

“Creative Talk”

With Nigel Cherrie, Founding Partner of The Guesthouse Interactive and Managing Partner at Digital School.

If you sometimes feel that your clients know more than your agency teams / or as an agency, you feel there is a knowledge gap in digital that is affecting the level of service and advice to your clients - then maybe it is time to go to Digital School.

Nigel Cherrie is a highly experienced digital producer and project manager, who has worked both sides of the fence - Client and Agency.

He has seen first hand the knowledge areas that are lacking and has decided there is a need to offer a tangible learning experience, where it's not just about learning digital, but also understanding it.

Your background is as an experienced Executive Producer, why the move to running a digital school?

It was clear to us that as well as offering our digital planning, creative and production services, there was a need to take it a step further and literally share our knowledge. By up-skilling our clients they felt more on a level playing field and less in the dark when considering advice, planning projects and evaluating new ideas.

Essentially, we were doing this in a piecemeal way with specific client projects; but with Digital School our aim is to bring all those key questions and sticking points that everyone has around online, social, search etc... and demystify digital so everyone feels confident in dealing with digital projects.

Speaking about digital is almost a natural extension of my and our work. As I'm fortunate to spend time on the speaking circuit, where I'm invited to share my learnings from my personal (out of work) expeditions, which is my other passion, but I promise not to segway off into long stories about rowing across the Tasman...

The digital landscape today moves so quickly, what is the best way to stay informed and how can we keep up with it all?

There's really no substitute for being in the thick of it and actively producing the wide variety of digital work that we do; but otherwise the best way to stay informed is to tap into key websites, get the relevant white papers and follow the top people in the industry.

I've been in this business for over 10 years and I still learn every single day - that's why I love it. No two days are the same because we work with extraordinary partners and some pretty cool clients, here in New Zealand and overseas.

We don't pretend to know everything. Though we know what we know very well, if we can't answer or explain something, we have an extensive network of trusted experts that we consult with; so we always ensure we get the right answer.

“We live our lives through digital devices, you need to at least know the basics.”

What can your students expect to learn and who will benefit most from the course?

Our courses will enable you improve the time, cost and quality of projects or campaigns by helping you understand the details, language and tools of the digital landscape. The standard curriculum is broken down into a series of modules, covering things such as CPC, SEO, domains (sub-domains to SSL), browsers and banners, to responsive design or device detection, databases and data quality and much more.

Currently our courses are tailored to each organisation's needs and level of knowledge, but ultimately our courses are aimed at corporate marketers, agency account service teams, media planners and buyers and public relations professionals.

We cover all the parts of a digital project that you need to know, from start to finish, including media aspects and project management. But this is not a course with lots of slides - we do hands-on learning where people can create, click and download for themselves to really learn how things work, and gain confidence in themselves that they're not going to break the Internet!



At the same time, we explain risk areas and the cues that signal you need to engage other professionals for bespoke pieces of work. Sometimes you need to recognise that you're entering into a specialist piece of work and you need someone with a specific set of skills to make it succeed.

Will the Digital School focus on the NZ market and what's trending here, or will it integrate what's hot in Europe?

Both - and more. We are answering the everyday questions and challenges people in the New Zealand market are facing, as that's 70% of our day to day work. Through the international work we've been exposed to, we're also covering what people should expect to hit New Zealand soon and the connotations of those changes to the digital landscape, from a learning, preparation and implementation perspective.

We've also been fortunate to get a lot of industry support and those connections will continue to keep us abreast of international changes in technology and trends; so we can update our curriculum as it happens and ensure the most up to date learning is taking place.

Do you think everyone / every business should make an effort to learn digital?

Absolutely. It's not going away - we live our lives through digital devices, you need to at least know the basics. If you know nothing - we'll be gentle and start with a basic (digital 101) curriculum that will fill you with enough knowledge to make you significantly more confident and efficient in your day to day involvement with digital.

For agencies, just as account service teams and creatives understand the basics of print and TV production, they too should have an understanding of digital production, the language, the tools and what it all means to effectively deliver projects and intelligently advise clients on risks, budgets or executional considerations.

“Digital School offer a tangible learning experience where you will not just learn, but also understand.”

Responsive websites are the hot trend at the moment, with more mobiles around per capita than computers - do you make a focus on mobile?

Mobile definitely features in a number of areas of the curriculum as it touches so many things we do - anything from customer journey planning, to testing, to measuring mobile vs tablet vs desktop engagement.

What has been the feedback from the Digital School students so far?

We're running through the first courses as we speak, so we'll know soon, but our mantra is learn, apply, improve - and we want people to enjoy the course and leave thinking "that makes so much more sense now".

We're asking for honest feedback from everyone that attends, so we can ensure we continue to develop our curriculum and offer the best possible courses.

Come on Nigel - sell it - Why your digital school?

There are many many courses out there offering high level, theoretical and strategy based knowledge, that although substantial enough to feel beneficial, can actually leave you just as much in the dark as when you started! Why? Because you still won't know how to use or apply what you've just learnt.

Digital School offer a tangible learning experience where you will not just learn, but also understand. You'll understand the language, the tools, their uses and what it all means. The real goal is that you won't feel lost in meetings, you'll understand what your producers and digital experts are talking about, you'll be able to better budget projects to avoid scope creep, and all without feeling like it's all in a foreign language. You'll be back in control.

.....
“Creative Talk”