Editorial

To educate and inspire

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I am excited to have been appointed by the Trustees to lead The IDM in its next phase of development. As a team, we now have the opportunity to take a breath, stand back a little from our day-to-day delivery of best-in-class training and qualifications and reimagine — and/or redesign where necessary — what we do, how we do it and who we do it for.

I've taken the liberty of updating a little the mission that has been in place since The IDM Charitable Trust was established 25 years ago: *To educate and inspire the most talented students to enter the accountable marketing profession*. The Trust owns two businesses whose profits should be spent attracting the best young talent into what was then the nascent direct marketing, and later the direct and digital industry. And yet, not enough individuals, even among some of our closest friends and supporters remember that this is our goal and guide our *modus operandi* (see our website: <http://www.theidm.com>).

At a time when being genuinely responsible for getting graduates into work and industry is such a great virtue, giving back will likely be seized upon like never before and lauded by customers and prospects alike — provided we articulate it in the right ways.

This mission has never been more relevant, or potentially more helpful, to the IDM achieving its full potential. Here is some ammunition for that.

Improving graduate employability

This is a top priority for students themselves, concerned as they are with what they will get for their increased tuition fees, as well as for the Government. In July 2012, the Higher Education Statistics Agency revealed that 22 per cent of graduates from the class of 2010–2011 were only in part-time work 6 months after graduating and almost 10 per cent were still unemployed.¹

According to a 21-year-old, who graduated last summer with a degree in creative writing, 'my tutors were brilliant and without my course I wouldn't have the job I have, but there was no mention of careers'. With creative jobs, there seems to be an assumption that, 'you have to be the luckiest person ever to land one of them. But there are jobs out there — it's just difficult to know what or where they are'.

That experience is not unique. Another student who studied creative media practice and graduated last summer was also disappointed with the careers advice on offer. 'It seemed to be set up to roll graduates towards positions in companies structured with last-century ideas, not for a world dominated by media and online content. I was given the same advice as every other student, rather than anything tailored for me, or for my particular sector'.

The Wilson Review,² published in February 2012, highlights the need for universities to collaborate better with industry in order to improve graduate employability. Among the key recommendations of the review was that all undergraduates should be offered internships and work experience to improve employment prospects, the promotion of sandwich courses and the development of Key Information Sets data.

The respected and well-understood place of the IDM in the direct and digital marketing industry means we could extend into helping with those initiatives. But what about professional skills training and qualifications that make graduates eminently more employable, because they can get to work and be productive straight away?

This is our heartland, playing to the existing higher education relationships framework we have in place, as well as offering us the chance to markedly expand what we already do and to add many of the new initiatives waiting funding. Once achieved, our ability to grow our Universities' programme is unbounded.

Digital and data education

The blurring of lines between marketing communications means that there is a very real need for all marketers — client, agency, technology and data providers, regardless of specialism or level of experience — to be digitally and data marketing educated. This presents a much broader and growing target audience for what the IDM does so uniquely well across our training and qualification businesses.

The opportunities for growth and innovation in what's taught, levels of teaching, tailoring and customisation, as well as distribution, are as exciting as the huge shift to technology-driven marketing itself. The twenty-first century digital, direct and data-driven marketing age is truly upon us. Accountable marketing as a topic is growing apace and is our sweet spot.

Keeping competitive

The model we've applied since the first IDM Diploma in 1986 means continually meeting the changing needs of marketers. Content has to engage, and thus it must always be topical, relevant, authoritative, trustworthy, effective, practical and applicable to the real world — plus in the formats our customers want to use.

Our participants score course content, tutor performance, expertise and the balance of subjects covered. The information is fed directly to tutors, course developers and IDM management. The feedback is immediately applied to refine future course content and to fine-tune the customer experience.

We work with over 200 expert marketers from both client organizations and agencies. Course tutors are experienced, real-world practitioners whose first-hand knowledge of the newest, most effective techniques is invaluable in shaping the syllabus, and in helping delegates apply their new knowledge to their own programmes and campaigns.

Training is more than ever a living, breathing thing that evolves to suit the needs and delivery preferences of those being trained, now more than ever. Therefore, we take co-creation of course content, tailoring, bespoke in-company programmes as far as we can. Engaging with the marketing community at large is very important — and engaging the influencers within that community is crucial. These areas are where I expect to spend a great deal of my time.

And now the ask

I strongly believe the shifts into technology-driven or accountable marketing offer us new and exciting partnership opportunities. We can spread our net in learning and qualifications while simultaneously increasing our ability to get greater numbers of outstanding graduates to pursue careers actively across all our disciplines.

Please feedback directly to me your thoughts and ideas as to who those partners might be — and how we partner with them — in the broad areas of technology, marketing and data. We value your support enormously, but can't do alone what I believe we could achieve with the right partners and organizations, working with us for the long haul and for mutual benefit.

Mike Cornwell

Notes

- 1 http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2071&Itemid=141
- 2 <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/w/12-610-wilson-review-business-university-collaboration>