

The metaphor of the Age of Aquarius

By  Gillian Rightford

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Whether this year actually brings the end of the world as we know it or not, 2012 is an interesting year from an astrological point of view.



Here's what one expert says:

"The coming together of Jupiter, Neptune and Chiron [the healer] is this millennium's Star of Bethlehem," says astrologer [Mark Borax](#).

It's the launchpad to 2012 and the full emersion into the Age of Aquarius....It's an ignition point, says Borax, to speed the evolution to the essence of who we are.

And, with this triple conjunction, he invites us to get past the cloud of gloom, and focus on the rays of light. He writes, "Regardless of your birth sign, the Aquarian in you - the future being in you that your old self was an early prototype of, gets the go-ahead to come out, come out wherever you are."

"As everything falls apart, the time is right to crack open to the new. Dowsed by this powerful celestial event, old stories have to change or die. Old structures fail. Old stories give way to deeper stories of the soul that were always hidden within them."

Peek in crystal ball

So what does this mean for our world, as we know it? Let's take a peek in the crystal ball.

1. Digital comes of age

[Aquarius](#) traditionally "rules" electricity, computers, flight, democracy, freedom, humanitarianism, idealists, modernisation, astrology, nervous disorders (more about this later), rebels and rebellion. So the trend will increasingly move towards accepting digital as is, not digital as special or different or only for some people. The digital world continues its merger with the old world.

2. Digital4all

Mobile will drive the lower income groups' engagement with digital, catapulting the power of the platform.

3. ATL, BTL, UX?

The notion that 'digital' has to be treated differently in the communication field will fade and instead its true potential will be accessed through merger, collaboration, experience, learning and creativity. The current industry structure will not last.

4. Traditional structures are broken down

In fact, all traditional business and service-delivery models will continue to have their existence (and costs) challenged and broken down to improve efficiencies and relevance to the user.

This will apply whether it's an insurance policy, a government, or the way an ad agency or a production house is

structured and charges. It will also apply to rigid work hours and an insistence on coming to the office. The same old way of working won't work for anyone.

The spotlight will turn on companies making excessive profit, particularly the mobile companies, as data consumption and storage needs multiply.

5. It's not on the box

The consumption of media in ways different to what was originally imagined will continue. Those who adapt will survive, those who don't, won't. But it doesn't mean every soapie or newspaper has to go digital.

"When the world zigs, we zag," says [BBH](#). Traditional models may be able to zag, and turn their experience into something worth the diversion. (Read the brilliant book by satirist Gary Shteyngart, [A Super Sad True Love Story](#), for a view of the future).

6. It's all about creativity, stupid

Creativity will be recognised as a staggering business tool, and the era of the paint-by-numbers approach to advertising will start its death rattle.

Anyone who has read Steve Jobs' biography, and still thinks that creative people only exist in ad agencies to win awards, is a moron. Creative people exist in the world's best businesses, and more creativity is needed to unlock powerful consumer engagement, not less.

But creativity isn't just an ad. And, actually, it never was.

7. Experience = confirmation

Brands will increasingly be held to account in social forums: what they promise has to match what they deliver. In every way.

8. Rebellion against 'a million little lies'

Consumer vigilantism will grow, especially as the income demographic of participation broadens in South Africa, and the less affluent, who are more ripped off, realise they have a strong voice. It's about rebellion against untruth.

9. Do, not tell

The flip-side of this is that more and more brands will cross the line through to creating content, experiences and philanthropy, in order to let consumers feel the brand through living it. And with this cross-over from clear marketing communication to "wait a minute, was that an ad?" will come some ethical challenges.

10. Are you talking to me?

Technology will allow more personal, customised advertising - whether it's on the internet, on your phone, on a billboard you drive past. The ads will know you, your friends, what you like and don't, and talk to you in ways that will either give you the creeps or make you wonder how they knew that (from my [2011 trends prediction](#))!

This will bring a renewed focus on privacy: an "old story" for some, but a drawing of the line for others.

11. I'm talking to you!

The consumer will continue to grow their dialogue with their favourite brands, becoming more involved in the creative process through marketers' efforts to get them to feel closer to the brand.

12. And finally, I'm OTG

As the internet and mobile define how we consume information, go about our daily tasks, and talk to each other, people will need to get 'off the grid' in order to avoid serious 'nervous disorder'. This will become harder due to the spread of technology, everywhere, always on, and therefore increasingly more valuable a commodity. The OTG experience will become sought-after, if you can do cold turkey.

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ABOUT GILLIAN RIGHTFORD

Gillian's CV is a mix of marketing, strategy, advertising, and leadership. She obtained a Business Science (Honours) degree in Marketing from UCT, worked in marketing strategy consulting, then headed into the creative world, doing account management and strategy for below and above the line agencies, before becoming co-founder and managing director of Hercules/DMB&B, and then group managing director of Lowe Bull...

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