



EPISODE 7

How GIFs deliver branding magic: Insights from Kevin Hein, CGO at GIPHY

Host: Alan Hart, leader in marketing and customer strategy, Deloitte Consulting LLP

Guests: Kevin Hein, CGO at GIPHY

Alan Hart: Are you ready to go beyond the basics of marketing? I'm Alan Hart and this is marketing beyond where we talk about the questions that spark change and share ideas that challenge the status quo. Join us as we explore the future of marketing and its endless potential.

On the show today, I've got Kevin Hein. He's the chief growth officer at GIPHY. Yes, that GIPHY, the tool that we use on so many screens to message our friends and colleagues. We talk about what GIPHY is today, how to think about the business. The fact that GIPHY seems to be everywhere, reaches over a quarter of the world on a daily basis. And the magic of GIPHY, how we use it, what kind of smile it brings to our face, and how do brands work with GIPHY today to influence culture, drive business results. That and much more with Kevin Hein.

Well Kevin, welcome to the show.

Kevin Hein:

Thank you. Thank you for having me.

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Alan Hart:

I'm excited for this conversation. I mean, we'll talk a lot about GIPHY, but in the interim as we try to get to know you a little bit, what is this about car detailing?

Kevin Hein:

Yeah, so it's something that has been with me my entire life. At a very young age, I was borderline obsessed with cleaning; it wanes here and there, depending on the job. But what has been consistent is my love for cars and actually detailing.

So in high school I had a car detailing business that paid for my gas and insurance, and to this day I have a garage full of car cleaning products. I haven't gone to a car wash in 20 years. I refuse to, no matter what time of the year it is, and every neighbor and friends legitimately think I'm out of my mind. Because I love it, I love the final product, I love the process. It's soothing, it's therapeutic, and I understand that 99.9% of the people are saying "that is the last thing I would ever want to do."

Alan Hart:

It does seem time-consuming, but if it is your like meditative state, I totally get it. I totally get it.

Kevin Hein:

It is. Standing away and seeing a clean car that's going to get dirty in 20 seconds, is just like a 20-second joy. It really is so fulfilling.

Alan Hart:

Alright. So from car detailing in high school to chief growth officer at GIPHY, tell me how you got from there to here.

Kevin Hein:

You might think that there are no parallels there, but there are. Some of the best thinking that I do, when I am cleaning cars, whether it's just like a wash or whether it's a full detail that could take hours, it's that type of thinking where you're not distracted and you're really, like, pulling all the levers. So when it comes to what we do today, those are some of my calmest moments, where I think about the biggest decisions I need to make for the business. Especially the ones that don't have a clear forecast to them, what you can't control. Like, those are some of ... I did it last week, I was cleaning, we had a 50-degree day, got out there, and I made some really good decisions for the business. So there are, that is a natural parallel that has tied through ever since my car cleaning at a very young age.

Alan Hart:

Yeah, I can totally get it. I don't want to clean my car though, but it makes perfect sense. I guess, other people, you know, it's in the shower. You're thinking about the decisions you are trying to make or whatever it is, but that's interesting.

So what was the first professional gig, maybe out of college?

Kevin Hein:

So I fell into through a friend's network, print publishing at a company called Ziff Davis. And at the time print and tech were emerging. We are sitting here in Austin, and Michael Del Reed is head, and the desktop computer, I was fortunate enough to work for a brand called PC Magazine, which at the time was the Vogue of, if I may, if Anne is listening, sorry, the Vogue of tech and incredibly profitable business. And that's where I learned the fundamentals of strategic selling, at the very early stage in my career. And I still refer back to it many times. So that was my foundational training and I found success. I was the youngest outside salesperson ever, traveled the East Coast. And I think back to that foundation many times actually with how I lead now in the company with, real quick, there's the

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structure around opening, market, buyer, competition, creating a narrative instead of leading and saying here's my brand, it's being thoughtful about a client and I learned that from Ziff Davis when I entered this market.

Alan Hart:

And then when did you join GIPHY?

Kevin Hein:

I joined GIPHY a little over six months ago.

Alan Hart:

Oh wow, oh wow, congrats.

Kevin Hein:

Thank you so much. It feels new, but at the same time it feels already very familiar. I created a plan with the team and we've executed on that flawlessly. So, doesn't feel like six months. It actually feels just about right on time.

Alan Hart:

That's good.

Kevin Hein:

Thank you.

Alan Hart:

Well, tell me about GIPHY today. I think a listener would have to be living under a rock to not know what GIPHY is, but how should we collectively think about it as a business?

Kevin Hein:

So you bring up such an important point and the roadshow that I've been on the last six months focused on clients, agencies, client direct, all across the board, our strategic partners as well. The reason why I bring that up is, because when we start having conversations like this, and I'm going to do it to you right now you'll see it happen. So when you think of GIPHY, what do you think of? No wrong answer here, but literally what you think of?

Alan Hart:

I think of meme wars in work or texting back and forth with my daughter trying to get the tone right?

Kevin Hein:

Okay, so business and personal and trying to capitalize on intent versus reception because you might not have the right text or you want to be the cool dad.

Alan Hart:

Exactly.

Kevin Hein:

So we're going to continue down this journey, if you don't mind. We'll stay away from the work stuff for now. So with your daughter, do you remember the last message that you sent to her? The last GIF you sent to her, fueled by GIPHY?

Alan Hart:

That's a good one. I don't remember the exact one, but I know it was basketball oriented.

Kevin Hein:

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So just the fact that you're physically doing what everyone does, which is smiling, because it is an extension of our emotions and it's always a positive emotion. So sometimes these feelings and associations with GIPHY and GIFs are commoditized because we just see them as a fleeting moment of a positive emotion. But think of how powerful that is, and let's go to the corporate side.

So it's like whatever, it's usually around Microsoft, you're working in Teams, something's going on. It's either a fun quick conversation, or somebody's getting frustrated and you kind of want to shut it down. And pull that magic GIF and it just rightsizes everybody in a very respectful, funny way. So, those are two very powerful moments, but the point is, around it, that we don't think about it that much. And that's our job to help people understand the thinking process of, "oh, well let's say Google might be someone's default search engine," GIPHY is by far the default search engine for any type of meme, GIF, sticker. But it's so ingrained in our behaviors, the thousands of messages that we send on a daily basis, that you sometimes don't really connect it—but, whenever I prompt somebody they know immediately. Like, your words, not mine, you said, like, the rock you have to live under if you don't know GIPHY.

So today, I'm excited to get to the area of where we talk about how do we translate this with brand marketers, for them to extend that feeling in that, most importantly that connection within messaging. It's so powerful and so underutilized.

Alan Hart:

And to your point, and, I guess, even my assessment, like, I'm using a phone, to work, messaging system. GIPHY is everywhere, it feels like. I mean you guys have done an amazing job getting GIPHY in the right places for those moments where I need to ratchet up the emotion in the team meeting or I need to, you know, try to be the cool guy to my daughter or try to communicate something that I can't really communicate in words to my wife.

Kevin Hein:

That's exactly right.

Alan Hart:

I mean, it seems like the proliferation, I guess, of where you are, is the distribution job done now?

Kevin Hein:

So the distribution job is never done. It's constantly evolving and we could get to that. So I wanted to thank the founders over the last decade who have done an exceptional job. They are no longer here. They've done an exceptional job building their relationships with those surfaces. And if you think about iMessage, Meta surfaces, TikTok, Reddit, just goes down the line for many, many more. It literally represents ... on a daily basis we're reaching a quarter of the world.

And when you think about all the platforms, digital, analog, whichever, you think about those places where how many X people could you reach? And once you hit the B word and you're a billion plus, it becomes pretty small. And we are the only brand that could have this global reach consistently across all the surfaces. That I believe is the least I like to say exploited, which might be the wrong adjective because it feels like very intense, but what an opportunity.

Alan Hart:

I mean to your point, a quarter of the world is insane as a stat. And then the notion of this, like, I'm just going to call it like magic of GIPHY to help aid in that communication. Would you agree there's something magical about being able to search for the exact thing that you're looking for to communicate the point you want to get across.

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Kevin Hein:

So I think the magic comes in different forms. One we discussed, which is just how it makes you feel when you're doing it. It's usually hysterical. It usually shuts down discussions in a very positive, fun way or it amplifies discussions. But that association between joy and personal expression is so incredibly powerful, especially these days when the attention economy is at what it's at.

The second part is its opportunity with brands to take advantage of this in a way that doesn't feel intrusive. Like, we talk about ad experiences, whether it's from the Super Bowl or a programmatic partner pushing an impression in front of somebody. We've become so muted to add messages that even the ones that are so in your face, you're like, yeah, I kind of expected that. And the beauty and the elegance about GIPHY is that it's part of the conversation. And it's not intrusive, it's additive. It's a natural extension of what you're talking about. Your example with your daughter, she probably didn't respond like "Dad that's weird, I wasn't talking about basketball," but it was probably dead-on. So it's just this magic that literally is not anywhere else, if you think about it. Like a little emoji or emoticon is not going to deliver that same message as a perfectly crafted, perfectly selected gift that is new to people.

The other part is the immediacy, whether it's a live sporting event and being able to produce that in many cases instantaneously because of our content creation team, is relevancy. It's just, it's all there.

Alan Hart:

And it captures, to your point, an element of the immediacy, the cultural connection if you will, because my daughter doesn't even write back, even "it's weird," she just texted me this creepy GIPHY, you know, a guy that like peers out at me, and I'm like, okay, I got it. I got it, creepy dad. I got you.

Kevin Hein:

She sent the message back.

Alan Hart:

You were talking about brands, how do brands work and engage with GIPHY? Like what does it look like?

Kevin Hein:

It comes in a lot of different flavors.

The one word I would want to use is collaboration. And in our world, that might sound so cliché and eye rolling, because everybody wants to be a strategic partner who collaborates, right? So what I mean about collaboration is let's talk about a Super Bowl ad. You have your 30-second spot. You spend 2 million on production. You're spending 7 million on a 30-second. And then you have branding around it, but usually it exhausts a large part of your budget. Let's pretend that you wanted to extend that. In fact, we did this with CeraVe the campaign for 2025, which makes everyone smile too, because it's hysterical. So, they had their spot and then we actually created custom content off of that. So we did what we call cut down. So we could take the 30-second spot and then make it into a 3-second GIF. Based on our insights, we know it's going to work, but what we also did is we created a unique GIF that wasn't part of the cut down. And the performance, the outputs were really powerful. It extended their campaign, with time and impact and that's what ... you want that long tail. Because if you look at the metrics of a Super Bowl spot: and it goes up and to the right and then the next day, it's just like crickets. So how do you keep that going? This was one way that we've proven and that's every Super Bowl advertiser should be looking at extensions on GIPHY and other platforms. But it's hard to do. I mean, what else out there is able to get the reach and drive the impact in a conversational way. There really is ...

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Alan Hart:

Not something that's going to capture the moment, like you're just describing.

Kevin Hein:

Immediacy.

Alan Hart:

Exactly. I mean in that case, I'm guessing you guys were working with the brand and the agency in some regards. Do you also work direct with brands.

Kevin Hein:

So, that's one example of taking big, splashy creative ideas. So another one could be a campaign that they are building right now, so, for a couple of months. I've seen a couple panels where the CMOs across the board of ... we just want you to get in earlier. And every person on the other side's like, we want to get in earlier, but we usually don't and that's no one's fault.

When we are in early enough, we're able to work with clients directly, media agencies, and I'd like to say very closely with creative agencies. And the reason why I want to emphasize this is because on the collaboration theme, we understand that agencies have margins within their creative agencies. Like, I'm talking holding companies that have sub or standalone creative agencies. We want to protect those margins. We are not going to come in to say shift a fee here. We are not going to be blockers. We are not going to challenge creative that the client hired to do a job. We'll work fluidly and in an elegant manner with them, because we just want to use their momentum. Now, where we start to add value is using our insights off of that audience, with that reach to say, hey, how about this? Or how about these words? How about this color? Or maybe we do this variation. In creative agencies that might be billable for them, right? We're not trying to make them more money, but we're trying to create the most effective campaign. And we can do it so quickly. The dexterity of my team is unlike anything I've seen before: A) Because they love it. B) Because we have these insights. And C) We know how to do this.

So I'm talking about, in some cases, 24-hour turnarounds, and we're in market. Sure, we like a little more breathing room if we're using the third part of what I like to say, our studios. Our studios team, we have a significant studio in LA. We have a mobile studio. In fact, we have it here in South By And what we're able to do is create GIF-based content or short- form video content within our style. And we've got the whole set up and we can do full production. So a couple of weeks ago in our New York office, in the Empire State Building, we have a studio there as well, we hosted big names from NASCAR. And right now, if you look at NASCAR and GIPHY, you're going to see some of the biggest names creating GIF. So we scale either way, but it's a full Hollywood-level production that we could do in a short period of time, multadays or something really quick that we can do an event like South By. We scale it and we're not going to hurt margins. Because if you're running a campaign with us, we're going to include it, which is unheard of now. Brands don't get it. They are like, what's the catch?

Alan Hart:

I mean I love the fact that you've got the studio horsepower. You've got it on a mobile format so you can take it where the action is happening. I'm thinking about we started with Super Bowl ad, but you could probably create GIPHY content of the behind-the-scenes aspects, because your talent is sitting around, most of the day for that moment where they are going to do the recording, there's a lot of opportunity to leverage that.

Kevin Hein:

So, what's fascinating about that is we've experimented with that, and majority of the time it's a hit. And sometimes because you can't predict everything, it just doesn't work. It comes down to this, you know, the editing, the

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opportunity, who are the actual people in it, what is the focus, but yeah, we have a lot of behind the scenes and we get approvals on it. We can make that into some magic. It's interesting of how it isn't always a guarantee, but it's a great idea. When it's done and curated properly it screams, and it does incredibly well.

Alan Hart:

And as I think about it, it is just that little extra for the chance for explosion of virality, if you will, or the like extending the life of anything that you're doing, I mean it seems like a very efficient play.

Kevin Hein:

Yeah, it is. And we want to tell more of that story.

Alan Hart:

Awesome. Well, we talked about a lot of examples. I didn't know if there's any other examples you want to share in terms of, like how GIPHY comes to life in brand campaign.

Kevin Hein:

Yeah, thank you. I have a recent example that I'm incredibly proud of. I'm so proud of it, that at times my team eye rolls, because they know it's coming. It almost turns into a dad joke. But on the serious side, we've all been really impressed by this and the campaign that ... we just received approval for this, so I want to openly talk about it. About October, there was a brand under the Pepsi umbrella, Mug Root Beer.

Alan Hart:

I am familiar with it.

Kevin Hein:

Are you from the northeast or you always been down here?

Alan Hart:

No, no, no. I travel a lot. So I've had Mug Root Beer on the road, I believe. I know, I've seen it, and I've had it.

Kevin Hein:

So Mug is a brand under Pepsi has established themselves as, let's carve out like kind of a cool niche without like, you know, when you're cool, it means you're not trying.

Alan Hart:

So the Fonzie effect?

Kevin Hein:

It is the Fonzie effect, and they are capitalizing that and they are doing it really well. So previously they had a contest where you, the winner of the contest won a stick. Like that whole ... right—that's the exact face, and it was incredibly successful. So they wanted to continue that momentum with us. They had a great idea to have a person who's about 6' 5" put on a dog mask, put this together in your head, and I'll show you some images later, if everyone could search it now on GIPHY, puts on a dog mask. Our studios team spent a full day with him and he did all these things you can imagine and not imagine from pouring Mug Root Beer onto bacon, to post-editing around him on a rocket ship saying "Happy Thanksgiving," like 60 GIFs were produced from this campaign.

So the one prerequisite from Pepsi was we're going to send you our sales data and what we want to see is a lift in sales, of course they do. So, when I first heard this, I see the outputs and, if I show you them or you can probably imagine them in your head. These are the, if we talk marketing funnel, the highest-level brand builders. There is nothing in it that's going to say, oh, there's a coupon for me, I'm going to go. Oh, I'm at 7/11, I think there was a tie-

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in here. There is nothing. There's nothing to click to. There is no action here. But we created 60 pieces of material that were distributed throughout the world with their campaign.

So our data scientist worked with the feed, which was direct aggregate sales of root beer. It's obviously anonymized, so it's nothing privacy, and we ran an eight-geography, I don't geek out too much here, but we did a synthetic hold out. We did eight geographic regions. The science is strong, and after about three weeks, our data scientist comes to say hey, we got some data. I am like, please don't be a negative growth. Please don't be negative growth. Just like 0.1% in like anything. He says, we're seeing over 4% lift. "Whoa." I said that. And I said, no, you're not.

Alan Hart:

No, there's no way.

Kevin Hein:

That's what I said. Nothing against GIPHY. No. I've seen thousands of campaigns and this isn't the one that's going to have 4% lift. So he worked on it more and he said yes. And then I said this, and there's an incredible data scientists, there's incredible marketers across the board. I'm going to use P&G as an example. Would you go to Cincinnati in front of a data scientist at P&G who's been doing this for 30 years and put this down and say this is the data. And he goes, yeah, definitely. And then the campaign ran. We got more data and it is a 4% lift with a one-and-a-half-times ROI. And I saw this—I was a believer the second I started working here, and when I saw this my jaw dropped. And sure, we want to replicate this in many places. And yes, it was a perfect formula. But that is astonishing to me.

Alan Hart:

I agree. Agree. I mean, especially in categories like that you know, 1% is a slam dunk. Like, to get that outsize growth, I mean, you're taking share. Like you're taking share from the competition and it's pretty amazing.

Kevin Hein:

Thank you. And what validated it even more, when we were on with the client, eight geographic markets, three of them are ones that they do extremely well and then the other five are scattered around the country that they don't. And I wasn't sure how they were going to react. And we have 100% certainty on some of these markets ... they said nothing is 100%. No, we're a 100% certain of this lift. So I'm sitting here waiting for their response. Those three markets had very little lift. And they said this: we're doing well in those markets, we didn't expect to see lift. Right? So now it validates the data even more. So, it's incredible.

And I think we might be getting to this later, but when I think about this opportunity, what I'd like to see more energy from brands is around this experimentation part. It doesn't have to be GIPHY. I hope it is. That would be wonderful. I would like to see senior leaders spending a proportionate amount of time in the areas that are that 10% experimental, instead of or with junior people who are charged to find whatever that next TikTok is.

And, because we're not seeing that as much, we don't get the same type of rigor or enthusiasm with: We're reaching a quarter of the world every day. We bring joy. We're brand safe. We should pressure test this a lot more, like with your core campaigns, and it won't be a large out-of-pocket investment. And now across CPG and beverage, you can drive sales. Like to me, that is utopia.

Alan Hart:

Yeah, no, definitely.

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Kevin Hein:

Who wouldn't want to exploit that?

Alan Hart:

I can't think of anyone that wouldn't want to do that. I mean it's phenomenal. You said it, I'll rephrase it, but it's a slam dunk. I mean that's an amazing case study. Well, I know we may pepper in GIPHY here in a minute, but I'd love to switch gears a little bit and get to know you even better. My favorite question, I ask everybody that comes on the show, is, has there been an experience of your past that defines and makes up who you are today?

Kevin Hein:

Not a single experience. But what I've been saying a lot to myself, and thank you for asking, it's interesting to be reflective. The one phrase that keeps going on my mind is "it's a chapter in the book."

And what I mean is that we have these moments now and obviously what's going on from a geopolitical perspective, whatever side you're on, the speed like, it used to be cliché—things are moving so fast. And now, nobody even says it anymore, because it's just a constant. And it can make you feel in that moment like it's really spinning, and you don't know how to get out of it. So I'm using this theme even when I'm being reflective for years back, I'm consistently saying to myself, it's just a chapter in the book. And it helps frame out it as a moment instead of everything is going to happen this way. So it helps me step back and look at the incredible moments that are ... there's a saying something like, you're never as good as you think you are and you're never as bad as you think you are.

Alan Hart:

That's right ... somewhere in the middle there, is the truth.

Kevin Hart:

I think it's Scott Gallowayism in there somewhere that I'm stealing from incorrectly.

Alan Hart:

No, I love that notion of it's "a chapter in the book" because it does give you perspective. Right? I think that's the biggest thing I would take away from that, being able to step back and say this is not everything, this is just the chapter that we're in.

Kevin Hein:

Whether it's the Mug or whether it's somebody threw a shoulder at you while you were walking, and you're still angry about it. Those are the micro moments that didn't happen to me by the way, but it's the first thing I thought of as a comparison.

Alan Hart:

Well, it is pretty crowded around the streets right now. Well, what advice would you give your younger self if you were starting this journey all over?

Kevin Hein:

I'm going to stick with the comparisons, because it really is what I was thinking. There are sprints that you need to win, but, really, the marathon is where you're going to build those foundational skills that are going to help you in all parts of life, whether it's work or your personal life.

And thinking back, if, whether you're putting your self if you're 15, 20 or 25 whatever year you're thinking back to, I had that ingrained to me. But I would look back to say I want to put it to practice a little bit more. The second part is

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you might think—or this is what I would say to my younger self—that, I have a strong ability to size up people pretty quickly and it's not a skill, it's more of a fight or flight protection, and I tend to be right about people. When I was younger, I wouldn't realize when I was wrong. And now when I'm not right about people, it's actually a joy, because I didn't pass too much judgment on them. And it's not a pat in the back for me at all, but it's like a really beautiful humbling feeling when you're wrong about somebody because you gave them the chance and the space to see them instead of inserting your biases to somebody. So I think that is a really important message that I'm now telling my 17-year-old self, who has a profitable car detailing business by the way, enough to pay for gas and for insurance and for a movie.

Alan Hart:

Oh wow. It's going to be in the family, I guess.

Kevin Hein:

That's exactly it.

Alan Hart:

Well, I'm just curious. Do you think there is something that either you're trying to learn more about or you think marketers need to be learning more about today?

Kevin Hein:

Yeah, this might tail into to a later topic that we might navigate to. But one of those areas is and it is the most cliché two letters that we could say right now. It's AI. But I want to elaborate on this because I've noticed that it's a topic that people are familiar with and have an opinion on, but I would say 90% of the people I interact with aren't experimenting with it. It's more of like a binary decision in a lot of people's minds and not being critical, just what I've observed. Which is: I'm not going to do that. I don't need it. It's going to overwhelm me. And then you have people that you see across all social surfaces that are like writing code and they are defining the next AI vision and they are so in it. You don't understand a word that they are saying. I'm noticing that aren't a lot of people in the middle and I'm extending this to brand marketers and agency leaders across the entire chasm. Most senior CMOs, down to somebody who just got in the business.

My point with this is I believe people need to experiment more. Just start with a model of your choice. It could be ChatGPT and type in "I need you to help me navigate around Austin because I'm lost" and just see what happens. It doesn't have to be this deeply scientific thing. And then on the other side, because I've been using ChatGPT, the paid version, not the \$200 version, but I think it's \$10 a month or so. And I really experiment with it. And this past week I tried to create an e-book and integrate with Canva. Are you familiar with Canva?

Alan Hart:

Yeah.

Kevin Hein:

So it's supposed to have a natural tie-in and it's something I just spent a little bit time on to experiment because I want to see if it could actually take a template from Canva and the text that we create and turn into something. That was it.

And just like going through that cognitively, the points of friction, the areas I was stuck or bored or frustrated and inspired, is very hard to put into words to people who don't experiment with it also. I see the overwhelming majority of people aren't experimenting with ChatGPT or any type of model enough, because when the time comes when you need to be dexterous and proficient, no matter who you are, you are going to have a steep learning curve. So I

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want to see more of that. It's so much opportunity there and I think people need to experiment with more, especially when thinking about brand campaigns and it's all tied in. So that's one area.

Alan Hart:

I love it. I love it. Well, are there any trends or subcultures that you follow, you think other people should take notice of?

Kevin Hein:

Yeah. So on the subculture side, I alluded to it in the category around AI. Whatever social surface you prefer, mine happens to be for this conversation right now, aside from GIPHY, of course, is TikTok. And I've been consuming TikTok content since it was musically, when my daughter started using it and I saw it was such a strong trend. And then when it became TikTok.

My point is the influencers, creators, the people on the edge, the people that are really driving this long-tail economy of independent contributors, some of them are incredibly smart, really pushing the technology, really driving business. And these are going to be the people that are going to have the next business across all verticals. It used to be, I am going to sell this T-shirt. I am going to integrate on TikTok shop. Now you're starting to see people do very sophisticated ... They were able to provide very sophisticated business solutions because they are grinding it out and they are doing it. And I think that's going to be our future. My point is, I don't think they are getting paid enough attention.

Alan Hart:

No, I agree. I actually met a magician not too long ago. I'm blanking on his first name. Last name is Flom. He is a full-fledged content creator and magician and just the power of his knowledge of how things like YouTube or other types of platforms and the algorithms are working. And the way he goes about testing and optimizing content. I was completely blown away and so were all the marketers in the room with me. Just the level of science that goes into the creation process, because we always see the output and it's hilarious. It's funny, it's shocking what, you know, all of those things wrapped up into one. But the process that he would go through to optimize content was just

Kevin Hein:

I'm so glad you brought that up, because, I'm not going to refer to the exact brand, but it was like a real eureka moment. I saw it today. There's a stat that I'm going to misquote, so poorly, but a year's time in change now is about 18 days. So whether we subscribe to that actual data point is something about that. But the point was, the amount of iterations that this brand does and the amount of times that they change all their landing pages, is at a very high frequency. So the point is, if you produce a product and it's working, it doesn't mean it's going to work 18 days from now.

And that type of optimization—insight-driven optimization—is the norm now. It's not, look, a magician's doing it. But think about how many brands keep their page static and then think about how many brands, we're talking with brand leaders across the world. As far as that experimental budget, or, we could play two roles. As like CeraVe, we can strongly complement a core buy. We could be the core buy. This is the third role. The other one is that test-and-learn phase. It's fun. We have data points that can prove it. We've got the reach. I want to see if I had a challenge to brand marketers, agency leaders, and it doesn't mean that GIPHY is always the answer by any means. But when you think about a brand-safe environment that could reach this many people with actions that people are doing millions and billions of times a day within messaging across all the surfaces that everybody uses across the world.

The experimentation in the test-and-learn and the iterations should be borderline fun. And we're not seeing enough of that.

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And with total respect, let's just stick on the CMO, I know you've talked to a bunch of CMOs lately, it used to be an 18-month CMO gig. Now it's like 20 minutes. I completely understand why they will look at digital as an accountable, measurable way, whether it's an MMM model or whether it's your programmatic outputs that show the direct correlation of sales—that can become a safe, addictive drug. What I'd like to see more of is that experimentation side, and I think every CMO listening now like punching the ceiling of their car, saying I do all of that. But the board won't approve me to do that because it doesn't have the data points to support that strategy. And I think whether it's the Pepsi Mug campaign or any of the fresh campaigns that delivered on the Super Bowl, which is a whole other discussion, you see that the brands that understand that a little bit, like I was thinking back to the Bud Light campaign with the What's up.

Alan Hart:

Oh, yeah. Classic, Super Bowl.

Kevin Hein:

And that is timeless. Even if you watch it now. And that wasn't too experimental. But that was like a little experimental, a little risky. But wow, what a hit. And now nothing against insurance brands, it's Flo. It's an emu. It's Mayhem. It's a gecko. It's a rinse and repeat. And I think that their data shows if it isn't broken ... right? So nothing is challenged there; in a highly competitive low-margin business where we need change and look, that's across an entire vertical that's spending billions of dollars. And I'm sure they have every signal in the world that is showing there's no reason or no CMO why would I change that? If I'm getting lifts and we don't have churn and I'm getting new people to join our insurance company, why would I move Flo out? They've tried, right?, so many times.

So what's the answer? I don't know. But I'm pretty sure that's going to end. Mayhem is going to end. It is not going to be a slow draw. It's going to be like a light switch. And what are you substituting it with?

Alan Hart:

Right to your point, yeah. If you haven't been testing, you don't know what to substitute it with.

Kevin Hein:

I'm sure they are.

But how much time is a senior exec or CMO spending in the test-and-learn phase? Probably not a lot. And that's not their fault because they are trying to keep their job. So, it's like that push pull, I think is a big opportunity in the industry with all brands. And if Mug can do it as a small brand. And they—listen Pepsi's got 15 brands that are billion dollars ... —And ... we're going to come back a year from now and see, like, Mug's going to be like played out because they are going to be like that billion-dollar brand. And then they are going to have Mug that's like strawberry Mug. I hope so, that'd be awesome. Strawberry Root Beer Mug —

Alan Hart:

Strawberry Root Beer Mug. All right. You heard it here first.

I mean it, you're right. And I remember it was a few years back. I was on a panel talking about marketing measurement and where things were going. And I remember making a comment, which is at the heart of what you're describing, which is when everything is going great, what can I change? The creative. Like the spark that is the underlying pin of this model, which is not actually being measured in its truest sense. Right? I mean there are now ways you can do that, but like normally we're just looking, is the chart still going up? Not, how do I bend the curve to a new trajectory?

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Kevin Hein:

That's right. Think of the mindset and confidence you need to do that. If you're across Meta, you're across Google. Maybe a little Amazon, if you're a CPG, and you're using programmatic you have 90% of the market served. And if you're showing incremental gains and you don't have strong attrition. Why would you experiment? I mean if you want to, but really, why would you do it?

Alan Hart:

There's no incentives really to do it. It just has to be you.

Kevin Hein:

That's right. So what we welcome, because categorically from a reach perspective, from a brand knowledge perspective—meaning I know what GIPHY is. I know what it does—from a conversational perspective, from a brand safety perspective, it's like, if you do the agency check the box. We've got them all. It's like, what do we do with creative? Oh, we can produce that in like 24 hours or we can take a much longer time and do a studio shoot. So, we are a very strong alternative, no matter if you're a small-size company or a Fortune One company and we are working ... What is actually interesting is they do an analysis of our accounts that we have active. We're attracting the Fortune 100 brands. Yeah, of course, we're going after them and they have larger budgets, but across every single vertical, aside from pharma for regulation reasons, but I think we are going to find ways for OTC. Brands are running to us. Maybe a little bit because of that friction that we're talking about. Maybe they are looking for alternatives. I like to say my sales team is really strong, consultative. But I think when we're here next year and I hope we are, whether we're New York or down here by South By. Where GIPHY is a year from now, is going to be in a much different place. I'd love to say because of our efforts and our wonderful platform, but I think it's going to be because this necessary shift in the market. Like you said it—the creative. But how diluted has creative become?

Alan Hart:

Right, well, and it's, there's not many other places where you can insert yourself in everyone's day-to-day life in a way that they want you there, right?, because they are trying to express themselves and the creative that you have out in the world is a tool for them to do that. And now you've married your brand to that person. Almost.

Kevin Hein:

Extremely well said. And listen, if GIPHY creative was stale and old, sure, then it would be just this stale old experience. But the freshness and the cultural relevancy and the timeliness, it's a perfect package. My biggest secret is the brands that are working with us, they are like don't tell anybody. And we want you to be all of ours. And there's plenty of impressions and plenty of reach and plenty of room. But once that light bulb goes off and I've seen at times in my career of just like, oh, this is wait, why is this a flawlessly run X? Why has this campaign been flawlessly executed? What, you-over delivered with organic distribution? Wait, you're not charging us for the creative? It is almost like too good to be true. I need to create a little friction I think. So they feel like we had to really negotiate there. I'm like no, we're just awesome.

Alan Hart:

I love it. I love it. Alright, well I have one last question for you. As you think about the role of marketers today, what do you think is the largest opportunity or threat facing them?

Kevin Hein:

The through line of what we discussed. So I believe that the opportunity is thoughtful creative, which sounds cliché to an extent. And what I mean is that test and learn. And understanding that a little bit more time thinking about not wanting to be different, but really looking at your unique selling proposition, really looking at the essence of your brand. And then being mindful of the modes. We're talking a lot about personalization again, which seems to

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be a theme I'm hearing. But if you're mindful of mode of the mindset of messaging, you talked about it with your daughter. You don't want a hard, stern message there, it has to be the exact opposite. There's some elegance to that. So I think on the creative side there, that is one of the largest missing opportunities, creative plus test and learn.

Alan Hart:

Got it, got it. Well, Kevin, it's been a joy to have you on. Thank you for the conversation and thanks for helping me at least attempt to be a cool dad too.

Kevin Hein:

Yeah. Thank you. It's great to be here.

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