**Globally Speaking**

**Podcast 83 Transcript**

**Unpacking the Complexity of Global Digital Marketing**

**Featuring Ed Hartigan of RWS Moravia**

Renato I’m Renato Beninatto.

Michael And I’m Michael Stevens.

Renato Today, on Globally Speaking we have a guest that is going to tell us some of his experience in digital marketing, an area that has expanded a lot for localization companies. It’s usually an activity that is requested to translators and very often they don’t know what to do, right Michael?

Michael Exactly. And our guest’s experience is in helping campaigns successfully go global. We cover some of the really basic questions like is this content better created locally? Can agencies actually do this? Along with sort of future-thinking and where this space is headed.

Renato So, let our guest introduce himself.

Ed My name’s Ed Hartigan, I’m Digital Marketing and Media Services Director at RWS Moravia and I kind of oversee all of our marketing and digital practices that we’ve added to our localization services over the last few years. So, really trying to help brands unpack some of the complexities around digital channels and how to take their content and be successful in global markets and help them understand the tactics and the nuances that maybe work in their home market, but then need to be adapted and applied to make it successful and make it relevant and useful to their customers in those individual locales.

Renato This is one of those type of services usually done in-country and some people struggle with the idea that it works at scale, that you can localize SEO campaigns or digital marketing campaigns. Why is that the perception, and can you effectively do that?

Ed There’s a couple of things. I think a lot of brands and marketers and the localization teams or whoever’s kind of in charge of making that content work, they’re kind of aware, I think, that customers want experiences and want the content relevant and in context and certainly in the right language. But then also, creatively, it looks correct and you’re speaking the language linguistically and creatively. Some of them are struggling to unlock the budgets for that, even though they know it’s something that they do want to do. They’re not, maybe, bringing budgets together from various departments to do that.

And the other one, there might be a bit of a case of, say ‘we’ve done a lot of keyword research for SEO; we understand how our customers search for us in our home markets.’ I saw this first-hand when I was working at agencies who were managing these campaigns for brands. We’d have it brilliantly done in London or in New York or wherever we were doing it, and then we had to do it in France, and a shout would go ‘round the office of, “Is anyone French? Can you just come and translate these keywords?”

And it just very rarely works because when you actually drill into the data, you see how differently people use search engines, and they’ll use slang and they’ll use different phrases and they’ll use hybrid terms with English and their local language in there. So, yeah, it’s a few things. I think it’s quite difficult and then quite expensive to do it well in each market, and I think there is this perception that ‘just translation’ works. And in some cases, it does, but from experience, I think largely it doesn’t.

Michael And Ed, some people think ‘just translation’ works in these regions, but you’re also seeing that marketers aren’t equipped with the resources to get it done. The time, being able to execute at scale, and the tools that are necessary to do that, the processes. You introduced me to that CMO Council where they said, like, less than 5% of marketing budgets go toward creative adaption and cross-cultural localization.

Ed Right. Exactly. Even though they know they’ve got to do it, they’re not investing in it, and I’m not quite sure what the answer is to that. I guess, you know, money is slightly tight and there’s an overspend, maybe, on the home market, and I’ve seen that certainly in the UK and the US. And those are, you know, big, big markets for a lot of brands, and that could even be another reason to invest the time.

If you found yourself in 30 markets, it’s difficult to then treat them all equal, so understanding where to spend your time and where to localize, where you really need to make sure it’s completely contextually relevant.

Renato So, give me a sense of what types of output do you use. When you talk about digital marketing, it seems to be a very broad categorization. SEO is obvious, banner ads would be another category. What other types of digital marketing [does] a company need[s] to localize?

Ed If you’re selling stuff, you want to try and reach as many people as you can. I think search and social media are the two that, that’s where the eyeballs are, that’s where the reach is, that’s where people spend their time, and there’s obviously, you know, a bunch of different social channels that’ll work, and they’re different in some markets as well.

So, it’s not just the organic posting in those channels. Brands have really got to spend money on the advertising products to reach their audience, even if they’ve organically grown to millions of fans or followers. You’ve now got to kind of pay to actually reach them. So, I think those two from a kind of performance perspective. Some of the apps, the ones that are doing this well, I think have understood that it’s got to be relevant and useful for the customer.

If we want an example of who’s doing this brilliantly, I think, or one of the ones who’ve really understood what digital transformation means, it’s probably Nike, who’ve got a whole digital division which is driving a huge amount of their revenue globally. And it’s…a lot of it, I think, comes from within. They’ve kind of empowered their staff to be creative as possible; they’ve got really nice kind of in-store experiences. Yeah, I think they’re focusing on what the customer really wants and helping them design their own sneakers, and there’s a sneakers app for example.

I think they haven’t just built stuff for the sake of it; they’ve really understood what’s going to be fun and what’s going to get the customers playing with their products more and then in the frame of mind of buying them.

Michael Have you seen the sneaker drop app that Nike has…

Ed Yeah. Right.

Michael …where it gives a picture of a location?

Ed Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Michael And the crowd has to find that location and then find the area where this limited edition or early release shoe is being “dropped”.

Ed Dropped. A little treasure hunt, yeah.

Michael And when they, yeah, they take the picture of that location, it’s AR where they can see the thing and it gives them access to early release shoes, and there end up being these crowds running around cities looking for these areas where the sneaker drops. It’s an app that translates into a social phenomenon.

Renato One of the interesting things about Nike that fascinates me is that they don’t think in terms of countries only or languages only; they think in terms of cities. There is a market for London, there is a market for Tokyo, there is a market for Sao Paulo, there is a market for San Francisco that is different from the market for New York. They have these megacities that they consider as significant markets for them, and it’s a different way of cutting geography, because a city like London is a city with over 300 languages that are spoken daily, and Nike has a whole strategy just for that city.

Ed With a lot of the targeting options that you’ve got, certainly within the social media ad platforms and Google and Microsoft and the search products, they understand exactly where these people are and they can serve ads based on the city location or even areas of the city location. There’s areas of London that would see themselves as very different, and I think they can just serve hundreds and hundreds of different experiences to people in different locations.

Yes so, it’s possible with all of these tools now, and I think a lot of it comes down to Nike actually just seem to be one of the brands that care enough to be doing this and have invested in it. And I think those are the ones that will win out.

Renato Those are the smart ones that know what they want, know what they need to do, and buy the services in a very structured way. People like me, who have no idea on how to do digital marketing, what do I need to know? How do I need to think about it?

Ed I don’t think it’s much different from marketing that we’ve always done. You’ve got to understand your market. You’ve got to understand your customers. You’ve got to understand what motivates them. And so, the planning side of it used to always be the case when our channels were TV and print and cinema. There was a lot of planning going in because the main hook of that was going to be creative, and I think that may have been lost a bit over time with all of the capabilities of digital and the targeting capabilities and knowing that you can reach people, you know, in a really personal way.

I think there’s more sort of a customization thing rather than personalization, and I think not really treating digital as this kind of silver bullet that’s going to solve everyone’s problems. I think if you plan these content campaigns or marketing campaigns, whatever they might be, in the way that, you know, a good marketer or a good advertiser always did, you’ll see which digital channels are most popular for your customer or are most popular in those markets and fit well with your brand or your product. Then, you won’t be too far away from the right answer.

I think it’s quite easy to get ‘shiny-object syndrome’ where there’s so many different options, and I’ve seen other brands that are totally reducing their TV spends, for example, and investing it purely into digital, and I haven’t seen that being wildly successful.

Renato What is a typical mistake that a company would make when localizing this digital experience?

Ed I think there’s been a number of missteps in understanding the culture. So, maybe you’re taking a piece of creative that fits perfectly for the culture and the timing in one market, and you’re tapping into a meme or some of the zeitgeist which is culturally going on in that country, and then thinking that’s going to work in a different location, which could then end up being just jarring with the audience or, in certain cases, being offensive. We’ve seen straplines, for example, when, again, they’ve been translated directly and it means something extremely offensive. One example is there’s a good reason why McDonald’s in France is still called The Big Mac, not Le Big Mac because that translate as ‘Big Pimp’ into French. So, that was a time when you didn’t need to transcreate and didn’t need to localize. So, I think, again, there’s times when knowing when *not* to do it is also important.

Renato Imagine I am a translator. That doesn’t make me necessarily [a] good digital marketer. What is the profile of a good digital marketing localizer?

Ed Being a good translator and a linguist would be one of the skill sets, I think, for being a good international marketer. Just taking your SEO example, there’s a lot of decent tools to help you plan and see what keywords are performing well or what are getting the highest searches in each market. So, I think it’s understanding what tools are at your disposal. Having a good understanding of culture, a good understanding of language, a good understanding of what resonates with people—an element of creativity, as well, I think is important. That’s one ares we spoke about earlier. I think that’s something that’s maybe getting lost, and I think if we look at the really great advertising campaigns, they’re all rooted in creativity that maybe isn’t something that the data points at, and it’s surprising. And a bit unexpected.

I think language, I think creativity, culture, I think, and being able to sort of have a broad understanding of data. There’s a lot of data there which comes out of some of these planning tools. So, I think if you can do it, or you’ve got some data analysts in your teams, then that combination of those is a pretty decent marketing skillset.

Renato You mentioned the element of memes and things like that, trying to convert something that doesn’t exist in a different culture into something that is searchable. I can see the challenge there.

Ed So, technology products in Germany, for example, when they’re searching for technology products, they’re using hybrids of English and German all the time. And so, a simple translation of that would just look very, very weird from a German perspective. And they don’t search using the sharp ‘s’ which is grammatically and linguistically correct in German. They’ll use double ‘s’ on the keyboard.

So, there’s little nuances like that that, yeah, a German living abroad may know and should know, but I think the longer that you’re out of your home country, it does help to get the quality control and the sense-checking done in that market by someone who’s actually there, not just speaks the language.

Michael Ed, what is the growth area within search right now?

Ed I’m quite bullish around voice search. I think that’s going to be a big one which is going to add another layer of complexity into this. We’re seeing what people are physically typing into their keyboards. Once it’s going to be predominantly people talking into their home assistants or talking into their laptops, and the search engines have to decipher people’s accents, slang—

Renato Yeah.

Ed —things like that, it will get really complex.

Renato It’s funny, it’s funny that you bring that up because yesterday I was asking some questions about French geography to Alexa. My Alexa is set up in English and I want to ask questions about populations in French-speaking countries and things like that. And then you say the name of a city with a French accent and it won’t recognize it. That’s absolutely a multilingual search challenge that we’re going to have.

Ed Exactly. And if there’s, yeah, loads of different people, different accents, nationalities in the same household, how’s it going to cipher through that? And, I think on a kind of just an advertising perspective point of view, I would be really interested to see how they monetize with that as well because, obviously, at the moment, with search on a desktop or a mobile, you’re seeing the ads—and a number of different ads will come up there—but it’s not that invasive. It’s actually one of the better forms of advertising, I think, because it sort of fits in the experience quite well. I don’t know how they’re going to be able to serve as many ads and how they’re going to rank which ones they’re going to give you from a voice search.

Michael “Population of cities that are French-speaking brought to you by Coca-Cola!” Clearly. Clearly.

[Laughter]

Ed Sponsoring of the entire category, possibly, yeah, yeah.

Michael Right? I love that…I mean, that’s wild.

Ed But, for the search engines that are so focused on providing the best answers for people, or the most relevant, I just, I worry, maybe it’s going to be who’s paying the most.

Michael Yeah, it’s fascinating. Humans are very good at code-switching and picking up on it. Machines, that’s a bit of a challenge for them.

Ed Yeah, it is.

Renato What is something that you are working on that is new and exciting for you?

Ed Some of the stuff that we are working on is what we spoke about, actually: combining search and search data to inform the content, and transcreating and adapting and knowing when to do that. So, there’s a few clients that we’re doing this for and they’re using a lot of their content that they’re producing to power search and power their SEO performance.

Renato So, imagine that I am a professional in the language services and I want to extend my line of services to my client. And I want to talk about digital marketing. What do I need to know from my client in order to be able to offer these types of services? What kinds of questions do you ask a potential buyer for digital services when you approach them?

Ed I think the first bit would be overall marketing business objectives. I mean, from a higher level. What are we really trying to do? Because there’s different products for different things. If it’s we want to raise awareness of our product in a certain market, then you’ve got to use, I think, more immersive types of content, different media, so, video. I’d probably sort of go higher up the food chain to TV at that point as well.

Are we just trying to sell loads and loads of products in a certain market? I think probably direct response and retargeting through social media, that would be another one. Is it we want to know which markets we should be even entering? Then there’s a whole analysis and research piece based on competitor analysis.

Ed And even how much it’s going to cost to break into those markets, because there’s various tools within search that will show you how much the people winning on those keywords at the moment, how much roughly they’re spending to be the top search result. So, you can say, right, we desperately want to be into this market and we’re selling cheap holidays, or something. Well, that’s going to cost us a fortune to get in there. But, if that is the market where your product’s going to resonate well with those customers, maybe that’s worth it.

So, I think it’s those kinds of high-level business decisions. I hope localization gets their seat at the table with that as well, because it’s got a huge, huge part in it, and I think the successful digital marketing campaigns I’m seeing ever since I’ve been here, that if you localize it properly, it performs better.

Renato Are you aware of any markets where transcreation and re-creation is better than localization, or other markets where localization works totally fine? Do you have any experience or any data related to that?

Ed Yeah. We did a test ages ago where we were testing out WeChat. We kind of isolated it to that platform because that had the most users at the time, and still does. I think we tried three things actually: machine translation, and then taking content and just adapting it, then someone in China recreating from scratch. And the posts that were created from scratch in the market performed a lot better, but cost a lot more.

It’s just whether people can afford to do that in each market. So, again, I think it’s about you pick your battles to begin with.

Michael One of the things I heard from you is that digital marketing allows you to experiment a lot more than traditional campaigns. You can get data back, you can adjust, people can move more quickly…

Ed Pull it down. It’s harder to pull a TV ad.

Michael Right, it’s hard to pull a TV ad. After you’ve invested all of this in some type of print advertising, you just hope it’s perfect. Whereas, a lot of people within digital are constantly experimenting and optimizing.

Ed You saw last year when Pepsi had to pull that ad with Kendall Jenner in it, when they were kind of riffing on Black Lives Matter.

Michael It was the protest commercial.

Ed Right, exactly. And then she comes out with a can of Pepsi and disperses the crowd and everyone’s happy again. And that was just a bit culturally insensitive, and that was in the US. They should have known that.

You know, sometimes, and it’s…I don’t know, I don’t think anyone does this stuff deliberately. It’s just that you can see how it does fall through the net sometimes, unless you’ve got a few checks and balances on it, especially if it’s an in-house creative team that comes up with these things. They’re so into their brand that I think they don’t think, well, how would that play out in Germany or in Russia or in the Middle East or whatever it may be?

Michael We need to bring back the old “I’d like to teach the world to sing” campaign!

[Laughter]

Ed There we go. That just works everywhere, doesn’t it?

Michael It does.