

One of your ‘five a day’?

Sara Phillips caught up with DK to find out about media snacking

To move forward you have to take a look sideways (another mantra of ours). Be open to take inspiration from all possible avenues.

Please explain the concept of ‘media snacking’

Media snacking is a term to explain how we consume the current media menu which is now served and available in totally different ways and on/through a variety of technological platforms/avenues.

We focus mainly on young people because they are the first generation who can truly claim to have a global voice instantly ... they also don't know a world without the interactive red button, mobile phones, online profiles, having friends they have never met – the media is no longer a passive entity.

Aren't snacks bad for you? What's happened to a good balanced meal?

If the snacks are junk, yes, they are bad for you.

Like you said, it's about balance. The difference is young people are creating snacks for others plus actively participating and sharing through weblogs and online social networks.

How did you get into this game?

I have an educational background in media and communications plus a professional background in local government. I started in leisure development and cut my niche working with young people. Very quickly I progressed to play with the ‘boys in the suits’ and was the first Corporate Youth Officer for any UK local authority.

When I finally got bored of the politics I got out of public sector and worked for a while with brands, developing their corporate social

responsibility youth projects / programmes. More and more of this work was in the new media area.

MediaSnackers was born from a throwaway conversation describing the way young people interact with the evolving media-scape. It's grown very organically but quite quickly, and in just over a year we've worked on three continents, spoken at many conferences and events plus now deliver three types of new media and technology courses.

I'm one of those people you want to slap – I don't work for a living as I do something I love.

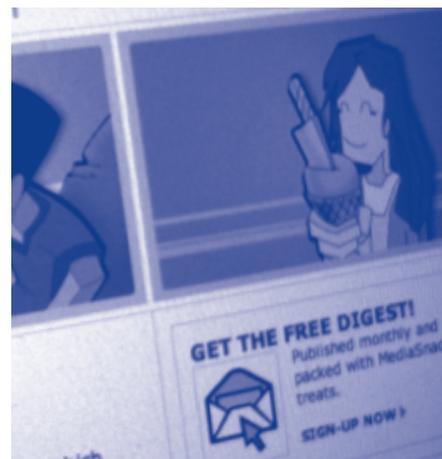
Your mantra is: ‘consultation is dead; conversation is king’ – are endless conversations productive, do they lead anywhere or is it conversation for conversation's sake?

Depends who's talking and about what.

It's only one of many mantras we throw around and that particular one was in connection to the rising questions and queries we get from organisations/brands wanting to engage young people in consultations and using new media to do it.

I've developed and managed so many consultations in my previous roles (from skate park developments to corporate priorities / budget setting) – consultation is only a snapshot of opinion.

Where's the interaction? The ongoing feedback? As an illustration, this article lacks the dynamism we're used to – if this was a weblog post I could embed videos, create hyperlinks to referenced articles/points and even flavour it with pictures/audio, then other people could leave their



comments and share their insights or opinions – better or worse than a questionnaire?

Put simply, to effectively design for the real, not the perceived, a conversation wins every time. No architect would design and build a house from a one-off consultation session.

As an aside, other MediaSnackers mantras/gems: ‘the world has changed and it’s not turning back’, ‘show don’t tell’ and our favourite, ‘everything we do must kickass’!

What do the voices of young people (as opposed to mainstream media) add to the web experience?

Authenticity.

Are young people talking mainly with each other or is there cross-fertilisation with other groups?

Mainly with each other.

However, the MediaSnackers youth training sessions create what we call digital journalists. These young people then cover an event or conference from their perspective, interviewing whomever they wish, editing the videos down and posting them on the weblog created for the project.

Here we have a group of young people talking to several individuals, posting it online for a mass to view, interact with, share or comment on. A simple model which I’m sure your readers can replicate in some way.

Is it possible for arts organisations to develop a meaningful relationship with young people without coming across as phoney?

Totally. Just be credible and transparent. Better still, get your young members to do it for you (or even teach you) ...

What is crucial, though, is a top-down commitment. This might mean a devolvement of power which means a change of tack for many organisations. This change can be quick but in our experience the decision to actually make this move takes far longer.

If an arts organisation has had little experience in this area, where is the best place to start?

There’s a great online resource called MediaSnackers who also deliver fantastic courses in this area!

Just ask around. Check out neighbouring organisations and see what they are doing. Look at other sectors and industries and glean from them examples of good practice, adapt then adopt them into your own strategies/operations.

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Does MediaSnackers have or is it planning a presence in Second Life?

No we don’t and no we’re not. Our vodcasts have been played in Second Life though. ■



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