

# MARKETING WEEKENDER™

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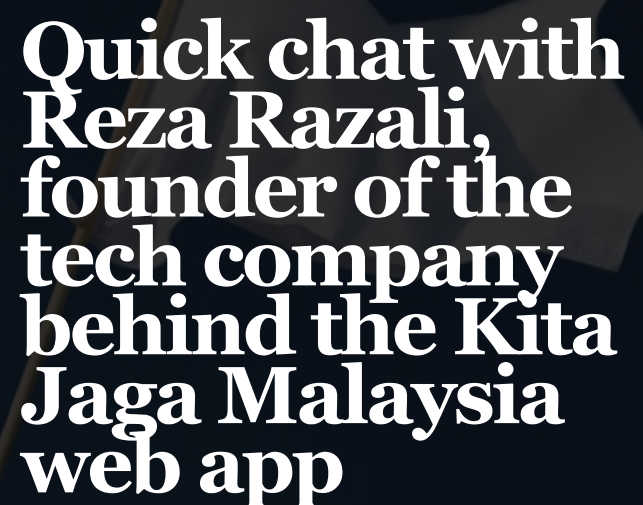
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# Say What



“THE MORE YOU SEEK THE UNCOMFORTABLE, THE MORE YOU’LL BECOME COMFORTABLE.”

**Conor McGregor, mixed martial artist and boxer.**



“THE WORLD WILL CHANGE WHEN IT MAKES GOOD BUSINESS SENSE.”

**Simon Ulrich**



“IN THE END, THERE IS NO IDEAL CONDITION FOR CREATIVITY. WHAT WORKS FOR ONE PERSON IS USELESS FOR ANOTHER. THE ONLY CRITERION IS THIS: MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF. FIND A WORKING ENVIRONMENT WHERE THE PROSPECT OF WRESTLING WITH YOUR MUSE DOESN’T SCARE YOU, DOESN’T SHUT YOU DOWN. IT SHOULD MAKE YOU WANT TO BE THERE, AND ONCE YOU FIND IT, STICK WITH IT.”

**Twyla Tharp**

## EDITOR'S NOTE



# Letter from the Editor

*“Music carries dreams. It helps us imagine who we want to become, where we want to be, who we want to be with. Locked down in our houses, uncertain when this pandemic will end, we have to keep dreaming of days ahead. We need love songs. We need songs about hugs and physical touch. We need songs about all the simple things we never knew we were taking for granted as we blew through life. Let these songs fuel our dreams and embolden hope.” - Chris Sikora*

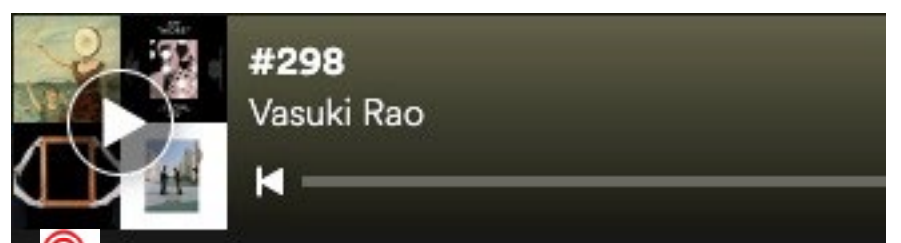
Since I lost my father in March last year, the two most important truths I’ve learned are that at the core of grief, lies an immense amount of love that just has no place to go and that human mortality requires the accompaniment of music.

The first truth matters to this Weekender issue because as you scroll through the content we’ve put together in an attempt to address the collective grief we are facing as a nation and an industry, remember that at the core of these stories lies a whole lotta love.

Love in the way some of these industry leaders have managed crisis after crisis while taking into account their employees’ well-being; love in the way colleagues have had each others’ backs in the toughest of times; love in the way communities have rallied together to take matters into their own hand and love in our ability to use radical empathy to minimise suffering.

The second truth was mentioned just so I can insert a short playlist of songs that could potentially meet you in our grief, lift your spirits and let you dream in the way only music can.

*Vasuki Rao*



CLICK HERE  
TO LISTEN TO  
THE PLAYLIST



# Rebuilding? Look to Rome!

Italy, the third most successful footballing nation in terms of World Cups, failed to qualify for Russia 2018, for the first time in 60 years. This Mamma Mia moment left the country in shock, its soccer administration pilloried, and its coach understandably fired. Fast forward to 3 years later, and the Azzurri (the Blues) end up winning Euro 2020. Along the way they vanquish dark horses Turkey, world number 1 ranked Belgium, always-formidable Spain and the quasi-hosts England, playing in front of a raucous, partisan crowd.

Italian coach Roberto Mancini, who broke Sir Alex Ferguson's heart with Manchester City in England, and won several League titles in Italy, is credited with turning around the nation's narrative. His work and Italy's progress offers plenty of strategy lessons for us to learn from, when we are shaping our own rebuilds from the pandemic.

1. **FEARLESS AMBITION:** Mancini believed, when even his players thought he was kidding. In one of his earliest team talks, he said their first goal was to win Euro 2020. Perhaps a

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

blessing in hideous disguise was the postponement of the tournament due to the ravages of Covid-19. It gave Mancini more time to prep his ragazzi (the lads). Management thinkers talk about BHAG: big, hairy, audacious goals. Mancini definitely thought BHAG. Businesses need to re-look at their own futures, and think big, now that the world is re-opening.

## 2. A TEAM OF TRUSTWORTHY COLLABORATORS:

Businesses and football teams need cronyism of the best kind. Mancini remembered and honoured his colleagues from the days when he was a rampaging striker himself, in title-collecting team Sampdoria in the 1980s and 90s. For his coaching staff he hired Gianluca Vialli as Chief Delegate, his former striking partner, despite the man battling pancreatic cancer at that time. There were at least four other players from the Sampdoria era in his staff, and this network of trusted allies helped create a positive vibe and team spirit. Tournament football often depends on team spirit more than skills, as

teammates don't play or train together often.

3. **CREATE YOUR OWN STYLE:** Italy is historically known for its dour defence, called *catenaccio*. *Catenaccio* means «door-bolt», which implies a very organised and resolute backline defence focused on nullifying opponents' attacks. It is highly effective and highly boring too, in contrast to the fizzy football of Brazil in the 70s and 80s. However, the footballing world was shocked when Italy turned up at Euro 2020 playing some of the most attacking and attractive football. Mancini had thrown away the traditional conservatism, and Italy dominated possession in most games, more like how Spain or Brazil play. It surprised their opponents and won them games. Businesses too need to redefine themselves and not get stuck with traditions that may not be relevant anymore, especially when the pandemic has re-written many rules.
4. **TIRAMISU MIX OF AGE AND YOUTH:** Italy featured some of the oldest players in the tournament, with its centre-backs, Chiellini,

## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

## ... The Italians managed to change it to “It’s Coming to Rome!”

aged 36 and Bonucci, aged 34. There were fears these veterans would be outrun by youthful attackers, but they pulled through using their age, guile and wiles to thwart most teams. Italy only conceded 3 times in the whole tournament. At the same time, other positions were filled with youthful exuberance. The Man of the Tournament was their 22 year old goalkeeper, Gianluigi Donnarumma (in some ways a veteran, since he started playing aged 17). Federico Chiesa, their eye-catching winger and the best attacker of the tournament, is only 23. Like Italy, a good business team needs a mix of seasoned wisdom and youthful courage.

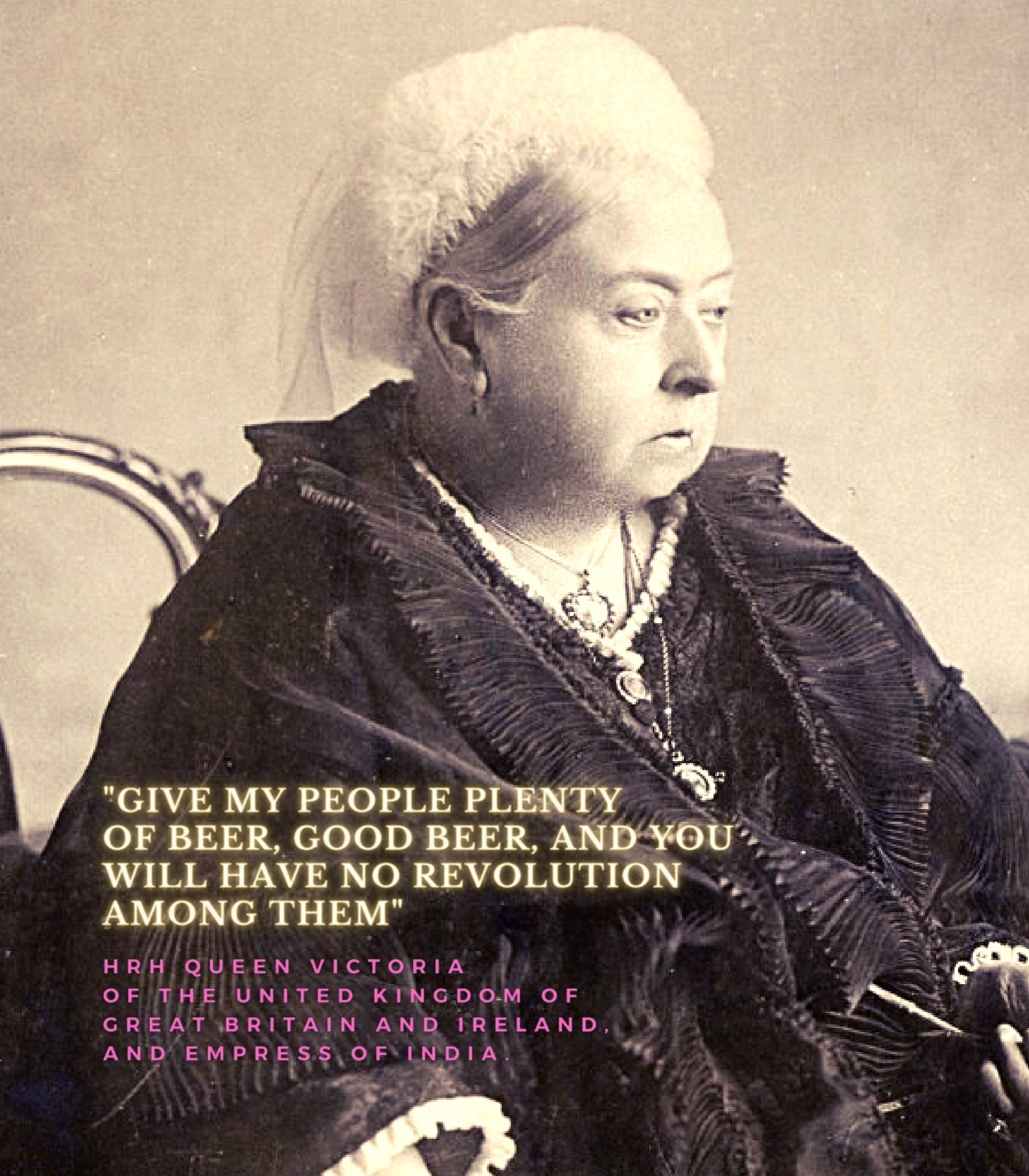
5. **ROLL WITH THE PUNCHES:** Perhaps Mancini’s best trait is his ability to adapt his team and tactics as a game progresses. Against Belgium, Italy came out playing champagne football and pinned back the higher-

ranked team. Against Spain, Italy was outpassed considerably, and hung on grimly. Against England, in a hostile Wembley atmosphere, they were shocked in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute. Yet they fought their way back, and dominated thereafter, finally winning narrowly. Businesses too need to adapt, and be ready to throw away pre-prepared formulas to win.

The English had a memorable, ironic song, “It’s Coming Home”. The Italians managed to change it to “It’s Coming to Rome!” By looking Romewards, business builders and entrepreneurs can also manage to win Great Reopen at work.


*Sandeep Joseph is the CEO and co-founder of Ampersand Advisory, a strategic media and data-driven consultancy. The company’s mission is “business results now!” and it has won numerous local and international awards. The views expressed here are the author’s own: you can debate with him at [sandeep@ampersand-advisory.com](mailto:sandeep@ampersand-advisory.com)*





"GIVE MY PEOPLE PLENTY  
OF BEER, GOOD BEER, AND YOU  
WILL HAVE NO REVOLUTION  
AMONG THEM"

HRH QUEEN VICTORIA  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF  
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND,  
AND EMPRESS OF INDIA.



Do ask the friendly bartender  
about our icy, cold beers. You might find  
them a tad colder than your ex-wife.



The British Raj

A CONTEMPORARY ANGLO-INDIAN KITCHEN



# In the Face of Grief: A Choice to Reflect, Re-Imagine & Reset

*by Vasuki Rao*

Putting into words the scale of suffering we as humans have felt over the last 16 months, has forced me to examine the complexity of the pandemic beyond its superficial implications as a virus in the vein of the common flu. COVID-19 is relentless and even if it doesn't kill you it exerts control over your life through a myriad of negative emotions such as fatigue, boredom, bitterness, loneliness and grief – especially grief.

In Malaysia grieving the loss of normalcy caused by the pandemic is intersected with an

## COVER STORY



unprecedented political climate that renders a weak government, rising unemployment rates, business shutdowns, burnt out frontliners, a collapsing health-care system and nationwide hunger; as each crisis intensifies our emotional state.

For many, the collective grief felt across the country has invaded their sense of inspiration and motivation; feelings that are often cited as the cornerstone of a creative industry.

Six different industry professionals were interviewed for this feature, in an attempt to underscore not just the complexity of our current

situation but also highlight the similarities in our experience.

### **How is our industry feeling?**

Echoing sentiments on the ground, Executive Producer of Mastermind Group, Jehan Miskin, said he's felt a variety of emotions over the last couple of months.

"Starting with relief during the lockdown in May when cases were rising, to concern when the curve did not flatten, to fear over the uncertainty of the endless lockdown which turned to horror as I watched the horrendous governance during the biggest crisis of our times," Jehan explained. "Recently I've been

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*Jehan Miskin working from home with his trusted MCO buddies*

the ineffective and damaging lockdown decisions that are causing tremendous amounts of damage to our people, economy and healthcare systems.”

Another industry veteran, Farhan Hafetz, responded similarly. Farhan - who recently left his position as Head of Group Marketing for FGV Products to join Baba’s as the Communications and Consumer Marketing Manager - shared how this “rollercoaster ride” affects his feelings at work as the ambiguity is echoed in day-to-day work life.

“On one hand, you feel like you’ve gone through this before and you can get through this, but on the other, there’s also a



*Farhan Hafetz during a WFH lunch hour with his children*

**“On one hand, you feel like you’ve gone through this before and you can get through this, but on the other, there’s also a perpetual feeling of uncertainty,”**

**- Farhan Hafetz**

perpetual feeling of uncertainty,” he said. “From a marketer’s perspective, if we keep having a ‘wait and see’ approach, then a lot of things will be delayed indefinitely, which may result in opportunity loss and so we somehow have to learn to go with the flow.”

When asked if he has felt a sense of monotony at work, Farhan said that isn’t the case for him. Instead, the main challenge has been figuring out what can

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*Nizwani Shahar in her usual working spot, juggling three devices at once*

and cannot be done as companies try to navigate the constant changes to national SOPs.

“Plans are made without knowing when it can be executed, if at all and this potentially leads to a sense of underachievement and frustration,” Farhan added. “It’s tough to be continuously excited at work when it’s unclear whether you’re being productive

**“In my position, there is a sense that I am not allowed to ‘break’ as there are many that look to me for assurance, hope, help and direction.”**

**- Nizwani Shahar**

or not.”

So how do we reconcile with the impossibility of maintaining full motivation and productivity at work as we stare down the barrel of uncertainty?

According to the CEO of Ogilvy Malaysia, Nizwani Shahar, because there are multiple tracks of worries and priorities at play during these uncertain times, it is only human that anxiety and sadness can set in.

“In my position, there is a sense that I am not allowed to ‘break’ as there are many that look to me for assurance, hope, help and direction,” Nizwani said. “In the past 16 months, I’ve learned that it’s really ok to allow ourselves a few minutes to grieve the situation we all find ourselves in; but quickly stop feeding the

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**“Regardless, this pandemic, in all its ravages, offers our industry a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our culture.”**

we can control and surrender the outcome for everything else.”

Nizwani’s words most probably resonate with many leaders even beyond our industry as there’s no denying that in times of crises, employees look to them for guidance.

While there’s no easy measure on whether this sense of responsibility prevents emotional volatility or causes it, taking the temperature among those in executives and junior management positions offers an added perspective.

One senior executive who works as a strategist for a digital advertising agency, offered to share her experience, while remaining anonymous.

When asked if she has felt

a sense of exhaustion and demoralisation when it comes to work, she answered yes.

“It feels as if although I am working on different projects, it is the same old cycle and although I have enjoyed working from home or remotely, it also feels as if the expectation to be available to jump right into work mode at any time and any day is somewhat amplified,” she explained. “It is exhausting and some days it does feel that I am wasting my days away to futility.”

To prevent spiraling into negative feelings, writer and health advocate, Malathi Siniah, said every morning, she writes 3 things she is grateful for; a new practice suggested by her coach that has helped to train her mind to focus on the good in each day.

“It has helped me tremendously, honestly it’s so simple and not to mention free,” Malathi added. “Apart from that, when I feel bored I try to look at what new skill I can learn and currently I’m trying my hand at Podcasting on a subject matter that really inspires me, which definitely breaks the monotony.”

**Same storm, different boat**

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While the last year and a half has been hard on generally everyone, there's no denying that certain circumstances such as socioeconomic disparity, lack of space at home, isolation from family & friends due to inter-state travel restrictions and pre-existing mental health conditions, all play a part in how an individual copes with the stresses of our current reality.

As a leader and as colleagues, identifying these nuances among team members' circumstances is imperative not only for employee well-being but also business continuity.

Nizwani shared that even prior to the pandemic, Ogilvy teamed up with The Mind Faculty to establish an Employee Mental Health Programme. She explained that the programme was introduced by Ogilvy to ensure its people have an avenue to support their emotional and mental wellbeing.

"Apart from that, we made it a point to speak to and engage each person on an individual level; to better understand their personal situation, family arrangements and if there is support needed," Nizwani added. "We have also made sure

to work around our people's personal requirements and priorities – flexi-arrangements are in place to ensure work and home can co-exist better and be more sustainable."

On the other hand, the anonymous senior executive added another valuable tip. She said that noticing the background noises that happen during calls can be quite telling of a colleague's living condition and can also be a great conversation starter beyond work related matters.

"Chatting with my colleagues as fellow humans during calls and via chat apps have also helped team camaraderie," she said.

Echoing this, Farhan emphasised the importance of creating a safe space where team members feel comfortable sharing the challenges they are facing, without worrying about how it might affect their job security.

"They need to know that they're not alone in facing the pandemic and this needs to be managed on a case-by-case basis," Farhan said. "As a team, it's also good to have sharing sessions where everyone can

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share their challenges and well-being in a relaxed group setting, instead of just updating on work progress or presenting reports.”

The unifying sentiment that reverberates through the different perspectives offered by these industry professionals is the importance of open communication. Perhaps this is a juxtaposition to the reality that open communication, as a core value, is oftentimes lacking in Asian workplaces. Or maybe it is an indication that our work culture still has a tendency of perpetuating the fear that honest disclosure will only result in negative perceptions of one’s capabilities or value within a company.

Regardless, this pandemic, in all its ravages, offers our industry a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our culture.

Finally, as Malathi so aptly said while sharing her experience, “I believe in the healing power of stories which is why I’m open to sharing my own; stories build empathy and as a nation hurting this is one of the many things we all need.”

“Or maybe it is an indication that our work culture still has a tendency of perpetuating the fear that honest disclosure will only result in negative perceptions of one’s capabilities or value within a company.”



*Work Unusual- Malathi Sinniah preparing to present as a speaker at a virtual Regional Conference, last year.*

COVER STORY



# Putting name to a feeling

While arguably a more western sentiment, neuroscientists have put out a theory that clearly identifying our feelings and re-categorising them can reduce the suffering associated with it.

Lisa Feldman Barrett, who is among the top 1% most cited scientists in the world for her revolutionary research in psychology and neuroscience, explains this theory below:

“Suppose you knew only two emotion concepts: “Feeling Awesome” and “Feeling Crappy.” Whenever you experienced an emotion or perceived someone else as emotional, you’d categorise only with this broad brush, which isn’t very emotionally intelligent. But if you could distinguish finer meanings within “Awesome” (happy, content, thrilled, relaxed, joyful, hopeful, inspired, prideful, adoring, grateful, blissful . . .), and fifty shades of “Crappy” (angry, aggravated, alarmed, spiteful, grumpy, remorseful, gloomy, mortified, uneasy, dread-ridden, resentful, afraid, envious, woeful, melancholy . . .), your brain would have many more options for predicting, categorizing and perceiving emotions, providing you with the tools for more flexible and useful responses.”

## COVER STORY

Relating to this theory, in May this year, The New York Times released an article that assigned the word languishing as the dominant emotion felt in 2021.

“Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness (and) it feels as if you’re muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield,” the article states.

While the NYT article was written in an American context as the country was coming out of its lockdown and going into some resemblance of normalcy (US), the term has caught on in Malaysia through several mainstream media such as The Star and BFM.

So the question is, how prevalent is this feeling among our industry? Here’s what some industry professionals had to say when asked if the NYT article resonated with them:

*“Blah. No, it doesn’t resonate with me cos I’m not a blah person. I’ve basically reduced my expectations in regards to quality of life, and am approaching this uncertain time as an adventure. Adventures are always uncomfortable when you’re doing it, many times its downright scary too, but when we look back at them, they*

*can be some of our most cherished times of our life. It also helps that I have a 5 month old baby that makes every day feel fresh with something new, and drives me to do better.”*

**- Jehan Miskin** (Executive Producer, Mastermind Group)

*“The NYT article very accurately described how many of us feel right now. Work has always presented a set of challenges and excitement. However, before Covid, we were able to signpost long work tracks with a vacation, we would punctuate a long week with meaningful weekends with family, friends and outlets or activities that not only enabled us to destress, but to recharge. This somehow allowed work to be so much more meaningful and fun.*

*Now, it seems we roll from one day to another with a prolonged sense of monotony to get beyond the task, the pitch, the job. There is a distinct lack of feel-good moments; not being able to see what awesome looks like at the end of the day. Or it’s just harder to distinguish those moments.” -*  
**Nizwani Shahar** (CEO, Ogilvy Malaysia)

*“Sure to an extent we all have felt a sense of sombreness but personally I try to look at things from another*

## COVER STORY

*perspective. In such a time, I have a roof over my head, a job, food on the table and am blessed with the prospects of helping another individual. So I would encourage everyone to do a self evaluation, as while we are all on the same storm, we are not on the same boat. So let's count our blessings (for those who can) and encourage and support those who need the support. We need to rise above this.” - **Santharuban Thurai Sundaram** (CEO, Atlas Vending Pte Ltd)*

*“Yes, it does (resonate with me) and it's important to acknowledge that. These past 16 months have been far from normal and it takes*

*time for the body and mind to adjust. I once would have said no, having been caught up in the hustle culture where I would suppress these feelings thinking it does not help me. The thing I have realised is being aware of my emotions helps me become more motivated and productive. When I feel languished or 'Blah', I acknowledge that feeling and try to find what caused the feeling either through therapy, meditation, mindfulness or writing. I find that not all the time the root cause of this feeling is the pandemic.” - **Malati Siniah** (Writer & Health Advocate)*





# Quick chat with Reza Razali,

founder of the tech company behind  
the Kita Jaga Malaysia web app

Amid the political spectacle mired in endless power struggles exhausting Malaysians in a prolonged lockdown, the quick-wittedness of local developers at the Bangi-based, Terato Tech, led to the development of the **Kita Jaga Malaysia web app** which currently hosts over half a million visitors daily.

According to the founder of Terato Tech, Reza Razali, the web app was initially developed as a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for the team to test out if

the concept of **putting up a white flag** on a digital map, with a clear call to action, would enable people to more easily provide or seek help.

Needless to say, the convenience of a peer-to-peer transaction that the platform enables, caught on faster than the developers anticipated.

Speaking to **MARKETING Magazine**, Reza shares his team's experience developing kitajaga.co and how Malaysians have used the web app to mobilise aid



**Reza Razali**  
Founder of Terato Tech

to those in need, in a scale like never before.

**Can you describe the experience of developing the web app, launching it, and within a day, seeing more traffic than you had anticipated?**

Definitely. For us, when we first started developing it, we were a tech company with the intention of building a POC because we knew it takes a lot of guts to put up the flag physically, by yourself. Maybe we knew this because we didn't see many flags in the kampung areas or nearby Bangi. So we thought that if we could provide them something digital, then they would do it.

The team went ahead and developed over three days and once that was done, we published it online on a Monday. And we crashed on the first day itself because we had about 50,000 visitors on a platform that was initially supposed to be a POC. But being a technology company, we went back, optimised and then launched it back up. On Tuesday, we got another 50,000 visitors. Then the next day, on Wednesday, we had about half a million people come into the website. So that was amazing. I mean, to see our tech withstand that kind of traffic, that was very interesting for us as it was built and optimised

over the span of three days.

But the feedback that we received was much more amazing than the tech. We were able to coordinate activities and at scales we did not did not foresee as possible before this. Because prior, if you wanted to donate to or help someone in your area, you would need to go to a local organisation or a local food bank and then they would send your donation to those who might need it. But this time around, this web app was able to coordinate peer-to-peer activity. So if someone needs help, help is on their way within minutes, or in less than an hour compared. Even on the first day when we launched on Monday, we had so many cases of people who had put up the flag, reaching out to me on Twitter asking me to take it down because they had received enough. Some would say "I only need RM 100 to survive the next two weeks and then send me screenshots of their bank account to show that they had already received RM300 and it was more than enough so they'd like their flag to be removed." There was even a Twitter thread that showed how some people were only

looking for 4 pieces of onions and nothing more. This changes the whole perspective right?

### **What has surprised you the most through this experience?**

When we started we did not think that the white flag movement was this huge. But our data shows that every day at least a minimum of 5000 new flags were raised on the platform. And then what's also mind blowing is that we suddenly have evangelists all over the country with people setting up volunteer groups and running donation drives to collect money to be distributed to their local community.

Because we are fairly decentralised, we at Terato are like the custodians to this project but there is no specific leader to the kitajaga movement. So everyone is just trying to help their local community which was the aim of the project -we wanted people to look for flags nearby instead of looking far. The idea is you go and help out your neighbours, right?. So that has happened fairly well, for both sides - for the recipients who need just enough and for the community that mobilises the

**KITAJAGA.CO**

resources. We've also seen that there are always more people who want to give out aid than those who need it. The ratio is about 2 to 1 now. I don't have the latest numbers right now, but based on the numbers from Saturday, there were about 15,000 Blue Flags (providing help) and 7,500 white flags (seeking help) and the ratio has consistently been that way. So for us that has also been interesting to learn.

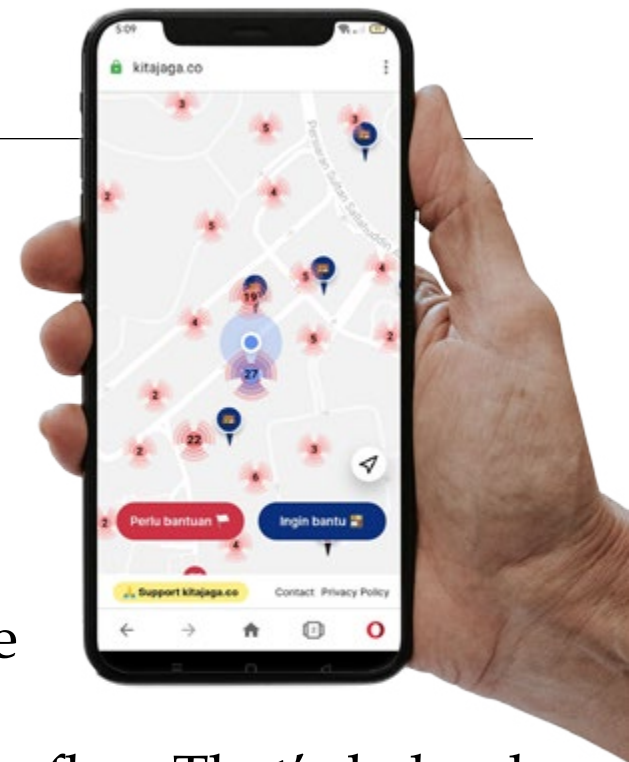
**Can you tell me a little bit more about your challenges with scams or abuse of the web app and what you and your team have done to address it?**

When we first launched, there were people who were sharing some of the "troll postings" they came across on the app. Such as people requesting for Musang King or an iPhone. I guess some people found that to be a funny thing to do. So then we realised that we need to develop a mechanism to rule these out and implemented a feature where people can report all suspicious activities, clearly. Then we also had cases where some people were putting up more than one pin on the flag using the same phone number. So now what we

have done is we no longer allow people to put up the same phone number twice or more than one pin on the flag. That's helped us reduce that kind of activity. So it has been a journey to make the platform a lot more secure for us. When we find the loophole, we immediately see how to fix it and we also normally take down the website at 8pm every night to implement those changes.

**What do you foresee this app becoming once the white flag movement subsides?**

Of course, as an individual, I hope the movement will die off and people will no longer need it as the economy will kickstart itself again. But looking at the feel on the ground, I believe it might take some time. So for us, we will try to upkeep the website for as long as it benefits the people because we started this project mostly as a CSR. We did not build this with the intent to monetize. So from our end right now our principle is very clear, we will keep the website up as long as people find it useful.



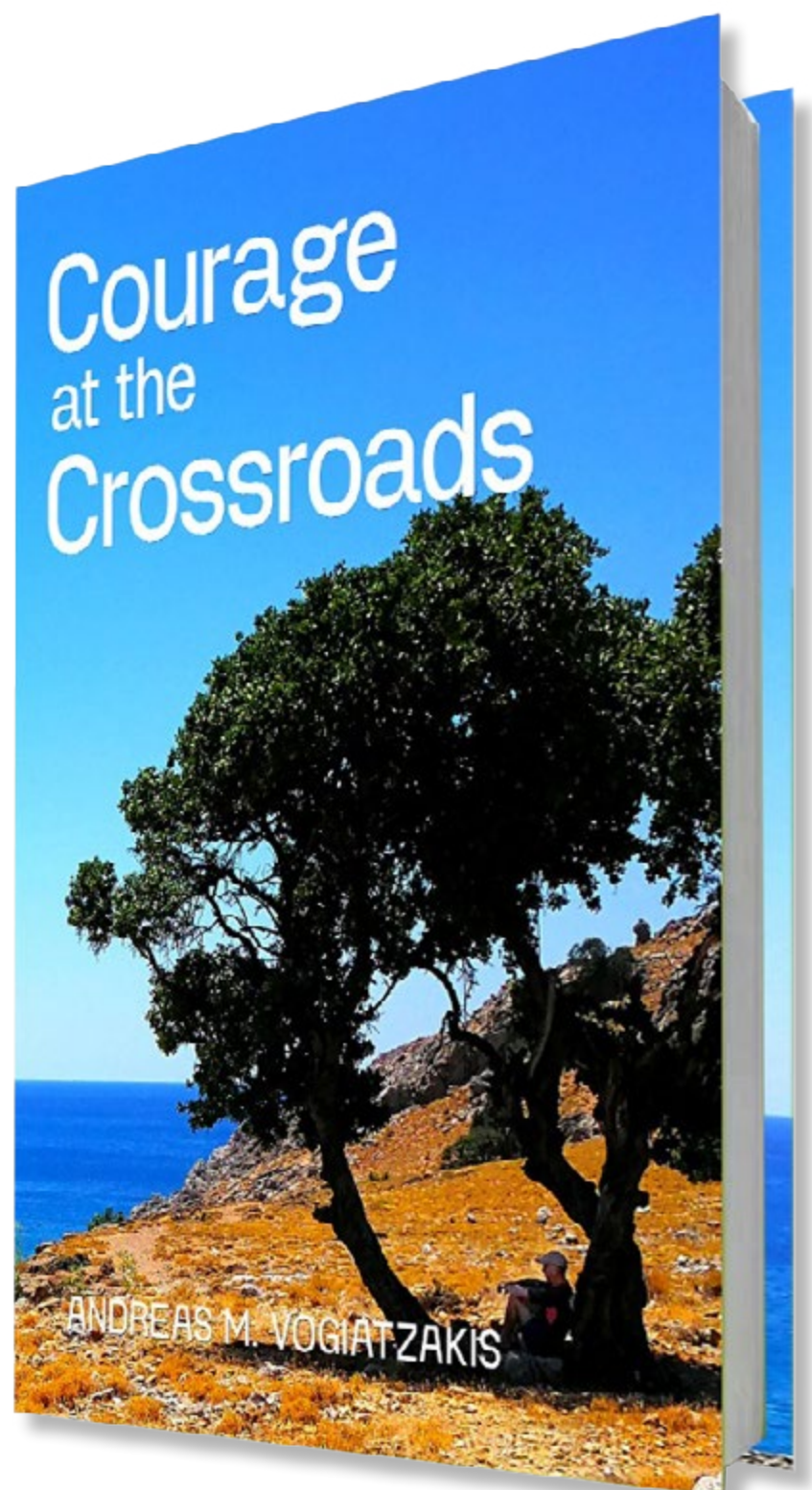
## READ THE BOOK

# The Magic Lies in the Process

*Andreas Vogiatzakis launches his first book, an introspective self-portrait through words*

**Andreas Vogiatzakis** (his last name is pronounced voh-ya-zaki) celebrated 55 years of an unplanned life today, with the launch of his first book, *Courage at The Crossroads*. The launch was streamed live on Facebook earlier this evening as Andreas candidly shared his experience moving through the process of publishing a book and how it required him to become a lot more introspective than he had planned.

*Courage at the Crossroads* is a story of Andreas' life - a village boy born to replace a brother he had never met. It recounts his journey from a university drop out to following his heart to become a **successful CEO** across Asia and how the journey is packed with stories of successes and failures, dramatic juxtapositions, determining



## READ THE BOOK

values and life-changing decisions, meeting at the crossroads.

Andreas started writing the book in August, wanting to launch it by Christmas. “It can make a great Christmas gift, I thought,” Andreas said. “But I was nowhere near halfway by then”. So he postponed the “launch” for Valentines, thinking it could instead make a great Valentines gift, before multiple chapter revisions changed his plans again. Then, as Chinese New Year approached, he thought launching the book as the **Bull entered the Chinese calendar**, would be symbolic. Alas, yet again, the universe had other plans.

“As one delay brought another, I realized that the universe was trying to tell me that the best time to publish it would be when I turn 55, a milestone, significant in my life, on July 16, 2021,” Andreas explained. “From there, the countdown started and here we are today.”

When asked to describe the feeling of publishing his first book, Andreas used the word cathartic. For Andreas, this project, like any of other

# ... like any of other meaningful projects, was a living organism...



meaningful projects, was a living organism. He watched it grow, nurtured it and finally, 10 months later, gave birth to it, with much love. “The basic structure did not change as I envisioned it, yet it got better, more embellished with stories and a magnificent design that brought my thoughts and feelings to life,” he said.

According to Andreas, *Courage at the Crossroads* did not start off as a self discovery project. But as life had planned for him this way, he found

## READ THE BOOK

# “What surprised me the most, in writing this book, was my greatest discovery about myself...”

himself facing demons he had forgotten existed along with many other things that he did not notice were lurking around him in the dark. But as it unfolded and took a shape and form of its own, it gave him clarity and a renewed passion to keep on creating and advancing while moving onwards and upwards.

“What surprised me the most, in writing this book, was my greatest discovery about myself - that I never realised before - lies in the first chapter,” Andreas said. “I do not think I have ever realised clearly the unconscious burden I carried in replacing my brother.”

For those who attended the launch, it was, among many

things, a timely reminder of the role honest storytelling can play as a tool of radical empathy to connect people with what they have in common.

*Andreas is an Executive advisor, Certified Coach & Trainer, TEDx speaker, Certified NLP Practitioner, a multiple award-winning marketing maverick, ex-CEO of many top tier media agencies in Asia, and the former Group CEO of Star Media Group. In August 2020, he launched AMVPLUS ADVISORY, specializing in Coaching, Training and Consulting & bringing in the forefront extensive experience in critical areas*

*Courage at the Crossroads is available on Amazon, IngramSpark and IHUB on a global scale, as well as all major bookstores in Malaysia as soon as the lockdown is over.*

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# THE INVISIBLE ADVERTISING AWARDS



It's the holiday season which means it's time for our industry to give awards for "Every Damn Thing of the Year"

Every advertising and marketing organization, publication, and media interest group is giving questionable

awards for The Real Time Online Digital Media Analyst Of The Year, as well as other heroic marketing and advertising practitioners.

I would like to start a new way to think about awards. I would like to recognize an

ignored and underserved minority -- the invisibles.

My thinking goes like this. Having spent hundreds of years in the advertising business, there is no doubt in my mind that the advertising and marketing industries generate far more bad ideas that never get produced than good ideas that get produced. Anyone who has spent 10 minutes in an agency will agree with me.

This is why we have creative directors, account managers, and CMOs. Someone has to separate the wheat from the shit.

As a former creative director, I would estimate that for every ad I approved I turned down at least 10 (I'm sure some of my former colleagues will get a good hearty chuckle from that estimate, but for the sake of this essay, and in the spirit of the Holiday Season, let's assume I wasn't quite as big a prick as they might claim.)

The point I'm trying to make is that if the ratio of bad to good is somewhere near ten to one, there is a very large gap in our appreciation of the importance of saying no.

We celebrate the people who create good ideas, but we do not celebrate the people with the good sense to shit-can the bad ones. And yet, bad ideas may have as much potential to do harm as good ones have to do good.

Some valuable activities are highly visible -- like the creation of a wonderful ad idea, or a brilliant media idea. But other valuable activities are invisible -- like the rejection of dumb ones.

Imagine if someone at Pepsi had quietly said no to the Kendall Jenner monstrosity of a few years ago. That person would have invisibly delivered an enormous benefit to Pepsi, but she would never have been recognized for it. Imagine if someone at Peloton had the sense to say no to their dumbass spot. The invisible person would never be known, no less win an award, but would have contributed mightily.

So let's just take a minute to thank all the brilliant, creative, brave, and invisible people who, in the face of often strident and self-righteous opposition, had the

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good sense and balls to say no to stupid fucking ideas.

Then, of course, there is the other kind of invisible excellence. It is the wonderful work of highly talented people that does not get approved.

Among the ranks of the aforementioned creative directors, account managers, and CMOs there is no shortage of imbeciles. As anyone who has ever worked in business is surely aware, a highly-placed idiot can kill or cripple the excellent work of dozens of people.

A good deal of excellent, award-worthy work gets killed every year by the arbitrary stupidity of dimwits. (Once again, I'm sure some of my former colleagues are getting a good hearty chuckle from that but, again for the sake of this essay, and in the spirit of the Holiday Season, let's assume I wasn't quite as big a moron as they might claim.) The result is that there appears to be a much smaller pool of excellent ideas than there actually is.

I think there's a term for this called "survival bias." In other

words, we believe there isn't much excellent work being done because only a fraction of it survives. The excellent work that gets killed or mutilated is invisible.

Imagine all the good ideas for Pepsi that must have died so that Kendall Jenner could live.

It is my belief that the invisible marketing and advertising contributions are at least as important to our industry as the visible contributions. The only problem is, well, they're invisible.

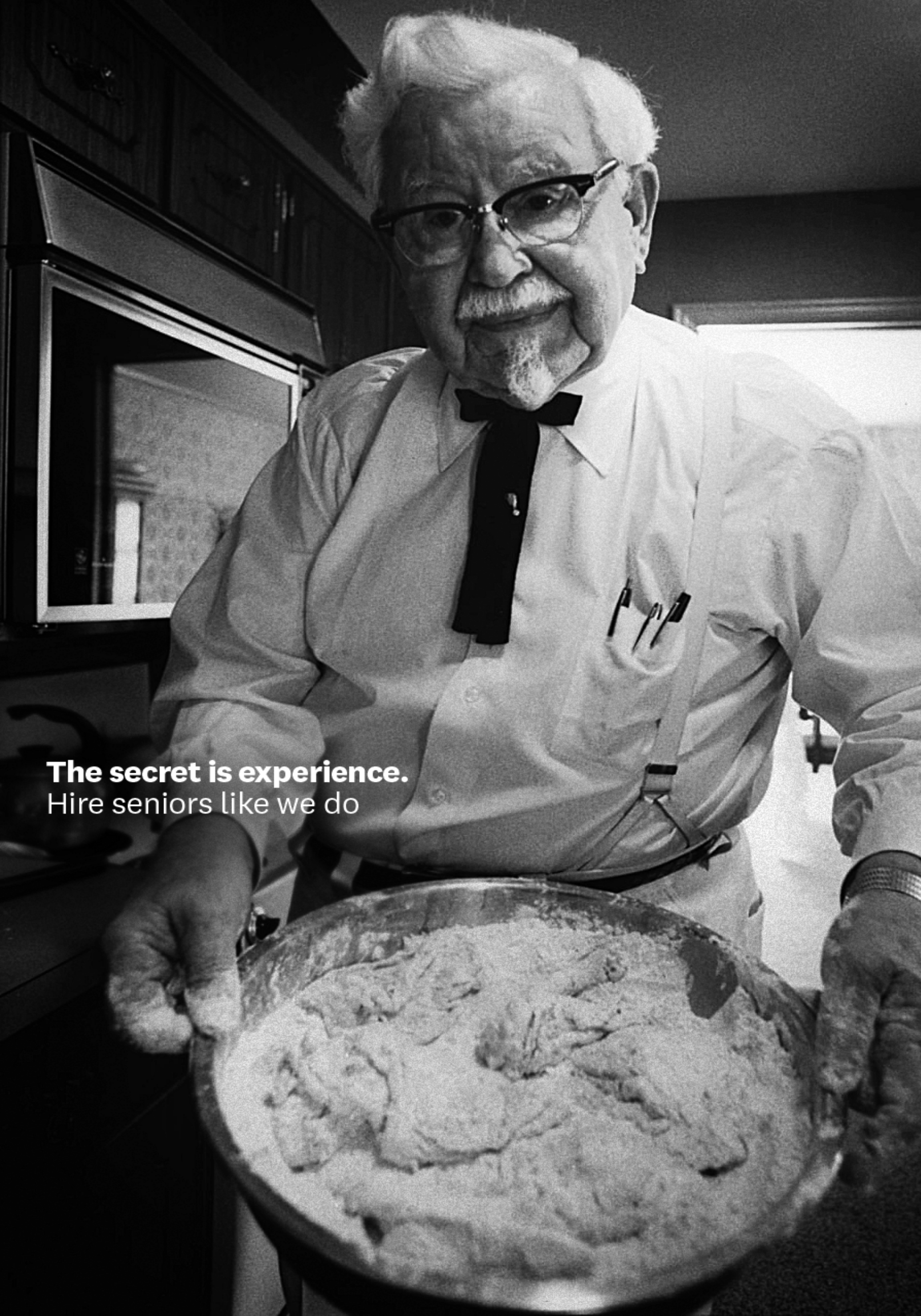
So to all the talented, sensible, and invisible people who contributed to our industry this year by saving us from bad ideas, and to the creatively excellent people with wonderful ideas that suffered ignominious invisibility at the hands of nitwits, thank you.

This column is your award.

*Bob Hoffman is author of "Advertising For Skeptics", "BadMen: How Advertising Went*



*From A Minor Annoyance To A Major Menace" and several other books about advertising.*



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