



Jennifer Warren

VP of Worldwide Marketing, Radio Shack

CREATIVITY AWARD

## Q+A on Creative Marketing with Jennifer Warren of RadioShack

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Creativity has always been tough to define, and even tougher to measure. But when it comes to marketing especially for a brand like Radio Shack, creativity can be the difference between another year of retrenchment and a major turnaround. So, how do you know which creative idea is the one you need? And once you have it, how do you execute?

Searching for answers, I caught up with Jennifer Warren, VP of Worldwide Marketing at RadioShack and recent winner of The CMO Award for Creativity. Our conversation ranged on a variety of topics, but her main takeaway is something that sounds a lot easier to talk about than actually get right: make sure you have a creative idea that resonates with your audience, and tell them your story in a way that inspires sharing.

**Drew:** Creativity can emerge in a lot different ways from how you approach problems to creative marketing campaigns. How are you being “creative” in your current role and how has that helped you?

**Jennifer:** As a retailer in the middle of a turn-around, creativity comes into play a lot especially when it comes to day-to-day problem-solving and making the marketing budget work harder. There is always a solution for a problem, you just have to keep pushing to find the answer. And when it comes to advertising, we are majorly outspent by our competitors so one of the filters we put the advertising through, is whether it is creative enough to get people talking about it and making it easy to share.

**Drew:** Some agency sages believe “it isn’t creative unless it sells.” Do you share that belief and if so, is there still a role for branding building activities in your marketing mix that may not have an immediate or directly measurable impact on sales?

**Jennifer:** Without building your brand and standing for something beyond just price, it’s impossible to compete with some of the online only retailers. I do agree that a marketers’ job is to drive sales, but the way in which you do it is different depending on the challenge at hand and meeting both short and long-term goals. For example, our biggest marketing challenge is that our brand has struggled in the past therefore we were not making it onto customers consideration set. We do our share of product/price promotional activity, to drive immediate sales, but we’ve also done things (i.e. the Superbowl campaign) to try to dramatically change the way people think about our brand and get back on their consideration set.

**Drew:** Radio Shack has faced some strong headwinds in the last couple of years, with changes in how people buy consumer products (a lot of it has shifted online) and changing demographics. What role has marketing played in helping the brand to overcome some of these challenges?

**Jennifer:** First, you have to understand your current customers and what they need from you in order to keep them. In our case, we have a customer base that still values face-to-face interaction and someone to talk to about technology and bounce ideas off of before they buy it. To compete, we need to dial up our strength and marketplace advantage—our in-store expertise and store experience. At the same time, you can’t be a relevant consumer electronics retailer today without a strong online presence, because even those that want to buy in-store turn online to do research before making a decision. With this in mind, we recently launched a new dynamic (mobile friendly) website that balances promotional selling with solution-driven and idea centric content. It’s a much better experience than before, and we see it as a foundation to continue to build our online presence.

**Drew:** From an overall marketing perspective, what recent program or initiative are you particularly proud of?

**Jennifer:** The development, re-platform, and launch of our new web experience- which launched on Wednesday, was a major initiative that was accomplished with a cross-functional team and in 8 months time.

**Drew:** What challenges have you faced in your efforts to get the entire company engaged with the brand and how have you overcome them?

**Jennifer:** I joined RadioShack because re-positioning the brand was one of the key pillars that our CEO identified within the turn-around strategy, and our entire management team believes in the importance in achieving that goal. Nobody views it as a “marketing thing”, but rather something that we all own together and are responsible for bringing to life within our individual areas.

**Drew:** Mobile seems like an ideal opportunity for local engagement – what kinds of things have you tried on mobile and what if any has been working for you?

**Jennifer:** We use promotional tactics, such as Retail Me Not, to geo-target customers on their mobile devices which have worked well for us. We were also one of the only retailers to immediately begin accepting Apple Pay, and we hope to get learnings and use them to our advantage once more capabilities roll out. We’ve only scratched the surface in our mobile opportunity.

**Drew:** Storytelling is a big buzzword right now. Is your brand a good storyteller and if so, can you provide an example of how you are telling that story?

**Jennifer:** Our brand promise “Anything is possible, when we do it together” is a great platform for storytelling. We generate a lot of content that show how customers can use technology to solve problems or bring ideas to life (turn lights on and off with their cell phone and a wemo switch) or bring ideas to life (3d Print your latest prototype, and put it through

our product incubator process to bring it to market). We want to partner and build a truly collaborate relationship with our customers. Our goal is to help them realize their goals, help answer their questions and solve their problems.

### About the author

Drew Neisser is the CEO and founder of Renegade, the NYC-based social media and marketing agency that helps inspired CMOs cut through. He is the champion of Marketing as Service, a philosophy he espouses in his writings on [FastCompany.com](http://FastCompany.com), PSFK, TheDrewBlog and The Cut, a much-appreciated monthly newsletter. If you have a CMO success story to tell, let Drew know at [dneisser@renegade.com](mailto:dneisser@renegade.com).

