

A Preview of Topics and Trends in 2017

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25 January, 2017

At the beginning of every year, I publish an overview that highlights some topics and trends in several sectors that impact my recruiting practice and the positions for which our clients are recruiting. Whatever your business may be, these are topics and trends that are inevitably impacting your company, your customers, and your life. The topics vary, but I believe they will be helpful in giving you some new insight and perspective. In each case, these industry forecasts for the coming year are changing what companies will be doing on several fronts.

Topics and Trends Making Waves in Marketing

- The negative attention and news surrounding, for example, Wells Fargo, Samsung, Volkswagen, the Epi-Pen Company Mylan, Chipotle, and even Whole Foods will continue to accentuate the importance of companies and brands continuing to work hard to create a relationship with their consumers based on trust and the need to be very transparent.
- There will be a huge increase in the use of digital assistants and chatbots such as Siri, Alexa, Cortana, and Google Assistant. In 2016, 45% of adults in the U.S. already used these forms of artificial intelligence
- *Transparency* has been called the “power word of the year.” Transparency will be critical in everything a company and a brand do. The consumer’s access to information via the 24-hour news cycle, social media, blogs, SmartLabel, technology, and other social-influencers will provide instant access to news and information, good or bad.
- The runner up for “power word of the year” is *authenticity*.

The Ebb and Flow of Government Regulation

- This is not a political statement, but under now President Trump’s new administration, the direction and priorities of

regulation could affect everything from plant and factory safety to food safety. It is difficult to predict at this time how things may change in the upcoming year under a new administration, but one thing that seems apparent is regulation across the board will likely be loosened.

How to Keep Up with the Various “-tarian” Consumers

- With a ramp-up in consumers becoming vegetarian, pescatarian, flexitarian, paleo, and vegan on top of preferences for organic, natural, non-GMO, sustainability (the list goes on and on). CPG companies will be challenged to keep up with the public’s various restrictions and preferences.

Flavor Topics and Trends for 2017 Include

- Global flavors, particularly of the Middle Eastern variety. Dishes featuring spices such as cumin, fennel, and coriander are rising in popularity.
- Fermented food and drink, particularly the beverage Kombucha, is becoming a huge trend in retail. Sprouted wheat is another example. These things have huge appeal to health-focused consumers.
- Sweet and salty have now been trumped by spicy as the preferred flavor, including sweet and spicy.

No matter what industry or function you are in, 2017 will be a year of change like no other. There are a lot of things in play and flux. Staying on top of these topics and trends at the micro and macro level must be a priority.

Have a great year!

*[*Note: Sources include CMO.com, foodbusinessnews.net, smartbrief.com, and Hartman Group.*]*