eMarketer: What is a chief digital officer, and what is your vision for the role?

Chris Miller: My job is to get digital out of my title. So for me, it’s about building digital capabilities within vertical segments in the agency. For example, looking at specific skillsets and areas like mobile and social while at the same time scaling that horizontally—so that they exist not just in vertical teams, but scale throughout the entire agency. My role is to evangelize and integrate digital capabilities operationally. I’m also involved in new business and working with existing clients. My role is to be an expert in the space who can help grow, lead and build the function.

Eventually, we don’t want to have a separate digital department or team. The goal is that we don’t have people who are digital art directors or digital account people. There are always going to be people who have more experience or more expertise than others, but I think we’re rapidly moving to, if we’re not already in it, a world where digital crosses through everything.

“...I think we’re rapidly moving to, if we’re not already in it, a world where digital crosses through everything.”

Eventually, we don’t want to have a separate digital department or team. The goal is that we don’t have people who are digital art directors or digital account people.

There are always going to be people who have more experience or more expertise than others, but I think we’re rapidly moving to, if we’re not already in it, a world where digital crosses through everything.

What kinds of challenges do you see as you look at the digital landscape and advise clients? What are the biggest challenges that marketers face today?

Miller: I think it’s multifaceted. At one level, everybody is under increased pressure to deliver strong results, so sometimes that makes it hard to change and experiment with a different strategy. At the other end of the spectrum, not everything has to have mass scale. In the digital space you can do smaller experiments and try things out, see what works and then scale them.
We continue to need people with great skills in the digital, mobile and social space and for those skills to connect with all the other areas as well. We need information and insight, which is where eMarketer helps in making decisions pertaining to consumer behaviors, device penetration, and how people are using certain devices and media.

**What keeps you revved and charged each day professionally?**

**Miller:** Overall, what gets me excited is the constant change. Things we couldn’t do a few years ago, we’re now doing. And things that we’re thinking about doing now that we can’t do just yet, we’ll be able to do soon. A couple of years ago it was all about social, and then mobile, and in the last year, there’s been a shift to SoLo (Social and Local). The key is how all of those tactics interact.

For me, the technology is less important than consumer behavior and how it’s changing. It’s exciting to learn how consumers behave and transition between digital devices, media and technology. It leads us to really interesting things.

**How does eMarketer help you help your clients?**

**Miller:** We use eMarketer as a learning tool, which is especially accessible with the apps. They make it really easy to—at any point—read and stay up to date on trends and what’s happening in the digital space. We also find eMarketer very direct.

For example, in doing research for a client, we were looking for computer penetration within the homes of tweens and teens, and I searched and found the data associated with that right away. We’re often trying to find some background information or we have a hypothesis that eMarketer helps us either prove or find the needle in the haystack that we hadn’t thought of before.