

webprofits

AGILE MARKETING

DRIVING GROWTH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

By Tam Al-Saad

Intro

“*Nothing is certain
but death and taxes*”.

It might be morbid (and paraphrased) but the old adage rings true today as much as it did in 1789 when Benjamin Franklin wrote it.

Despite that, marketers are prone for planning long-term, rigid campaigns based on what they know (or think they know) at the time.

The recent pandemic has shown us how quickly customer preferences can change and leave marketers scrambling to find new ways to appeal to and attract them.

This article aims to outline an approach - agile marketing - that can bring marketing teams closer to the needs of their audience, and enable them to pivot quickly to meet those needs when they change (which they always do).

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How change affects marketers

As businesses and marketers, we've dealt with change since the beginning of time. Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "Change is the only constant in life."

While the Coronavirus pandemic might have been the biggest event to impact marketing strategies in recent history, marketers are constantly affected by change at a number of different levels.

The different levels of change

GLOBAL

The GFC, just ten years ago, was a financial crisis responsible for obliterating 40% of Australia's stock exchange. Like today, marketers had to adjust and find new ways to promote their business in light of broad changes that affected nearly every facet of our lives.

NATIONAL

At the national level, after the bushfires of 2019/2020 consumers came out in droves to show they care about more than just their day-to-day lives—their caring extends to the plight of others, animals, and of Mother Earth.

They supported causes that donated money and resources to help Australia recover from devastation that cut a wide swath across our country. If you speak to people in B2B, particularly members of sales teams, they will confirm that in the lead up to elections customers are not making buying decisions. They, like us, are waiting to learn what will happen next.

INDUSTRY

Changes on the industry level makes its mark as well. Think of legislation imposed after the Royal Commission's findings of banking misconduct in 2019.

Restrictions placed upon the financial service sector once again forced marketers to adapt their strategies to maintain compliance.

Even the product level is subject to change. New competitors, new products, new features, new USPs—all are designed to swipe market share you've spent long months and years gaining.

MARKETING

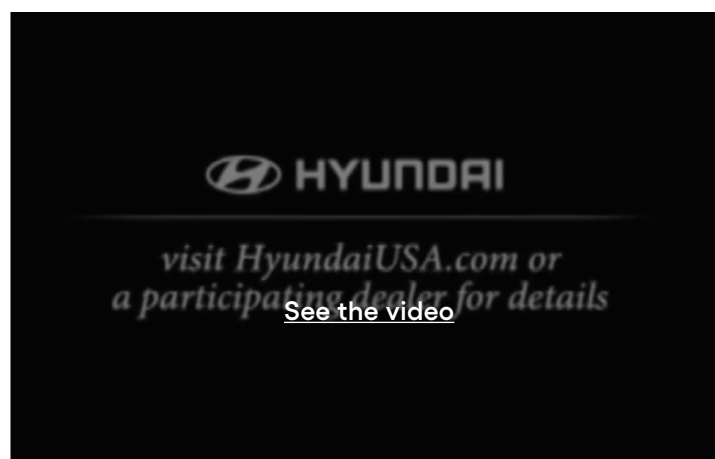
It doesn't stop there. You can drill down even further to marketing-level algorithm changes in our tech stack. Changes rolled out by Google, Facebook, Instagram, etc have completely changed how you use these channels to gain success.

Change is constant – and we will adapt – but for now, what can we as marketers do to make ourselves and our businesses more resilient to change?

Adapting to change: A case study

During the time of the Global Financial Crisis, Hyundai became a prime example of how marketers adapt to change. At a time when all car companies were experiencing low sales numbers, Hyundai made a concentrated effort to dig deeper and learn what their customers wanted. Contrary to what the industry as a whole believed, it wasn't that people did not have the money to buy a car – they were concerned about losing their jobs and how they would continue to afford new car payments after being laid off.

In response, Hyundai launched a program guaranteeing that customers who experienced a layoff after buying a new car from Hyundai could return the car without any negative credit reporting. Not only was Hyundai the first car company to launch such an initiative, they did so just 37 days after it was first discussed in a Superbowl ad. While other car manufacturers were reducing ad spend, Hyundai was offering real value to customers and doing so on one of the most expensive ad platforms available.

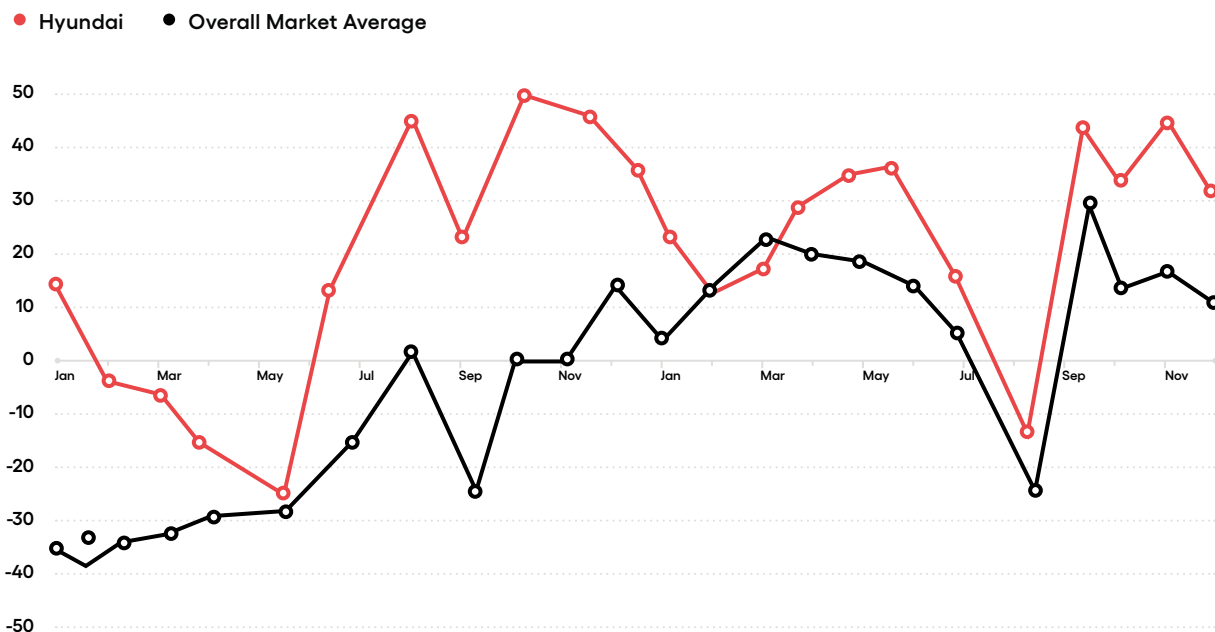


Between 2008 and 2010, Hyundai increased its new car sales by 33%, and its market share grew from 3% to more than 4.5%. That growth has continued, and today Hyundai holds about 8% market share in the U.S. Consumers responded because they felt Hyundai was listening to them and acknowledging a genuine concern – job loss. Compared to financing deals offered by other car makers, Hyundai's approach resonated with their audience and became a beacon of hope there was a positive future ahead.

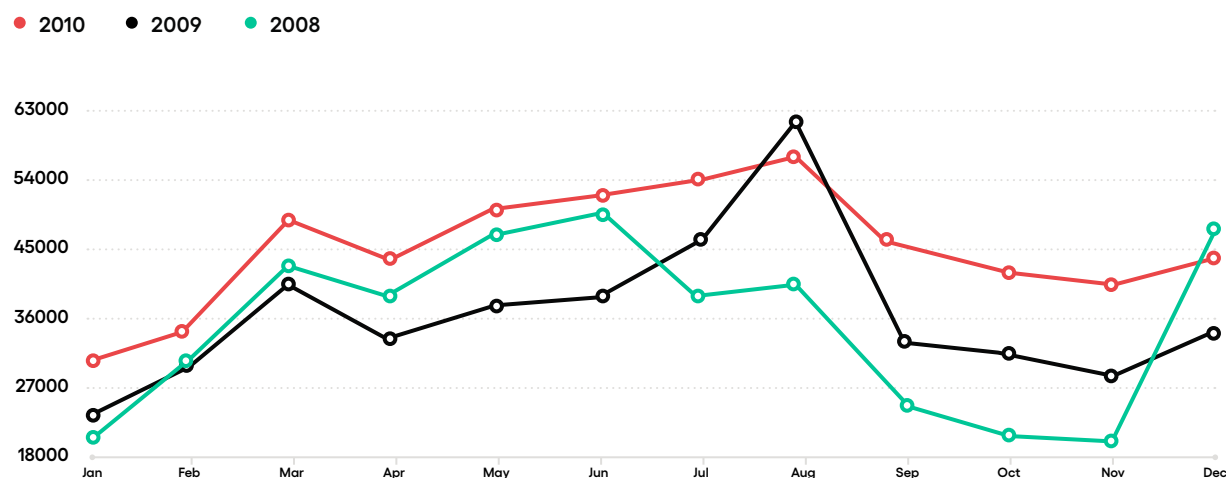
Hyundai Sales Growth

Hyundai U.S. sales growth and monthly sales in the period surrounding their Job Assurance program

Hyundai U.S. Sales Growth vs Overall U.S. Market Growth 2009-2010



Hyundai U.S. Monthly Sales 2008-2010



Source: www.goodcarbadcar.net

What we can learn from this

As marketers, we can see this was a real example of the power of consumer insight. Being agile enough and responsive enough to launch a marketing campaign, and to make the best of an external event, gives consumers a reason to consider alternatives.

The Hyundai Assurance program and its predecessor Job Assurance are good examples of agile marketing done extraordinarily well. The company gained consumer insights, delivered a quality product, used innovative marketing programs, and integrated their marketing efforts in a way we don't see as often as we should.

In this article, I will give you ideas about how you can make your marketing more flexible, more adaptable, and more agile. Just like Hyundai, you can drive growth in uncertain times.

What is Agile Marketing?

Agile, in the software spectrum, is not new. It's been in use for years as a name for a methodology focused on being quick and efficient. Kanban also comes from the agile approach, and describes a scheduling system for lean manufacturing and just-in-time manufacturing – or in our case, lean marketing.

There is no clear, agreed-on definition of **Agile Marketing**, and the few that I found were filled with jargon, so we decided to create a new one:

*Agile
Marketing*

An approach that enables brands to adapt their marketing to meet the evolving needs of their customers through the use of data and shared goals.

Agile Marketing is the constant optimisation and iteration of marketing tasks you perform to achieve your goals quickly. But Agile Marketing isn't only about speed. It's also about doing the **right** things, the things that will make a difference to your business growth – and doing them well.

In an Agile Marketing environment you experiment and test hypotheses frequently, so it's also about trying new things, failing fast, and scaling the things that succeed. If this sounds like ideology straight out of a startup handbook, it is.

Startups such as F&B, Facebook, and Dropbox used Agile Marketing to grow their businesses and to become the giants they are today.

The benefits of Agile Marketing

That being said, Agile Marketing is not an approach limited to a company's startup stage. If you search the web for case studies on Agile Marketing, you'll be able to read about how General Mills, Dell, IBM, ING Netherlands, Aussie, and other well-established brands and businesses have all adopted Agile Marketing as a framework with significant success.



The benefits of Agile Marketing are countless, and the potential impact on your business is tremendous. Adopting an Agile Marketing strategy will make you a better business because:

You can get more done. According to Jim Ewel, founder of AgileMarketing.net, teams he has taught the Agile Marketing approach say they are getting 30% to 40% more work done.

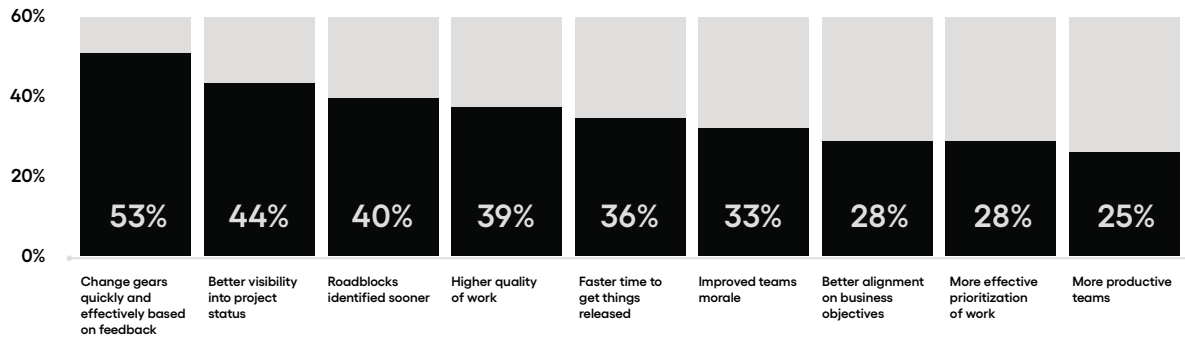
You get the right things done. As a squad, you are developing ideas, scoring them, and then executing. It's a team effort toward a team goal and agreed upon priorities.

You adapt to change quickly. We marketers have been dealing with change since the invention of marketing, but agile means your ability to adapt to change is much quicker and more thoughtful.

You improve communications. Agile calls for teams to be aligned in their approach, and transparent in sharing what they're working on. This leads to improved communication – and not just for the marketing team, but across departments including sales and senior management.

No matter the size of your marketing department, Agile Marketing enables you to be more efficient, better address your customers' wants, and be more aligned with the organisation's goals.

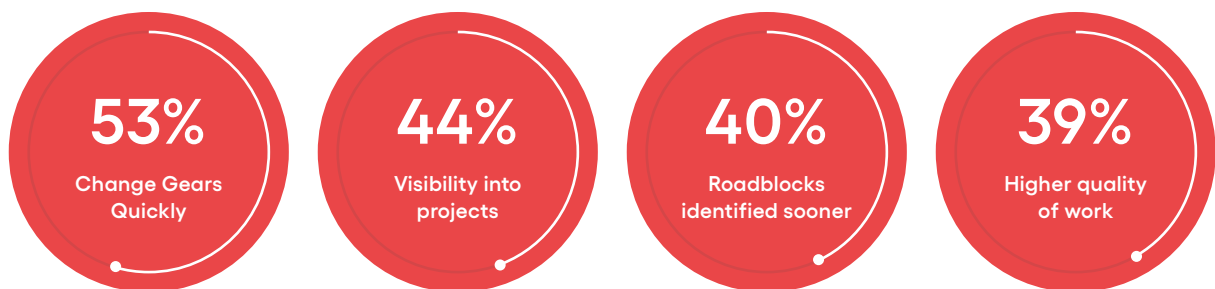
BENEFITS OF USING AN AGILE APPROACH



“Agile is rooted in a desire to deliver for the customer. This holds true for great marketing as well as great software.”

General Mills

TOP BENEFITS OF AGILE MARKETING TEAMS



Source: www.marketinginsidergroup.com

The barriers to being agile

If agility has so many benefits, then what stops more businesses from exercising it? I think it's fair to say that most businesses, especially the larger ones, would like to be more agile in their approach, pivoting quickly to meet changes in the market.

So before we get into how to be more agile, here are five key barriers we identified that are responsible for holding businesses back when it comes to being more agile.

CONFLICTING INTERNAL GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The first (and probably biggest) barrier many companies have is competing or conflicting internal goals or priorities.

What often happens in businesses is different departments or even teams within departments have different objectives.

If you want people to change together and to change quickly, you all need to be singing off the same hymn sheet.

NOT KNOWING WHAT THE CUSTOMER WANTS

How many of us can raise our hand and honestly say we know what our customers want from our business – say with depth and with detail, this is precisely what our customers want and we are currently delivering it.

If you want to change marketing so you deliver what a customer wants, you need to know what their wants are at all times.

LACK OF DIRECTION

Another area in which businesses struggle is a lack of strategic direction – a guiding light that indicates where they're headed, and what they want to achieve together. Agile Marketing can often lead to sudden changes in activity, and when those times come it is easier to agree what changes need to be made when everyone knows what the business is trying to achieve.

LACK OF INSIGHT

Data plays a huge part in Agile Marketing, and I have found many businesses lack access to insightful data that enables decision making and shows how they're performing. Sure, reports might be generated and reviewed every so often, but without instant access to data and insights your business can't quickly decide what to do differently, or what to do better.

MARKETERS ARE AFRAID TO FAIL

Given the constant nature of testing/experimentation in Agile Marketing, there is inevitably going to be an element of failure. Many marketers (and indeed, businesses) are afraid to try new tactics or strategies, relying on tried and tested methods to drive their growth. This is all well and good until those methods no longer work, or competitors grow faster by using other methods.

Being able to embrace failure, learn from it, and apply those lessons to your next initiative is an important part of Agile Marketing.

Who is Webprofits?

Webprofits is an award-winning digital growth consultancy headquartered in Sydney. For the last 14 years, Webprofits has helped national and global businesses drive growth through digital marketing across Australia, the U.S., and Singapore. As partners with Google, Facebook and Hubspot, our team have access to some of the latest marketing technology as well as exclusive data, insights, and support for our clients.



Author bio

Tam is the Head of Growth at Webprofits, a Digital Growth Consultancy founded in 2006. Starting out his career in startups, he quickly acquired experience across a range of digital channels while developing a passion for business growth. This includes developing and executing go-to-market strategies for expansion into new markets, as well as the launch of new brands and businesses.

Since joining Webprofits, Tam has established himself as a thought leader in growth marketing through his prolific content writing. Through articles, videos, eBooks, public speaking and extensive case studies, he shares his knowledge and insight to spread the word about the effectiveness of growth marketing.

As well as his focus on growing the Webprofits brand in Australia, the U.S. and South East Asia, Tam consults with clients across a wide range of industries to develop marketing strategies aimed at driving significant growth.

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