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## TOP STORIES

**Making Connections** [Related Item: [Columnist](#)] Making Connections Joanina Pastoll It is essential in today's relationship economy to make connections with an audience. But how? Joanina Pastoll, creative director of Cross Colours, offers some examples of getting it right.

It was Anais Nin who said, "Each contact with a human being is so rare, so precious, one should preserve it." In the relationship economy in which we find ourselves, it's a sentiment that's as relevant today as when it was first spoken. Perhaps the most valuable currency businesses have is not money, but they relationships they manage to build with their customers.

But building relationships with consumers seems to get more and more difficult every year. Today's consumer has more power to choose when, where, how and with whom they want to connect than any generation that has come before them. They can choose which blogs they want to engage with, which sms and email messages they want to read, which media messages they want to unsubscribe from, which songs to download, and which television commercials to fast-forward.

In a media-saturated world, they prefer to be enticed by 'pull' messages rather than bombarded with 'push' marketing.

So while content and functionality might remain an important part of the creative solution, what's really essential is the ability to make connections with an audience that demands an individualised, tailor-made, authentic and human touch.

Some might point out the irony in the fact that these demands have coincided with the rise of the digital lifestyle, in which technology has come to replace so much face-to-face human interaction. People email each other while sitting in the same office, they text instead of making a call, blog when they want to air their views instead of doing so in face-to-face debate, conduct their social interactions on Facebook and use iPods to insulate themselves in a private world of music to which no one else around them has access.

And yet, people are still having conversations. It's just that the media they use have changed. In fact, as people become hyper digital, the need to make connections in order to have conversations increases.

And ironically the rise of technology has done more to create connections between people across vast distances and cultural divides than anything else that has come before it. Companies who understand the symbiosis that exists between technology and people are using it to their advantage, and in doing so forging powerful connections between their brands and the audiences they wish to reach.

### Nike +

Perhaps one of the most outstanding examples of how technology has been used to make a human connection with an audience is to be found in the Nike + concept. When Apple and Nike connected to sync music with running, they struck a chord with runners around the world, giving them the two things they love the most in one beautifully simple solution. In doing so they created an immediately resonant experience for a broad market, from geeked-out marathoners to everyday fitness joggers. (Research shows that 75% of people who run, prefer to do so with music).

The multi-channelled, multi-sensory marriage of Apple and Nike technologies created a new world of motivation, competition, connection and fun. The companies turned the two solitary pursuits of running and music into a global community characterised by people who wanted to connect with each other. A robust platform of virtual racing, progress tracking, comparison tools, motivational goals and personal stories took Nike+ beyond the product experience of a running shoe or an iPod and made people feel they were a part of something special.

A fun feature on the original site is that you can create a virtual character of yourself, a so-called 'mini me'. If you don't connect or exercise for long periods the character puts on weight!

In August this year, their Human Race project saw a million people running on the same day under one banner in places all over the world creating a sense of universal community. Check out the Human Race at: <http://nikeplus.nike.com/nikeplus/humanrace/map.jsp> and Nike+ at: <http://nikeplus.nike.com>.

Nike+ added a further connection, using the new global 'Twitter' technology craze. (Twitter allows for the exchange of quick, frequent messages through a free social networking and micro-blogging service that lets people keep in touch with people using the web, phone, or instant messaging). Nike+ users can now join Twitter to start receiving their Nike+ updates.



### Facebook

Craig Newmark, the founder of craigslist.org - the most successful classified advertisement website in the world that attracts 30-million people a month - said in an interview that although the internet is changing, its primary benefit remains the fact that it connects people to each other.

Marc Zuckerberg, age 23 (really!) the creator of Facebook, is someone who understands and has tapped into this potential. Launching Facebook as a campus-wide system from his dorm room at Harvard in 2004, he birthed a social network that spread first to other campuses and colleges, and then to the national and international community. If anything, Facebook's more than 90-million active users (source: <http://www.pcworld.com/article/150489/>) show just how much people feel the need to connect with each other, or re-connect with people from their past, find old school friends and varsity pals on the network.

### Emotional Cities

Erik Krikortz' Emotional Cities project, shows how emotional connections can be achieved through technology. Started in Stockholm, the internet-based project asks citizens of the city to answer a simple question: "How Are You Today?"

Users rate their feelings on a scale of colourful smiley faces. Factors like how well they slept, whether they've had any physical activity, and how inspired they feel are all part of the equation. The results are then averaged and aggregated by region to get a sense of how a city is collectively feeling.

Krikortz then went further and negotiated with a building company in Stockholm, where he resides, to project the corresponding colours on huge panels on the side of five buildings. A live webcam shows how the lights change with Stockholm's moods.

The result is a very public display of the emotional status of the city, sparking conversations about how we interact with each other and what influences our feelings. The application can be connected to Facebook and the number of users is growing.

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### An enduring human condition

A simple yet enduring human condition underpins the success of all these examples - the need to connect with other people. For all our species' technological advancement, this fundamental remains the same. The marketplace is a conversation - go out and connect with it.

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