

Deviating from the norm

By [Delicia Arjunan](#), issued by [Dentsu](#) 23 Feb 2017



Converged specialist



That term, (coined by myself) is a term I use to describe the future of work progress. In the advertising and marketing space we often hear the term convergence and collaboration as well as various other aligned approaches to media and how we talk to, or with, our audiences. Consumer behaviour is always changing, this means that the traditional way of linear conversations is a thing of the past. It has all been said and lightly practiced with innovation taking the lead role amongst various account executives. However, this culture of convergence is one that needs a lot of moulding and attention.

Entire industries are working towards a phenomenon that they have no title for.

We live in an era where specialisation is no longer defined as one skill set in a restricted field. Referring specifically to the marketing and advertising world and specifically as a data and insights (soon to be) guru (yes, I said it), I have spent much of my industry experience observing “work code”.

This essentially is me trying to understand what I am good at and trying to be a master of ‘something’. What dawned on me not too long ago is that to be great at what I do in this job, I have to be what traditionalists fear, a “jack of all trades... and master of all trades”. As an insights analyst it is my duty to understand all the consumer data points, that work together to make advertising work for clients, ergo my path to professional self-discovery. I realised more importantly that to attain the

best outcomes regardless of the task or context, it is imperative that I have a great deal of understanding in every aspect of my field. To be a true insights and data analyst, I need to have a thorough understanding of the entire value chain. This to me is the epitome of what a converged specialist is.

Converged Specialist: "A person who embodies the role of marketer, advertiser, strategist, planner, buyer, researcher, insights and innovator across all platforms."

Why can't we all be converged specialists?

In order to meet the demands of the modern-day consumer, it is important that we are well aware of their needs as well as the value chain that ultimately caters to that need. What do I mean by this? I am well aware that consumption of goods does not merely start with the desire for that good but the advertising of that good as well. However, in this value chain there are multiple layers that need to happen before an ad gets sent out or before the customer is actually aware of their desire or want for that product. Creating a mental availability space in the consumer's mind is a process, and is often underestimated. Being what I refer to as a converged specialist, is the key to understanding how to unlock this consumer journey. It is essential that every employee is well versed in the value chain and is able to carry through the process of creating a brand space in the psyche. No longer should a specialist be defined as someone who only knows how to do planning or strategy research. In order to be a converged specialist, a conscious effort must be made to pursue professional development at the intersection where different disciplines converge. This means that, for example, an account executive should not be confined to their job spec and seek to embrace complementary disciplines such as strategy, research, planning, digital, buying, and everything else that defines this value chain in order to provide the best recommendations for clients.

Now that is what I call a converged specialist...

Workplace trends are always altering the way business is done, with companies like Google, Netflix and the like. Employees are redefining (and encouraged to redefine) their roles so that smart, innovative and more productive outcomes are the standard. These workplace trends are creating workspaces where action meets understanding and passion. These are the key criteria for convergence. The more flexible the role, the greater the chance of generating results that persuade you to contribute more to the value chain and the requirements thereof. To be a converged specialist means to have a great combination of love for the job, knowledge about the value chain and the space to be creative within it.

Ed Pierce believes that skills deficits occur when growth outpaces the availability of local talent. Despite the fact that 10% of SA companies reported difficulties in filling jobs, the desire for well-rounded employees is becoming more of a concern than before. With technological growth occurring at a rapid pace, the need to have well-rounded specialists in any field is pertinent to business objectives in these competitive economic times. The dynamic nature of workplace trends seems to be outgrowing these job roles and titles and instantly places businesses at a disadvantage in terms of harvesting the ability to innovate your day job and ultimately foster a larger skill set for the entire business' value chain as opposed to an individual department.

What are companies doing to align themselves with employees who want to redefine their roles and decide on their own job title? How can we as employees contribute to the understanding of being a converged specialist? Going over and above our role requirements is what some of us may already do, but it's certainly not the norm. Let's make it the norm, give it a name so that we do not enslave ourselves with mediocrity and settling only for what we are supposed to do. More of the same has never been a key factor for good strategy.

Signed, converged analyst for Dentsu Aegis Network (I am a millennial who is changing the outlook on how employees work together to achieve better).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Delicia Arjunan, graduated with a BA degree (majored in International Relations and Media Studies) from the University of Witwatersrand. She is currently in the process of learning about media research and insights derivation, as the Insights Analyst at Dentsu Aegis Network. Passionate about various topical issues and getting behind the scenes of multiple projects. I love expressing myself through some form of interface, i.e. social media, but I am also a firm believer in doing everything in moderation. I believe in the harnessing and imparting of knowledge as well as living through the religion of humanity.

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