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MY CAREER

At school we had to do a career suitability test, to guide those like me who at 17 didn't really know what they wanted to do apart from being in a rock band. It identified two possible career paths – the legal profession or becoming a journalist. I did eventually study law, which I enjoyed, but not enough to make it a career. Instead I discovered marketing.

Before joining the AP I ran the global whisky marketing for Seagram, a huge drinks company. It was a terrific marketing experience to work with great drinks brands such as The Glenlivet, Chivas Regal, Absolut and Captain Morgan. Like all marketing challenges the secret was to understand your customers' needs. Why did they choose a particular brand, what were their perceptions of yours and competitors' brands and how could you influence them through marketing, be it advertising, online programmes, PR, promotions or whatever worked best.

The same principles apply in what I do now, marketing the Associated Press and its products and services around the world. We need to understand what news content and services our customers need, when they need it, and as a result build products and services that make their news as good as it can be. The launch of APTN Direct was a case in point - during the first Gulf War we created a multi-source live video service that provided live footage from key locations.

My first day at Associated Press Television News – the broadcast

arm of the AP – was October 1st 2001, three weeks after the events of September 11th. It was a dramatic time to join the leading news agency in the business as it was clear that we were about to embrace an irrevocable major shift in world news events. During my initial week AP's Broadcast Services Group were already working on how to get a satellite dish into Afghanistan, having correctly assessed that this would be the new battlefield against terrorism. AP's arrival in Afghanistan was not widely trumpeted but crucial in enabling broadcasters to get their coverage of the unfolding events out to the wider world. This for me characterises AP's approach to providing news to its customers. Often going to incredible lengths to be first to cover a story and being able to provide the wherewithal to support our broadcast partners on location, however arduous the conditions – for example taking a satellite dish and equipment on horseback over treacherous mountains, whilst negotiating safe passage with dangerous local warlords in the process.

Frankly marketing gets easier the better the product is so I was delighted that the quality of APTN's newsgathering was recognised with a special Emmy Award in 2005 for its coverage of Beslan, a first for an agency.

ABOUT ASSOCIATED PRESS

AP provides news to all media platforms and on any given day over half the world's population will see content originated by AP. The company has a fascinating heritage and an incredible focus on breaking news and delivering accurate and objective news coverage. Not swayed by a partisan or political ownership or other commercial distractions, the AP is unique in its mission to be the definitive source for news. Operating as a not for profit cooperative principally owned by the newspapers of the US the AP's heritage is in text and photos and dates back to breaking news events since 1846. The television side of the business is relatively new and was launched in 1994 as APTV, then with the acquisition of WTN in 1998 became

APTN, Associated Press Television News. Now there are burgeoning digital products, mobile applications and news behind the news services provided through social media.

LATEST INITIATIVES

AP has made initial steps in the US to create products direct for consumers. Whilst essentially a B2B news supplier AP has aggregated content available from its member newspapers and broadcasters to create a digital cooperative, essentially a platform for sharing content and creating new consumer facing products.

In 2008 AP launched the first mobile news application on Apple's iPhone and is now available across all smart phones and has in excess of 4 million users. More mobile apps have followed and in May we launched the AP World Cup app which has consumers in 190 countries accessing the text, photos, video and stats as they followed the fate of their countries in South Africa.

FUTURE STRATEGY

A new multi-channel, multi-screen media ecosystem has arrived, with more ways to access news. Equally, it will become more important to protect the value of original news content. AP's future strategy is encompassed by AP Gateway, a new platform for launching products and services designed to meet these changing market needs, introducing new business models and ways of monetising content online.

At its heart lies the aggregation of original content, made easier for customers to access to enable the creation of products informed by closer engagement with end consumers to understand what they want from their news. The integration of different media formats will see products that work seamlessly on tablets such as the iPad and increasingly capable smartphones.

For video the introduction of 16:9, HD and continued enhancement to IP delivery will be a key technology focus for our broadcast clients.

OUTLOOK

Exciting and challenging. ■