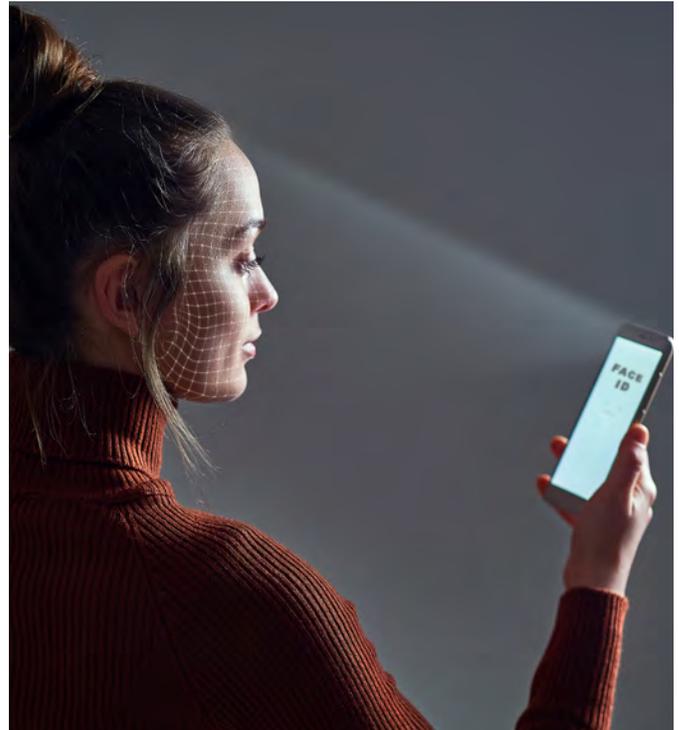
As with all the other SDG areas, we need universal and global laws that protect the users and their data, while enabling tech companies, governments, industry, civil society and researchers alike to unlock the beneficial potential of new technologies and making the world a better place than when they leave it. The solution to many of the other Sustainable Development Goals relies on the use of technology and how corporations leverage Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Machine Learning etc. to convert insights into big opportunities. We simply

need to find solutions to coexist and define common rules. Today, as many technology companies are now so embedded in people's digital lifestyle that there is an "intertwined existence" or an "entangled relationship".⁹

Defining such global guidelines will involve funding, resources, and expertise while companies need to find new ways of working and innovating with people. It can be done if companies commit to collaboration with their customers in identifying new solutions. However, it will be impossible if it's not guided by a new Sustainable Development Goal number 18 – A Meaningful and Safe Digital Life.

We live on one planet, and we need to give the same consideration to our digital existence as we do to our physical world. Technology has never been so present in our lives. Its omnipresence makes it an extremely powerful tool for delivering change, including change that is positive for all.

It is easy to use stark, dark terms to measure the destructive power of wars, natural and man-made disasters, and health crises such as pandemics. The sheer breadth of these tragic events – measured bluntly in the number of casualties – serves as a stern warning. Governments, companies, and other institutions should act in order to avoid the risks that



would allow the ravages of history to repeat themselves. A greater challenge, however, is to ensure that the positive and reinforcing parts of history do indeed repeat themselves. In the wake of cataclysmic events, especially ones with a global scale, the part of history we want to repeat is the mix of creativity, ingenuity, and hope that inevitably emerges as the crisis fades. That special mix sets the stage for unprecedented progress for society as a whole. ❖

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SHARE OF LIFE

Who Do You Choose To Share Your Life With?

The pandemic has compelled us all to reflect on the important relationships in our lives.

We miss seeing friends and family in person without worrying about risk factors and masks and social distancing. We are grateful for (and sometimes fed up with) the loved ones we are quarantining with. We long for chats with colleagues in the break room, rather than on Zoom calls, even if we like working from home.

COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief the relationships that are essential to our happiness and well-being—and not just with other people. Our relationships with the brands we choose to share our lives with have also taken on new significance in the past six months.

For brands, this reality opens immense opportunities, but it also carries great responsibility. Business leaders must change their mindset and, instead of focusing on

short-term financial gain, prioritize building long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.

Not Just Time; Meaningful Time

The Share of Life® concept - the deep digital interconnectivity between brand and customer on a day-to-day, minute-to-minute basis—hardly needs explanation anymore. We see it clearly woven into the fabric of our lives as we stay connected on Facebook and Instagram, shop for groceries and household goods on Instacart and Amazon, conduct business on products built by Microsoft and Google, and entertain ourselves on Netflix and YouTube.

How many minutes or hours do you actually spend each day with these companies? When you start to think about the time, it adds up quickly. Before the pandemic, you might have worried about the effect all this screen time was having on you or your children.

In 2019, the time-tracking and distraction-blocking app RescueTime analyzed the data of 11,000 active users and found that, on average, they checked their phones 58 times a day and clocked 3 hours and 15 minutes in daily phone usage.

RescueTime conducted another study in May 2020, evaluating the data of 14,000 users, to see the impact of COVID-19 on screen time. Before March 11, when the WHO officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic, U.S. users were averaging 5 hours and 58 minutes of daily device time. A month later, the daily

average jumped to 6 hours and 54 minutes a day—56 minutes more, a 16% increase—with a trend toward communication (+13.5%) and entertainment (+ 2.3%).

But our attitude toward constant connectivity has changed in short order. In the past, we might have bemoaned all that wasted time spent on screens. Now we see the value in that time, and in the brands responsible for it.

Tech reporter Nellie Bowles, who has covered the dangers of too much screen time for years, wrote in the *New York Times* in March 2020 that she has “thrown off the shackles of screen-time guilt” and embraced the positives it brings to her life:

“The screen is my only contact with my parents, whom I miss but can’t visit because I don’t want to accidentally kill them with the virus. It brings me into happy hours with my high school friends and gives me photos of people cooking on Facebook. Was there a time I thought Facebook was bad? An artery of dangerous propaganda flooding the country’s body politic? Maybe. I can’t remember. That was a different time.



“The screen is my only contact with my parents, whom I miss but can’t visit because I don’t want to accidentally kill them with the virus.”

— Nellie Bowles, *The New York Times*

Covered in screens these past few weeks, I have noticed some positive changes. I FaceTime my friends so much that I know them better than I did before. I decided to learn what TikTok was, and I love it. I spend hours with my chin tucked into my chest and a weird smile on my face, watching. I’m using Duolingo, an app to learn languages.”

The Share of Life® Opportunity

This is why Share of Life® is so powerful. Without it, we aren't able to live our best possible lives.

We have developed strong relationships with certain brands, and they have become increasingly important to us in recent years—but especially in recent months. If they disappeared tomorrow, I would argue that you would miss them in the same way that you would grieve the end of a close friendship or romantic relationship.

Some may say it's concerning how dependent we are on companies, and it's fair to debate the best way to approach the boundaries we should set as

individuals and as a society. But on the other hand, we are also extremely dependent on our governments—for everything from public safety to infrastructure. Depending on where you live, you may have more confidence in these companies than in your own government to act in your best interests.

Brands that value this connection have a remarkable opportunity to achieve an entangled relationship with their customers. They can become an indispensable part of their customers' daily lives, without being intrusive, but only if they take the time to cultivate the intimacy and respect of a long-term relationship. Full entanglement occurs when the customer interacts with your brand reflexively without even thinking about



it, such as downloading from iTunes or streaming from Netflix or purchasing from Amazon. It's just part of the customer's day.

Business leaders must change the mentality that customer relationship management really means, "How can I sell people more at every interaction?" They wouldn't try to sell something to a close friend or family member every time they talked, and they shouldn't treat Brands that achieve Share of Life® will learn to ask instead, "How can we serve this customer in the best possible way, so we can continue deepening our connection—together?"

The interconnection between brand & customer is Share of Life®

Weave your brand into the fabric of your customer's day. That's how you gain Share of Life®.

We are in the midst of a marketing evolution that is moving much faster than most are aware. At one time, marketing was about contact. Then it became about engagement. Now it's about inhabiting your customer's world.

Stan Rapp was the godfather of one-to-one direct marketing. As the co-founder of legendary agency Rapp Collins Worldwide (now RAPP), he practically invented one-to-one direct marketing. Sebastian Jespersen's career developed in the age of engagement. He co-founded the global digital media agency, Vertic. Together they are redefining the way

customers are created, nurtured, and grown. To function in today's marketplace, brands must change their focus from trying to trigger an immediate sale to understanding the consumer's lifestyle and routines.



The interconnection between brand & customer is Share of Life®.

Weave your brand into the fabric of your customer's day. That's how you gain Share of Life®.

This will not only change how they market, but how they do business, including what they offer, where they sell and how they deliver.

The Share of Life® concept presents a new set of imperatives for dealing with this life-changing moment. Embedding your brand into the customer's new mode of existence – what we describe as gaining Share of Life® – is the key to success going forward.

Studies indicate that more than half the day is spent in front of a digital device. We live online. At a time when neural networks recognize spoken words better than people do, Gaining Share of Life rethinks the very nature of business activity in an ever-evolving digital frontier.

"You want people using your product because it's a part of your life, then they can't stop using it." - Sean Parker

Traditional thinking gets challenged every 20 years or so. In the 60's we had mass marketing and a struggle

for share of mind. The 80's gave us the information revolution and database marketing. At the turn of the century, booming internet usage set the stage for digital marketing. Now, a generation later, life beyond the tipping point requires a different model. The time has arrived for a radical new concept we describe as Share of Life®.

The new measure of a brand's strength is the share it gets of the customer's attachment to the internet. The way to win the game is to gain and hold on to consumers who are obsessed with cyber activities. Think of Share of Life® as the depth of a brand's multi-screen presence in a person's 24-hour day. The Share of Life® doctrine calls for the brand and the consumer

the brand is out of sync with progress in the digital domain. Forrester notes that the fate of individual firms has never been more uncertain. They tell us that the window of opportunity is closing for companies unprepared to think differently.

Mere engagement is yesterday's news. The most far-sighted managers find ways to entangle the brand and the user in supportive, ongoing experiences. The greater the Share of Life® online, the greater the chance of retaining a customer forever.

Share of Life® is more than simply developing a relationship between a brand and a customer. It strives to ensure that such a relationship will last a lifetime.

Consider Share of Life® as a paradigm shift taking place at the heart of brands within a digital-first age, an evolution from what marketers had traditionally known as 'one-to-one' marketing is now moving towards 'one-with-one.' Our rapidly changing digital age is constantly reshaping our attitudes

toward brands and media, as well as our interactions with the world itself. In the past, products and services relied heavily on mass media – a generic message communicated to a wide audience resulting in a potential purchase by some within that audience.

We're now experiencing a dramatic evolution of how brands and customers interact—more directly and even more intimately. With automation and artificial intelligence reshaping everyday life, consumers expect more from the brand, but they are also willing to do more with the brand. Closing an immediate sale has

“Market dynamics favor those taking aggressive action and create risk for those who are still holding on to what has worked before.”

— Forrester

to benefit from creating value together online. Share of Life® teaches companies to be so entangled in their customers' lives that the brand rarely comes to mind. Full entanglement occurs when the customer interacts with your brand reflexively without even thinking about it, such as downloading from iTunes or streaming from Netflix or purchasing from Amazon. It's just part of the customer's day. That's Share of Life®.

Slavish concentration on the smartphone recasts how companies acquire and retain customers. Far too often,

become secondary to making your product or service an essential part of the consumer's digital existence.

Traditional Business Models Have Shifted

"We lived on farms, then we lived in cities and now we're going to live on the Internet."

— Aaron Sorkin, *The Social Network*

These were screenwriter Aaron Sorkin's words describing what the founding of Facebook could mean for the way we live as a society. They've grown truer with each passing year, as companies have stepped up their efforts to put their online presence at the forefront of their brand.

People now have more daily experiences online than they do in real life. Instead of speaking to co-workers, we send emails. Rather than paying someone in person, we send it through Venmo. When we book a trip, we use travel sites, not travel agents. "We increasingly do more of our shopping, more of our dating, more of our friendship-making, more of

our learning, more of our news-seeking, more of our communicating and more of our selling goods, services and ideas," said economist and Nobel laureate Milton Friedman as he described our digital reliability across all types of monitors and screens.

"We lived on farms, then we lived in cities and now we're going to live on the Internet."

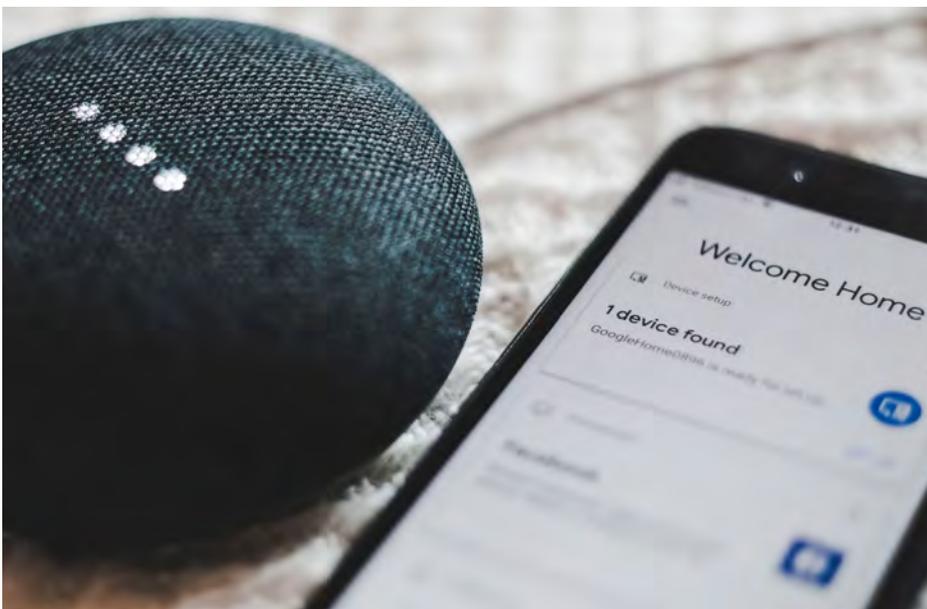
— Aaron Sorkin, *The Social Network*

Our online world provides a wealth of goods and services, so companies have now begun to strive for excellence in how their products are provided.

Today, the brands that have surpassed all others are those that are digital by nature. Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft, and Google — without question

— have all incorporated their brands into the daily routines of their consumers.

Google, as an example, has entrenched its brand into consumer lifestyle by both anticipating and addressing needs even before they're recognized by the people who have them. When Google finally introduces its long-awaited self-driving car, users will immediately understand the benefits of reading, working, or



sleeping while commuting in the privacy and home-like feel of their own vehicle.

By inserting itself into a new part of the consumer's life and adding value where it has not been active before, Google will continue to gain greater Share of Life[®]. Google focuses on adding value to things that consumers already want, such as an easier ride to work. Google's Share of Life[®] crosses multiple activities or areas of a customer's life. Google, of course, is more than a search engine; the company now produces phones and cars, while helping us navigate with Google Maps and connecting us through Gmail and features like Google docs and spreadsheets.

Through basic need-filling and smart planning, there is seldom a 24-hour period where someone does not check their email, use Google Maps or perform a Google search. That's significant Share of Life[®].

The 3 Pillars of Share of Life[®]

1 Achieve Zero Degrees of Separation.

One element of the journey is to achieve Zero Degrees of Separation by closing the gap between brand and consumer.

Simple demographics are no longer enough in today's complex marketing environment. Market researchers and consumer experts are now



delivering more than just numbers. They are analyzing giant data sets to provide information that can be acted upon by all divisions of a company that work with customers and prospects, including behavior patterns, product usage and trend forecasting.

They are leveraging Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in order to provide critical insights and opportunities. The brands that are winning are those that achieve zero degrees of separation with a customer by essentially incorporating the brand into the person's lifestyle and daily routine without being perceived as intrusive. Marketers need to seek more granular insights into the needs and pains of their consumers to close the gap from arms-length to zero

degrees. Doing so will uncover new areas where brand messaging can yield a higher degree of resonance.

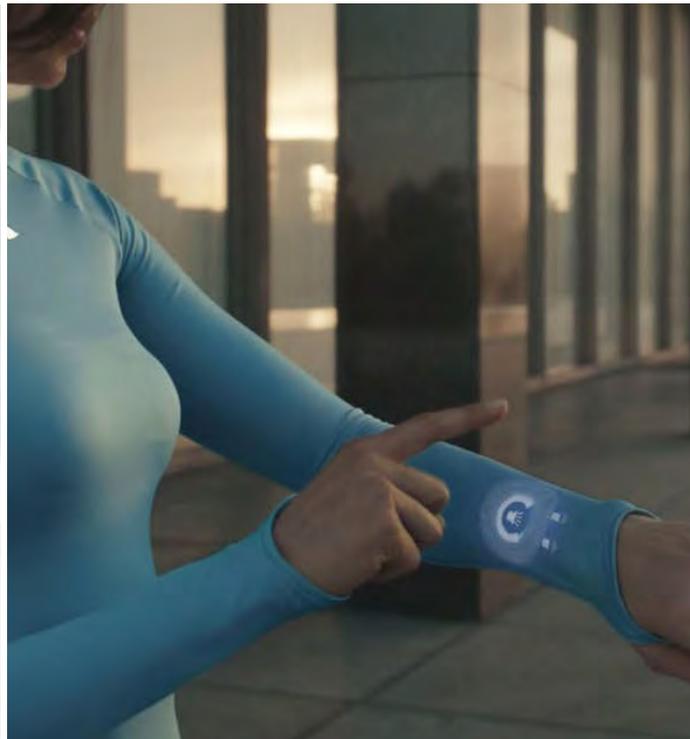
2 From One-to-One to One-with-One.

The 'One-to-One' direct marketing strategy has evolved into the 'One-with-One' entangled marketing relationship.

The word "to" implied that there had to be opposing sides. There are no need for opponents in marketing. When a brand and a customer become friends, the relationship takes off, and will often endure to the satisfaction of both. The brand's insights into the customer's desires fuels this evolution. A "data companionship" with both the consumer and the brand only serves to strengthen the relationship and keep it relevant over time.

Under Armour is betting on the notion that the right hardware, combined with large data sets enhanced by machine learning and powerful motivational tools can enhance their customers' lives and the company's bottom line. Under Armour sells athletic gear. They provide an app free of charge called Record that customers can use to track their daily fitness routines and goals. User data gleaned from the app is used to develop precise recommendations for individual consumers. They are creating products and services with the consumer, not just for the consumer. The company can spot trends as they unfold and respond to market demands in real time. By becoming entangled in their lives, they've proven that everyday athletes want to know more about the brand as well as do more with it. In today's world, there must be a stickiness in the brand-to-consumer relationship. They cannot be on opposing sides.





A great example is the company's new effort called Make Athletes Better. The brand has launched a new line of clothing that literally turns human performance into big data. In fact, Under Armour is no longer just a manufacturer of high-quality sporting clothes, but has transformed into a high-tech fitness partner enhancing your life and workout experiences.

3 Entanglement. The third element needed to gain Share of Life® is for brand and customer to become an entangled pair, a term Jespersen and Rapp borrowed from the world of quantum mechanics. In other words, whatever effects one, effects the other. Both the brand and customer emerge as winners in the relationship.

In 'One-to-One' marketing, brands and customers had separate definitions of success, where brands would get paid and customers would get a product. This antiquated

definition of marketing is no longer the goal of the relationship. Instead, both sides are interested in gaining value and satisfaction, so that brands are rewarded with higher levels of customer loyalty while customers are provided with excellent goods and services.

The more you entangle people through rewarding, value-adding experiences, the greater share you will receive of that person's life.

This entanglement will only create further growth for a brand as it evolves into other aspects of a customer's daily existence. Just like the five digital leaders we've cited, a company should not stop at filling one need, but should look to fill other needs that a person may have on a routine basis. When a brand can take part in solving persistent problems of a customer, the entanglement only becomes stronger and has the potential to go on for future generations. ❖

A collection of various pills and capsules scattered on a blue background. The pills are in various colors including white, orange, yellow, green, and red. Some are capsules, some are tablets, and some are round. They are scattered across the page, with some in the foreground and some in the background.

CASE STUDY

Rethinking Merck.com

Today, people are becoming far more conscious of how they spend their time. Plus, they are looking to derive real value from devoting precious minutes or even hours to specific activities, especially when interacting with products, services, or companies. Without question, this new recognition of time, particularly in our online lives, directly affects how any brand provides information and delivers a digital experience. It is a symbiotic relationship that cannot be underestimated, and it should always be meaningful. Merck's thought leadership program goes beyond simply talking about products to genuinely enlightening a website user. The intention of Merck.com is that a visitor will leave the site feeling better informed, while also acknowledging that their time has been well spent.



■ Client Overview

Merck & Co., known as Merck Sharp & Dohme outside the United States and Canada, is the world's seventh largest pharmaceutical company, with approximately 71,000 employees worldwide. The company is at the forefront of research to prevent and treat diseases that threaten people and animals – including cancer, infectious diseases, such as HIV and Ebola, and emerging animal diseases.

■ The Challenge

Enable Merck / MSD to portray their thought-leading position in healthcare through a simplified corporate website that focused on stories.

■ Business objectives:

The rules of the game for pharmaceutical companies are changing. It's no longer about providing treatments in the form of products. Today, pharmaceutical companies need to earn their right to talk by delivering value through patient and physician support, disease awareness initiatives and more. This

establishes a need for the corporate brand to take ownership across offerings, and drive authority and trust.

While Merck and MSD had responded to the increasingly complex set of requirements for this paradigm shift in healthcare, they had a digital ecosystem expanding in multiple directions. In the center was the corporate .com, which was not built to control the complex ecosystem nor the increasing number of stakeholders with differing needs, interest areas and health literacy levels.

With a focus to significantly reduce the amount of content, while creating a best-in-class user experience to connect with multiple stakeholders, Vertic was asked to support the team's new strategy and creative experience for Merck.com and MSD.com.

■ The Strategy

Build Merck and MSD's brand reputation by earning awareness and differentiation, understanding and quickly responding to various audiences' needs.

■ The Vision

“Unlock the potential of Merck.com/MSD.com as the centerpiece of the digital ecosystem, to support Merck & MSD in earning Share of Life[®] with their key stakeholders.”



MERCK

Search everything Menu

Corporate Responsibility

We are driven to discover, develop, and innovate to help save and improve lives

For more than a century Merck has been inventing medicines and vaccines for many of the world's most challenging diseases. We have always been and always will be inventing, and we do it for the single greatest purpose: LPH.

[Read our report](#)

We have a legacy of saving and improving lives by creating sustainable impact

Our approach to corporate responsibility is about the health, economic, social and environmental impact we have on individuals and communities around the world. We hold ourselves accountable to our many stakeholders, including patients, employees, customers and shareholders, whose perspectives help to define our corporate responsibility priorities.

Our focus areas

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Access to health

Employees

Environment

Ethics & values

Access to health

Millions of people are living longer, more productive lives than ever before thanks, in part, to better health care and access to innovative medicines and vaccines. However, more progress is needed to ensure greater access to health around the world.

[Learn more](#)

Our approach

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Access to Health Employees Environment Ethics & Values

Access to innovative medicines and vaccines

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Research and development in key therapeutic areas

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Making our products affordable

Manufacturing and supply - Quality and safety, product pricing and registration

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Collaborations in key initiatives and programs and available

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1933

Business Heritage
Merck exhibits at the Century of Progress International Exposition.

1936

Merck and Ball synthesize vitamin B1
Pharmacist J. K. Cowdrey, together with Dr. Williams of Ball Labs, develops the synthesis of vitamin B1. Within a few years the product sharply reduces vitamin B1 deficiency (beriberi) and constitutes more than 90 percent of Merck's sales.



1941

Merck's Brownwood plant begins manufacturing operations.
"Valley" is born. The slogan "Merck is here" is coined during the long production period producing new product opportunities to residents throughout Valley, Pennsylvania. The plant employs about 300 people. First product is vitamin B1 and B2 and later, acid. Merck develops new products and more complex ones, including manufacturing for products, pesticides and more.

1942

Merck develops subordinated fermentation process for producing penicillin.
Alphus Thomas Chapman's laboratory building on the southeast corner of Pratt and Howard Streets in Baltimore, Md., and starts his own business as a merchant and apothecary.

1956

Merck opens its first U.S. office in Philadelphia.
Merck introduces its first oral temporary contraceptive, the first oral contraceptive, Norgestrel. It is the first oral contraceptive to be approved by the FDA.



1962

Merck opens its first U.S. office in New York City.



■ The Solution:

Vertic started out with an extensive research and strategy exercise that brought an 'outside-in' perspective to their audiences' information journeys, utilizing data and insights to inform content requirements and recommendations.

1 Audience Prioritization and Decision Journey Mapping

Vertic prioritized and investigated the key stakeholders of Merck.com/MSD.com and mapped their expectations and needs from the site. This knowledge, extracted via both conventional and digital research, was consolidated into personas and journeys capturing the essence and sequential steps of 1) how to satisfy their needs, and 2) how to support Merck/MSD objectives.



2 Content Assessment, Gap Analysis and Recipes

Based on the profiles and journeys of the prioritized site stakeholders, current content and functionalities were assessed and tagged, and gaps identified in order for the new Merck.com/MSD.com to best serve audience needs and reach objectives. The outcome was an overview of content to discard and content to transfer to the new site, and a set of the content recipes guiding content repurposing and new

content creation for site launch and in the future.

3 Information Architecture and User Experience

Vertic rebuilt the information architecture on Merck.com with the objective of positioning the brand a reputable publisher within the healthcare space. The new user experience aims to highlight Merck's key thought leadership content within an intuitive navigation system that guides the user to prioritized sections.

4 Brand and Patient Centricity

As brand reputation was the primary KPI for this project, Vertic created opportunities to nest stories around Merck's innovation, patients, employees, and health awareness throughout the site. The objective was to leverage real storytelling to humanize the brand and reveal its authenticity.

Bringing patient centricity to life was a key intention of this project. Merck aimed to give a voice to patients and caregivers through the rebuilt of the website; therefore, Vertic created a dedicated patient section to enable patients direct access to resources and information linking to assistance programs. This section is meant to be a living organism as Merck will continue to grow it to accommodate patient journey and needs.

5 Flexible Design System for the Merck digital ecosystem

Vertic built a modular design library that allows the Merck team to scale, by building infinite number of new pages and sections, with a shorter time to market. Vertic leveraged this design system for the website localization rolls out, as well as a base to build on for other digital properties within the Merck digital ecosystem. 





POINT OF VIEW

The Missing Debate

By Sebastian Vedsted Jespersen

Status is reachable

By the end of 2020, the five technology titans (the Fab5) were racking up valuations in the trillions of dollars, serving global customers by the multibillions and reaching out to online touch points in the zillions.

The prevalence in our lives of Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Google and Microsoft, when most of the world was sheltering in place was like nothing seen before. The pandemic transformed shopping, dining, fun-

time and work-time dramatically. How the disaster will impact long-term individual behavior remains a puzzling question mark.

Adding to the uncertainty, there is a mounting number of Fab5 antitrust cases in the USA and a host of regulators clamping down worldwide. Current lawsuits against the internet superpowers are much more crucial than the one against Microsoft in the nineties.

Steve Lohr, a 30-year veteran journalist at the NY Times, put it this way:

“Today’s technology powers touch far more sectors of life than Microsoft ever did. The Microsoft antitrust case was fairly narrow. Questions about Big Tech now have a bigger canvas than antitrust. It’s also about misinformation, their ability to shape public opinion, data hoarding and whether that should be reined in.”

There is no question that relationships with tech services are valuable because we are willing to devote significant portions of our time to using them. However, we should also ask if brands are simply stealing our precious time when we must watch a 20-second ad before tuning into something relevant on a service like YouTube.

Is advertising becoming a “poor man’s tax” in a world where people will gladly pay premium subscription fees to skip ads through content services like YouTube Red, Amazon, and Netflix?

“Questions about Big Tech now have a bigger canvas than antitrust. It’s also about misinformation, their ability to shape public opinion, data hoarding and whether that should be reined in.”

— Steve Lohr, *The New York Times*

That 20-second ad is not advertising, but “non-advertising,” or advertising that fails to connect meaningfully with a person at the right time with a relevant and appropriate message. The ultimate goal in today’s world of advertising and marketing is to reach and maintain a Share of Life® with customers through creating a one-with-one relationship.

The digital revolution has reached a point where people no longer go online. They live online. This reality got a tremendous lift from the reliance on Amazon and the other internet goliaths during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The controversy swirling around the unbridled power of Big Tech will take years to resolve itself. Steve Jobs had a totally different persona than JP Morgan and the “Robber Barons” of the industrial revolution. Each century revisits how we define what constitutes illegal antitrust activities.

Government officials in America now accuse Facebook of smashing competition. Google is accused of illegally protecting its control of search. Strict rules and massive fines limit Big Tech in Europe. Each of the internet giants pioneered its own spectacular journey. Yet they share a number of traits in common that are under assault around the world.

1 Control of Behavior. The Fab5 own an overpowering role in vital aspects of life online. Google has built a 90% share of search reaching out to over 500 billion web pages. Amazon controls more than 50% of online shopping. Microsoft with Windows has an 88% market share on all kinds of devices. Facebook Inc. have connected more than 3 billion people. The online titans set the rules for digital interaction. Huge size crushes attempts at rivalry.



2 Limitless Partners. As if that wasn't enough, mighty corporate entities partner with other tech companies to amass still more clout. Google puts its search engine front and center on billions of smart phones. Amazon's website serves up product offerings from almost every brand across the retail spectrum. Consumers can order just about anything from Amazon at the click of a mouse. People save time. Big Tech collects commissions from countless partners.

3 Big-time Buy Outs. The huge stack of cash and soaring stock value held by each of the Fab5 is used to buy out the most promising digital newcomers. Google's hundreds of takeovers fuel the brand's enormous growth. At the top of the list, of course, stands YouTube. Users watch almost 5 billion videos in a single day. Facebook acquired Instagram in 2012 just

two years after the photo and video sharing website was launched. Purchase of Instagram by Facebook for a billion dollars seemed like a shocking amount when it happened. Actually, it was a steal measured against what the platform has become. According to the latest Hootsuite stats, over 1 billion people now use the wildly popular network every day. Nobody knows which recent startup is likely to be the next YouTube or Instagram. But in all likelihood the buyout will be made by Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple or Microsoft.

The creative in-house genius of the Fab5 is another major source of runaway growth. Ongoing involvement in cloud computing, streaming entertainment, the gaming, boom, personal digital assistants, abundance of data and other developments heighten the amount of time people spend living online.

During the Covid-19 crisis, Big Tech generated truly awesome numbers. When so many Americans were losing their jobs, Amazon added over 400,000 workers to handle soaring online sales. Over a million men and women are now in its workforce.

How big will Big Tech get to be?

The antitrust and regulatory debate recently got a rude shock. Twitter permanently suspended the president's connection to 88 million followers. Facebook made the same move on a temporary basis. Some commentators said that Trump's loss of his social media bullhorn could mean more to him than the loss of the presidency.

It seems to me that the debate about controlling Big Tech has been looking in the wrong place for answers. The focus has been on competition in America rather than how to help people worldwide have a better day-to-day existence in cyberspace.

The digitized way of life we construct online can be a danger for all of us or the greatest windfall ever for mankind and womankind.

With the internet erasing boundaries and blurring borders around the globe, we can access the same information and tools whether we are in New Zealand, Singapore, Denmark or Chicago. The problem is that there are no international standards protecting us.

Global threats online require a global response.

Meeting worldwide challenges such as climate change, inequality and nations at peace, is the work of the UN General Assembly. The organization has identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals to reach by 2030. I suggest adding an 18th global challenge.

How do we create a safe and meaningful digital Life for everyone on the planet?

It would be in the interests of Big Tech to get behind the proposed *t* is mutually beneficial for business, governments and individuals to make a momentous life for themselves in cyberspace.

We live in an electronic environment that changes by the day. Every company does business through the miraculous internet. This the new way of life wherever they may be located or how sizable the firm happens to be. Brands can boost a meaningful Share of Life® with users online while committing to standards that protect customer data from misuse.

Tim Berners-Lee, who unleashed the World Wide Web more than a generation ago, now is raising the alarm about Big Tech acquiring too much power and too much personal data. He has started a new company offering an innovative tech step forward to give online users needed protection.

Mr. Berners-Lee is intent on returning the ownership of personal data where it belongs in a person's hands. The new technology clears the way for a fresh burst of digital innovation.

What has been missing in the debate about corralling Big Tech is now emerging. We live on one planet, and we need to give the same consideration to our life online as we do to our physical world. ❖

Those who support developing a global UN sponsored 18th Sustainable Development Goal can change the future scope of life online in a responsible and meaningful way.

Vertic founded by Sebastian Jespersen and Mads Krogh Petersen



Sebastian Jespersen
CEO and Founder of Vertic
Connect on LinkedIn



Mads Krogh Petersen
President and Co-Founder of Vertic
Connect on LinkedIn

In 2002, Sebastian Jespersen and Mads Krogh Petersen came together with a shared belief; through digital transformation, any firm could form a deeper and broader connection with customers than possible before. The dominant marketing trend of our time was destined to be gaining Share of Life® with end users in cyberspace. The founders' background in management consultancy underpins the agency's differentiation of seeing creativity and technology as mediums through which business objectives are achieved – rather than the focus of our work.

Contact Us
Hello@Vertic.com

 VERTIC

The Share of Life® Agency

NEW YORK / COPENHAGEN / SINGAPORE

180 Varick St. Suite 1518 / NEW YORK / NY 10014

Ryesgade 3A / 2200 Copenhagen N / Denmark

<http://www.vertic.com>

