

GIO Podcast Series: An Innovation Conversation with Mr. Youth

Transcript Title: The 'MySpace' Generation and the Changing World of Media and Content

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Summary: Matt Britton, the Founding Partner and Chief of Brand Development for Mr. Youth, a New York based firm that provides custom integrated marketing services targeted to the youth market, discusses what's on the minds of today's youth culture including privacy, piracy and authenticity.

Host: Amy Hermes, Global Innovation Outlook, IBM



HERMES: Hello, and welcome to the Global Innovation Outlook Podcast Series, where IBM demonstrates the innovative value of collaboration. My name is Amy Hermes, and today I'll be speaking with Matt Britton, who's the Founding Partner and Chief of Brand Development for Mr. Youth.

Mr. Youth is a New York based firm that provides custom integrated marketing services targeted to the youth market. Thanks for joining me today, Matt.

BRITTON: My pleasure.

HERMES: You recently attended a Global Innovation Outlook Deep Dive on March 6th in New York, where you joined a small group of global thought leaders from various backgrounds to discuss the changing nature of innovation related to media and content.

So I thought we'd talk about the youth culture, since that seems to be right up your alley. How does the youth culture, and when we say the youth culture we're talking about the 12 to 24 year old demographic. How does this youth culture of today view media and content?

BRITTON: Well, I think young people have become quite immune to traditional media. I think their lifestyles go about in such a way where the consumption of television and radio and Internet mediums are done in their own terms.

And advertisers try and interrupt and disrupt the normal path of young people consuming media is not really an effective way for brands to kind of reach young people.

So I think that's what's really driving the focus on a lot of innovation for corporate America, is really trying to target young people in America.

HERMES: So how does this demographic feel about what's private and what's public?

BRITTON: Well, I think the lines have definitely become blurred in what's become public and what's become private. There was recently an article in New York Magazine about how privacy is no longer really relevant to young people, and I think that's more the case than ever before.

I think young people have kind of grown to expect that their lives are going to be transparent and out in the Internet, in plain site to everyone. I think young people think that being transparent and having their lives and their hobbies and their interests exposed is in their best interests in

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becoming social and ultimately becoming successful in their career.

And I think that these lines are going to continue to be blurred because people are very voyeuristic, and people are very interested in everybody else's business. And young people have come to accept that as a way of life, and I think it's really going to change our culture moving forward.

HERMES: You mentioned privacy, which is very, very interesting with the younger part of the youth culture being the 12 year olds and then the older part being 24 year old, do you feel in the next three to five years, do you think some of their ideas about that will change?

BRITTON: I think that with this generation, where in the eighties and nineties privacy was very important, I think that being out in the open and being transparent and being connected to everybody is much more important than being private.

I think there is still some distrust amongst young people and corporations, which is where probably privacy comes into play more than anywhere else. I think young people have a problem with corporations knowing their every move, because it's commercially driven. But in terms of social environments, I think privacy is less important.

HERMES: So how do you factor in fad aspects of today versus something like a long term, here-to-stay trend?

BRITTON: Well, I think fads are more genetic markers towards where our culture is going than anything else. So I think the reason why a fad pops up and goes away like Friendster, for instance, was there was kind of a rush towards people to get involved in social networking, so Friendster as a brand was a fad but it was really indicative of a major shift that's going on.

So I look at fads as kind of individual pointers of where a culture is really headed. But I think if you look behind the fads and see why the reasons why these fads exist, one could really extrapolate current trends that are more sustainable in the long term.

And another example would be Real World on MTV. Once that came out there was a huge rush and everyone loved Real World on MTV. Real World has since faded, although it's still quite popular among young people. But the underlying trend that was here to stay was reality television.

So I think if you can look behind the fad and seeing what's driving it, you can really find the long-term trends that are going on in our youth culture.

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HERMES: So let's shift gears a little bit and talk about piracy, because this is one of the issues that came up quite a bit in the New York Deep Dive. So, how does the youth culture of today view it differently than adults?

BRITTON: Well, I think in the last five years the RIAA has really driven a lot of fear into young people about piracy, and I think the attitudes five years ago when Napster was hitting the mainstream was, if it's out there for the taking, I'm going to take it, and that's okay.

But I think the RIAA has done as good as a job as anybody could have to really trying to protect the recording industry and really trying to beat down piracy. It's still quite rampant within our society, especially among young people.

But I think more than ever young people are conscious that what they're doing is wrong when they're engaging in piracy. It doesn't mean it's not going to happen, but I think it's the first step. It's very akin to smoking, where for a long time, it was driven down everyone's throats that smoking is bad, smoking is bad, but it took quite a while for smoking to actually really tail off among young people, which it's starting to do.

So I think you're going to see kind of a similar pattern, when it relates to piracy. And it's my hope that piracy

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will be a thing of the past as digital rights management technology gets better and people have a better understanding of what they're doing is actually stealing.

HERMES: It's interesting that you mention that, because the day after your Deep Dive, on the March 7th dive we had quite a few students, some from Syracuse, some from M.I.T., some from R.P.I.

And they actually called it sharing. And they didn't actually seem to view it as something that was wrong; they actually seemed to view it as they were sharing their lives with other people.

BRITTON: Right, but the ones getting sued for thousands of dollars from the RIAA, from the universities across the country right now, I'm sure don't view it as sharing anymore.

HERMES: Exactly. One of the things that came up again in the March 7th dive with some of the students was that they can sort of see through marketing companies, that it's really important to this youth culture that we be authentic when we talk to them. Do you want to talk a little bit about authenticity?

BRITTON: Absolutely, and I think one industry where authenticity and really being overt and open in your

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marketing messages, that's really under the spotlight, is in the word of mouth marketing industry, which is a white hot industry right now and a lot of brands are kind of jumping on in terms of building out word of mouth marketing messages and tapping into buzz creators to really spread the word.

And I think being authentic is extremely important there as it is important for any brand that's really talking to young people. I think being open about the fact that you're marketing to somebody I think being overt that is a commercially driven message is paramount. I think young people are more savvy than ever before when it comes to corporate America and their consumption of marketing driven messages.

And I think being authentic and being really open and honest with consumers is really a must for any brand that is going to try to engage in any sort of dialogue with young people.

HERMES: Matt, thank you so much for joining me today.

BRITTON: Well, you know, I'll just say that I think that the Global Innovation Outlook meeting that we had was extremely informative, and it was just great to be in a room with people across so many different industries, seeing people from the corporate, and government, and the marketing side all kind of share their views and where they think things are heading. And I think it's a great thing IBM is

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doing to try to really tap into the power of collaboration and where things are headed.

HERMES: Matt Britton of Mr. Youth. Thank you so much.

BRITTON: Thank you.

HERMES: For more information about the Global Innovation Outlook, please visit www.ibm.com/gio.

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