

MARKETING

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WEEKENDERTM



DAVID DROGA

**CREATIVITY
WILL SURVIVE AI.
WILL ADVERTISING?**

WEEKENDER

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COVER STORY

06



**THREAT OR
GREAT FOR
ADVERTISING?**

EDITOR'S NOTE

04



IDEAS CENTRAL

17

**B2B MESSAGING
NEEDS TO START
FROM THE
CUSTOMER'S
PERSPECTIVE, NOT
THE COMPANY'S**

22

**WHAT'S ON YOUR
CREATIVE STAT
CARD?**



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**"THE IMPORTANCE OF
THE INDEPENDENT IS
NOT DIMINISHING."**

**"IT'S NOT EASY TO
TEACH AN ELEPHANT
TO DANCE."
ON THE RESTRUCTURING OF
DENTSU.**

**"AGENCIES
ACT AS HIGH
CREATIVE
ENTREPRENEURS
AND ARE MORE
RISK-TOLERANT
THAN CLIENTS."
ON AGENCY CULTURE.**

**BREAKFAST AT CECCONI'S
1170 BROADWAY NY, WITH
GREG PAULL - PRESIDENT,
GLOBAL GROWTH,
MEDIASENSE.**

**"ENSURING
AGENCY
CONTRACTS
ARE UPDATED
TO ADDRESS
GEN AI IS AN
ACTION EVERY
BRAND SHOULD
TAKE."**



This week in New York, I had the pleasure of catching up with my old friend David Droga.

Our conversation ranged from his role as vice-chair of Accenture to the ideas and work he still cares most about.

At a time when AI is reshaping our industry, his perspective is a timely reminder: technology can speed up

the work, but human judgment and imagination give it meaning.

I hope you enjoy the conversation as much as I did.

Meantime, check out the view from [his office](#).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Herman".

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THREAT OR GREAT FOR ADVERTISING?

In an exclusive conversation in New York, David Droga talks AI, broken agency models, human imperfection, the power of daydreamers and why the advertising industry may be in greater danger than creativity itself.



COVER STORY

... He came to Malaysia, judged our Malaysian Creative Circle Awards and became part of a generation of creative leaders...



There are very few people in advertising whose name has become almost an adjective.

David Droga is one of them.

For decades, he has occupied that rare space between creative icon, agency entrepreneur and business leader. From his early years in Australia, through Singapore and London, to the founding of Droga5 in New York and eventually the sale of his agency to Accenture, Droga has spent much of his career testing how far creativity can travel beyond the traditional boundaries of advertising.

I first knew David long before all of this.

He came to Malaysia, judged our Malaysian Creative Circle Awards and became part of a generation of creative leaders whose influence travelled far beyond the markets in which they worked.

So sitting with him again in his New York office felt less like a formal interview and more like picking up a conversation after a very long pause.

There was just one obvious difference.

David Droga is now Vice Chair of Accenture.

Naturally, I had to ask whether that meant he no longer had any work to do.

He laughed.

“No, no. It’s much more of a Godfather type of role.”

ONE FOOT IN, ONE FOOT OUT

Droga stepped down as CEO of Accenture Song last year, initially expecting that he might finally call time on his working life.

Accenture had other ideas.

“They asked me to stay on as Vice Chair of all of Accenture,” he explains. “I said, well, what does that mean? And they said, you get to pick the things that matter to you and the things you want to get involved in.”

Droga has never been particularly good at standing outside something

“Whether you’re negative and nervous or excited and euphoric, you’re right, because it’s not going to be one thing.”

interesting.

“My personality has always wanted to get involved in things that I think can be influential or impactful.”

What has changed is the relentless operational pressure.

He no longer has the day-to-day responsibility of running an enormous organisation. He can choose where to contribute, while also reclaiming something that had largely disappeared from his life.

Time.

“I’ve got one foot in and one foot out. I’m doing more personal things. I’m going to my daughter’s volleyball game this afternoon.”

Then comes a revealing admission.

“It’s the first time since I was 18 that I haven’t been pedal to the metal.”

He pauses.

“I like it.”

But retirement this is not.

Because the biggest transformation of the creative industries in decades is happening around him.

Artificial intelligence.

AI WILL RADICALLY CHANGE ADVERTISING

Ask anybody in marketing today about AI and you get a spectrum of responses ranging from exhilaration to existential panic.

Droga thinks both reactions are understandable.

“Whether you’re negative and nervous or excited and euphoric, you’re right,” he says. “Because it’s not going to be one thing.”

His vantage point is unusual.

Having spent the past several years inside Accenture, one of the world’s largest technology and consulting businesses, he has seen AI developing further upstream than most advertising practitioners.

His conclusion is unequivocal.

“It’s irrefutable.”

And advertising will not escape untouched.

“For our industry, it’s definitely going to change it radically.”

But Droga sees opportunity inside that disruption.

If AI forces advertising to confront weaknesses it has avoided addressing for years, that might ultimately be healthy.

“The first thing it has to change, is to change the business model of advertising. Because the business model of advertising is somewhat broken anyway.”

That distinction matters. Droga is



DECODED

This is essential. It may be the purest expression of the Droga idea that advertising does not have to look like advertising. One campaign turned 320 pages into physical media across 13 cities.

DAVID DROGA DIDN'T JUST MAKE ADS. HE KEPT INVENTING NEW PLACES FOR IDEAS TO LIVE.

worried about advertising.

He is considerably less worried about creativity.

NOT ALL CREATIVE JOBS NEED TO SURVIVE

This is where the conversation becomes uncomfortable.

For someone whose reputation was built on creativity, Droga refuses to defend every creative job simply because it carries the word “creative”.

“The role of creative people and thinkers and strategists and people with taste, has not gone out of style. There’s actually more need for that than ever before.”

But then comes the qualification.

“Not all creativity needs to survive, and not all creative jobs need to survive.” It sounds almost heretical coming from David Droga.

His reasoning is simple. Why

defend mediocrity from machines?

“A lot of the things that we’re nervous about, AI can do a better job of.”

Not all advertising is brilliant. Not all architecture is brilliant. Not all journalism is brilliant. Not all Hollywood output is brilliant.

“Most of it is pedestrian and formulaic,” he says.

If AI can produce that level of work faster, Droga is not particularly sentimental about protecting it.

“Knock yourself out. I don’t care about that.”

What he does care about is the very top of the creative stack.

The place where ideas originate rather than replicate.

The place where somebody looks around a corner nobody else has noticed.

The place where something unexpected creates a feeling.

“The things that make things different and make a difference to people’s lives, that level of creativity,

COVER STORY



THE TRUTH IS WORTH IT
For typography, journalism and sophisticated craft.



STILL FREE
Because the photograph of Air Force One apparently covered in graffiti is the sort of image that makes a reader stop.



DUNDEE
For sheer spectacle. It gives the feature Hollywood scale.

▶ MISTY COPELAND, I WILL WHAT I WANT
For human beauty and emotion.

“To risk it all to change the game to shift the form and take its name”

Words by SAUL WILLIAMS



MISTY COPELAND Principal Ballerina

that level of thinking, is still going to prevail.”

The battle, then, is not to preserve every creative function.

It is to preserve the creative spirit.

“Let’s not fight to keep something that was mediocre alive. Let’s fight to keep the best of the creative spirit alive.”

DON'T OUTSOURCE YOUR THINKING

Droga is equally clear about how creatives should use AI.

Embrace it.

But understand the difference between assistance and surrender.

Those who learn to use AI to get ideas out of their heads faster, visualise possibilities earlier or remove repetitive work will gain an

advantage.

Those who simply hand over the thinking may find themselves increasingly replaceable.

“It can be a tool for you,” he says. “It doesn’t mean it’s going to write the story for you and just do everything. You’re not just going to sit back and prompt it.”

The early phase of AI has been dominated by efficiency.

Droga believes that fascination will eventually wear off.

“Clients and people are still caught up in the parlour trick of it can do what we’re familiar with faster and cheaper.”

Then he offers one of the most memorable lines of our conversation.

“When everything becomes best practice, nothing is anymore.”

That is when the difference-makers return.

HUMAN BEINGS ARE INTERESTING BECAUSE WE ARE FLAWED

Technology tends to worship perfection.

Droga believes creativity lives somewhere else.

Think about Silicon Valley, he says. A bug in the system is something to eliminate. Software must work flawlessly. Algorithms are designed to give us precisely what we ask for.

Humans are the opposite.

“What is it that makes humans interesting? It’s our bugs and our flaws.”

“All these quirky things that we’ve got going in our head. That’s actually the thing that keeps humans interesting.”

Creatives, he suggests, simply wear those imperfections more visibly.

And if human beings begin trying to become as frictionless and predictable as machines, something important will disappear.

“If we can keep those alive and not try and become perfect like AI, then I think that’s what matters.”

AI can study Picasso. It can emulate Picasso. But could it have invented Picasso before Picasso existed?

Droga doubts it.

The same applies to a revolutionary building, a musical, an artist or a cultural breakthrough.

AI can become extraordinarily

accomplished at what has already been demonstrated.

What is harder is the strange left turn.

The absurdity. The leap. The thing nobody asked for because nobody knew it could exist.

HAVE WE FORGOTTEN HOW TO WAIT?

There is another casualty of technology that concerns Droga. Patience.

“We’ve lost the ability to wait for things.”

A message arrives and we expect an immediate response.

A question is asked and we expect an instant answer.

A film feels slow and fingers drift towards fast-forward.

And creativity itself becomes vulnerable to this expectation of immediacy.

Some ideas require friction. Some require torment. Some require bad ideas to collide with other bad ideas before becoming something good.

“A lot of the most magical creative ideas or innovation comes from the ricochet and the friction of ideas bouncing off each other.”

“If AI allows me to get bad ideas out of my head faster, or allows me to visualise something I’ve been thinking about, then that could be a good thing.”

But acceleration and originality are not the same thing.

The risk is that we become so addicted to instant answers that we stop giving difficult questions enough time.

“There are times when a conversation is where you get the real tell of what’s going on between the words.”

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

Our conversation moves from creativity into something more fundamental.

Human communication itself.

Droga worries about what happens when conversation is reduced to emojis, abbreviations and instant responses.

“There are times when a conversation is where you get the real tell of what’s going on between the words.”

The awkward silence.

The body language.

The hesitation.

The thing someone almost says.

These are profoundly human signals.

And increasingly, we are moving towards what Droga calls a “surface layer” of interaction.

Still, he has no interest in nostalgia for nostalgia’s sake.

“You can’t slow progress.”

His philosophy is more pragmatic.

“Progress is inevitable, and you either accept it and try and influence it, or you resign to it and it bulldozes you.”

That may be the central philosophy behind his entire career.

“I’m never going to fight progress, but I’m also not going to be a spectator of progress. I’m going to try and work out how to insert my values and my belief systems into the progress that’s at hand.”

WHY MORE CEOS SHOULD BE CREATIVE

Droga’s definition of creativity has always extended beyond advertising.

An ideas person, he argues, is trained to live with uncertainty.

So creative people learn to find another route.

“If an idea disappears for whatever logical reason or it can’t be done, then you come up with another solution.”

That makes creative thinking valuable far beyond an agency.

“You’re not a one-solution person.”

Droga believes more chief executives should think this way.

“When I was CEO, I spent a lot of time trying to work out how to get other creative thinkers into the CEO position because I think more CEOs need to be creatives.”

His own beginnings hardly suggested corporate leadership.

Growing up in the mountains of Australia and later going to boarding school, Droga remembers being known primarily as one thing.

“The daydreamer.”

“That’s how I got through life, just being a daydreamer. Somehow I found a way where I could parlay being a daydreamer into a career.”

And the market for daydreamers has expanded.

First storytelling needed them. Then communications.



CLICK TO WATCH THE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW IN NEW YORK

Now businesses themselves need people capable of seeing things differently.

CREATIVITY MUST ESCAPE THE ADVERTISING BOX

This, perhaps, is where Droga becomes most animated.

Creative people must stop defining themselves by advertising formats.

A television commercial is a format.

A billboard is a format.

A website is a format.

None of them defines creativity.

“You can create in anything now.”

An idea could be an event.

A collaboration.

A product.

An experience.

Something that evolves slowly

over time.

“It can be anything.”

This was part of the logic behind selling Droga5 to Accenture.

Droga saw technology becoming the prevailing force shaping business and decided he would rather participate in that transformation than wait for it to arrive at advertising’s doorstep.

“I wanted to be the insurgent.” Then, with typical Droga humour: “I wanted to be the tail that wagged the dog. Actually, I wanted to walk the whole dog.”

His message to creatives now is similarly expansive.

Stop being beholden to advertising’s business model.

“The more that creatives realise they’re relevant around more boardroom tables, the more creatives are going to flourish.”

DAVID DROGA: THE TROPHY CABINET

- Most-awarded creative in Cannes Lions history
- Lion of St. Mark, Cannes Lions
- Advertising Hall of Fame
- Clio Lifetime Achievement Award
- ADC Hall of Fame
- AAF Hall of Achievement
- Agency of the Decade, Ad Age
- Agency of the Decade, Adweek



#	CAMPAIGN	BRAND	WHY IT LOOKS SO POWERFUL	AWARD SIGNIFICANCE
1	DECODED	Jay-Z / Bing	Pages of Jay-Z’s book became swimming pools, billboards, pool tables, clothing and objects across cities. The medium literally became the book.	Cannes Outdoor Grand Prix, Integrated Grand Prix and Titanium Lion.
2	DUNDEE: THE SON OF A LEGEND RETURNS HOME	Tourism Australia	Shot and promoted like a genuine Hollywood blockbuster. Huge Australian landscapes, stars, trailers and movie iconography.	1 Titanium, 3 Gold and 4 Silver Cannes Lions.
3	I WILL WHAT I WANT	Under Armour	Misty Copeland dancing while a rejection letter is read. Beautiful, muscular and almost brutally simple.	Cannes Grand Prix plus 2 Gold, 7 Silver and 2 Bronze Lions.
4	RULE YOURSELF	Under Armour	Michael Phelps training alone in darkness. Water, repetition, fatigue and extraordinary cinematography.	Multiple major creative awards, including recognition at The One Show.
5	THE TRUTH IS WORTH IT	The New York Times	Headlines physically build themselves through dynamic typography while photographers and reporters pursue stories.	2019 Cannes Film Grand Prix.
6	THE TRUTH IS HARD TO FIND	The New York Times	Photojournalism stripped back to images, danger and the act of witnessing.	Cannes Gold-winning work.
7	STILL FREE	Marc Ecko	Grainy footage apparently showing graffiti artists breaking into a secure airbase and tagging Air Force One. It looked disturbingly real.	One of the campaigns that established Droga5’s reputation for earned-media spectacle.
8	UNICEF TAP PROJECT	UNICEF	Ordinary restaurant tap water suddenly becomes an object representing the value of clean drinking water.	Became one of Droga5’s defining purpose ideas.
9	THE GREAT SCHLEP	Obama campaign	Sarah Silverman, direct-to-camera comedy and a provocative behavioural idea aimed at Jewish grandchildren and their Florida grandparents.	Cannes Titanium Lion.
10	AFTER HOURS ATHLETE	Puma	Pool halls, bars, darts, table football and nightlife turned into sporting arenas. Rich, nocturnal visual language.	An important early Droga5 award winner.
11	IF WE MADE IT	Newcastle Brown Ale	The Super Bowl ad that deliberately never existed. Trailers, storyboards, celebrity footage and fake production materials became the campaign.	Cannes-recognised work and Creative Effectiveness Silver in 2015.
12	DID YOU MEAN MAILCHIMP?	Mailchimp	Nine bizarre visual universes including MailShrimp, JailBlimp, WhaleSynth and SnailPrimp. Almost surrealist branding.	Cannes Cyber Grand Prix, plus Silver and Bronze Lions.
13	DAY ONE	Prudential	Real retirees photographed and filmed on the first day of retirement rather than actors portraying retirement. Humanity became the aesthetic.	One of Droga5’s most influential financial-services campaigns.
14	THIS IS WHOLESOME	Honey Maid	Modern American families photographed with warmth and almost documentary intimacy.	Cannes Creative Effectiveness Gold.
15	BEFORE ALEXA	Amazon	Lavish historical comedy imagining what people did before voice assistants existed. Period production design made each gag visually memorable.	Cannes-recognised Droga5 work.

BULLISH ON CREATIVES. LESS SO ON ADVERTISING.

Droga still loves advertising. He remains grateful for Cannes Lions and for an industry that gave him extraordinary opportunities.

“I’m bullish about creatives. I’m not bullish about the advertising industry as it’s currently structured.”

That may be the most important distinction in this entire conversation.

Creativity is not disappearing. It is escaping. Escaping departments. Escaping formats. Escaping agency structures. Escaping even advertising itself.

Droga believes there will always be a need for an interface between platforms, brands and people.

But that interface will have to change.

And the irony is already visible.

“Clients are trying to poach all the best creatives while the industry is giving up on them. What’s the irony of that? That’s crazy.”

For an industry obsessed with predicting its own death, perhaps we have been asking the wrong question.

The issue is not whether AI will kill creativity.

The more urgent question is whether the advertising industry can reinvent itself fast enough to remain the natural home for creative people.

Because David Droga does not appear particularly worried about the future of ideas.

He is worried about the structures around them.

As our conversation ends, we return briefly to Malaysia, old

memories and the possibility of David joining us again for a gathering of creative people next year.

“If I can come to that event, I will.”

It would be good to have him back. After all, the world may be changing at extraordinary speed.

But as Droga reminds us, there will always be room for people willing to daydream, make strange connections, challenge convention and imagine something that has never existed before.

And perhaps, in the age of AI, we are going to need those people more than ever.



I have known David for many years, long before the awards became too numerous to count. Today, he is the most-awarded creative in Cannes Lions history, a Lion of St. Mark recipient, a Clio Lifetime Achievement honouree and a Hall of Famer several times over.

But what stays with me is not the trophy cabinet. It is the man. Curious, generous, irreverent, restless, and still excited by a great idea. The awards record what David has achieved. The affection and respect he has earned tell you who he is.

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INTERVIEW WITH SANCHIT MENDIRATTA

Sanchit Mendiratta is a seasoned digital marketing expert with over 18 years of experience. Currently spending his time as a fractional CMO and micro-SaaS enthusiast, he was the Managing Director of Merkle till early-2025. At Merkle & dentsu, Sanchit was the Managing Director for the CX practice and responsible for growth of the business for the region, and spent the last 9 years driving solutioning and innovation at the intersection of marketing and tech.

Specialist B2B agencies vs. traditional broad agencies working on B2B accounts. What are the pros and cons?

When I ran a B2C agency, I assumed B2B wasn't really different. Experience has taught me otherwise, quite a few things need to be handled differently.

The biggest difference is where marketing ends and sales begins. In B2C, marketing does most of the work and sales plays a small role. In B2B, it's closer to the reverse though it depends on the deal. A low-ticket purchase might only need sales to "drop in and say hello," while a high-ticket purchase (millions in enterprise software or machinery)



... B2B still needs an element of traditional agency thinking - starting with the brand...

leans much more heavily on human sales relationships. That boundary shifts depending on ticket size, but it's always different from B2C.

That said, B2B still needs an element of traditional agency thinking - starting with the brand. One thing B2B teams consistently do naively is talk about their product as if the fact that *they* have it means someone will want it, messaging that's "inside-out" rather than "outside-in." That's where a traditional creative director's instinct is valuable: making sure the ideal customer profile

and messaging are built from the customer's perspective, not the company's. So yes, B2B marketing needs its own specialism, but rooted in real creative and advertising experience: whether that experience originally came from B2B or B2C agencies is beside the point, as long as the creative talent is there.

B2B decision-makers, especially at C-level, often don't understand marketing well unlike, say, a Unilever. How do you win the trust of C-level people with little or no marketing experience, or a bad one?

This connects directly to the outside-in versus inside-out problem. I've seen it at financial services, tech & software, manufacturing companies alike, B2B organizations and their products are almost always described inside-out, when they need to be outside-in. That's where agencies and marketer's finesse come in, but it takes real coaching.

... agencies fall short is in selling that idea in the first place. That's one of the things that separates agencies that grow from ones that plateau: whether the client is open to listening....

Most established brands outside of new-age startups understand the value of that coaching, and I've seen good marketers walk the C-suite (and sometimes the board) through it: everything is too technical, it needs to be more customer-facing, ICPs need to be properly defined, and the conversation should be about benefits, not features.

The other complication is that B2B buying decisions involve several different people. That requires real account mapping, on top of getting the creative and messaging right.

Where I think agencies fall short is in *selling* that idea in the first place. That's one of the things that separates agencies that grow from ones that plateau: whether the client is open to listening. Some clients learn the easy way, some the hard way, some not at all. My

approach, honestly, is not to try to convert a skeptic — I tend to look for companies with an open mind rather than trying to talk a closed one into believing in marketing. You can't convert someone who doesn't want to be converted.

As a fractional CMO covering both B2B and B2C, how do the two compare?

Counterintuitively, I find that when it's done well, B2B is actually easier than B2C. In B2C you rarely hear back from the customer, you don't get feedback from someone who had a bad experience or decided not to buy. In B2B, you're face to face with people; you can see directly what's landing and what isn't. Done right, that visibility makes B2B more tractable.

What's the biggest marketing, sales, or growth challenge B2B companies face right now?

There's a lot of noise and uncertainty. Speaking as someone who is also on the receiving end of B2B marketing (I buy software, strike partnerships), I don't go to Facebook, Instagram, or LinkedIn to be marketed to. There are plenty of channels: events, conferences, thought leadership but I think B2B organizations, at least in this part of the world, haven't really made good use of thought leadership. The real skill is reaching the right person, on the right channel, in the right frame of mind to be pitched to, that's the actual secret sauce of B2B

marketing, and it's rarely Facebook or Instagram. For some companies it's events, for others lunches, for others wine tastings but it has to be focused and coherent, not "spray and pray," which might work in B2C but never in B2B.

Coming from journalism myself, I've noticed the impact of any single piece has shrunk hugely since I started, and AI is adding to the noise, since now anyone can publish. Is there a good way to cut through it?

It's rough everywhere, honestly. When ChatGPT launched, I expected marketing teams to produce five times better content because they now had more powerful tools. What actually happened is that they produce five times *more* content, not better content but a flood of AI slop. Organizations do this partly because they lack clarity about priorities: when suddenly you *can* do everything, chaotic organizations try to do everything at once instead of picking one or two things and doing it well. What marketing teams actually need is to do less, but better.

That's part of why I've been going back to offline channels: airport advertising, magazines, newspaper inserts, especially in markets where people still read physical papers and even direct mail, which I actually read. It's the same logic as events and conferences: you catch people when they have real attention to give, and attention is the actual scarce currency today. Digital isn't

... AI lets you produce slop in three minutes. Used well, it helps you produce something genuinely valuable...

automatically "the thing" anymore for everyone, that's a strong personal opinion of mine, but I hold it firmly. And it's not unique to B2B; B2C has the same problem.

There's also a sheer complexity problem: marketers today juggle far more platforms, tools, dashboards, and integrations than anyone signed up for when they did their undergrad or MBA in marketing ten or twenty years ago. That's actually an opening for new-generation agencies, not ones that claim to do everything for everyone, but ones that define a real niche and use AI deliberately, with guardrails.

Used carelessly, AI lets you produce slop in three minutes. Used well, it helps you produce something genuinely valuable but most people take the shortcut.

That's why I think this is actually a moment for traditional creative agencies to matter more, in both B2B and B2C, you can't just publish any piece of advertising and expect traction anymore. You need to



say more in fewer words, get the message right, and build it outside-in rather than inside-out. Current digital-first agencies, generally, aren't doing great which is exactly why the old creative instincts with new perspectives are becoming more valuable, not less.

Hear More from Shawn Low at Elevate B2B Conference 2027

Jade Choong will speak at the Elevate B2B Conference 2027 on 12 January 2027 in Kuala Lumpur, sharing practical insights into how technical B2B brands can communicate value, build thought leadership and connect more effectively with decision-makers.

Join leading B2B voices for two days of strategy, creativity, case studies and practical learning at KLGCC Convention Centre, Kuala Lumpur, on 12 & 13 January 2027.

Registrations are now open.

For enquiries and group registrations, contact Ruby at **+603-7726 2588** or ruby@adoimagazine.com & For sponsorship Opportunities*, Contact vishnu@adoimagazine.com.





WHAT'S ON YOUR CREATIVE STAT CARD?

Professional athletes have it.
Fantasy sports athletes have it.
Top esports players have it
Low level video game characters
have it.
Costumed superheroes have it.
Mostly naked Pokemons have it.

It's time agency creatives have their own stat cards. With AI cutting a swathe across adland and clients demanding more accountability from their agencies, creative players need to understand what keeps them in the game.

A stat card is like your personal report card. Business-card size. Updated annually. Gold trimmings optional. Unlike your LinkedIn page, this one tells you what you need to know about yourself.

What should appear on your stat card? 3 things.

1. Work that earns client's respect
2. Work that wins peer recognition
3. Work that keeps you in demand

These 3 are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the more they overlap, the better. Let's take a closer look.

WORK THAT EARNS CLIENT'S RESPECT.

Arguably easier to impress compared to the second bunch. Clients are simple creatures really. They only want 2 things: A) Something they can't do on their own and B) An unfair business advantage.

To most creatives, this sounds something like, "Help me win a Gold Lion at Cannes." Now, sonics travel very fast from the client's lips to the creative's ear. From the ear to the brain takes a bit longer. From the brain to the hands can take years if not decades for the message to arrive. Good thing we have suits and planners who can (generally) help speed up the process.

It takes awhile to realize that clients don't have a creative problem. They have a positioning problem, a relevance problem, a visibility problem, a likeability problem, a budget problem and so on. Creativity is simply the vehicle that transports the solution. Not an end in itself.

Clients buy good thinking. Good thinking comes from understanding the category, knowing what moves consumers, engaging them at every stage of the transaction process, finding/ creating opportunities for

growth and more. Good thinking does not come from knowing the difference between Helvetica and Helvetica Neue. Neither is good thinking automatically accorded just because you have a shiny new trophy on your shelf.

Can good thinking come from AI? No matter what's out there, advertising still a human-to-human connection. One human sharing facts and feelings, thoughts and opinions to another. Machines don't have qualia. It does not know the sensation of holding a newborn, driving a new car, buying your first house or what good wine tastes like. But yes, ask AI and use AI. Just don't let it become a substitute for sound judgment, good taste and instinct.

Above all, know your sh*t. Clients can usually smell bull a mile away.

WORK THAT WINS PEER RECOGNITION

Ask two creatives to comment on a campaign and you'll get 5 opinions. However, if there's one thing creatives can agree on, it's this: Win a D&AD Black Pencil or a Cannes Lion Grand Prix and you'll become the literal incarnation of God on earth.

You are untouchable, all-knowing and always correct. Again, two things. First, creative awards have a shelf life of exactly 365 days. After that, you'll need another ladder to heaven. Second, with the long list of credits on every campaign- most people are understandably confused about who actually came up with the



“He who gathers in the summer is wise. He who sleeps during harvest causes disgrace.”

idea and who was in the same room sucking up oxygen.

You have to be somewhat consistent in winning awards- in the main shows like Cannes, D&AD, One Show, AdFest, Spikes and of course, Kancils. Failing which, you’ll need work that goes viral (the good kind) year after year. Ah, it’s gotta be work for commercial brands. Pro bono doesn’t count. Creative people are hard to please.

WORK THAT KEEPS YOU IN DEMAND

This one is about career sustainability. After all, you still want to have a job in the next 10-15 years, possibly longer depending on the size of that loan/ mortgage. This is about work that keeps you on the cutting edge. Work that expands your horizons, broadens your thinking and where necessary, narrows your focus. You’ll also need work that keeps you intellectually fulfilled. Work your younger self finally got a chance to do. Work your future self will be glad you took on.

One more thing about AI: Nobody really knows how technology will transform the landscape. Whatever we think will happen, it’s gonna be like how people in the 60s imagined life in 2000s: Food comes in pills, we will travel by jetpacks and live in floating cities. The reality will probably be a bit more grounded.

Will there still be an advertising industry? I have no idea.

The good book (Not Confessions by Ogilvy- the other one) has a verse that says, *“He who gathers in the summer is wise. He who sleeps during harvest causes disgrace.”* It bears considering. Now is the summer of our youth. Now is the time to prepare for winter. Realise that you can’t keep doing the same thing in the different seasons of life. Environments change. Agencies change. You change. Plus, you’ll get annoyed if you expect- and don’t get – the same results. Wait, are you even awake? You are? Phew!

Lastly. There are three things on your business card: Your name. Job title. Agency’s name. The second and third will change and in some cases, disappear completely. The first remains with you until your last breath. In the long run, you want peers and clients to remember your name – not your job titles nor your previous agencies.

Stay humble. Constantly improve your craft. Give your best in every brief. Be nice to interns. The rest will follow.

Creative stat card ready? Meet you in the trading room.

Written by Edward Ong and Mark Fong. Edward is the Founder and Creative Director of Borderless. Mark is an agency Creative Director turned client. Both never leave home without their Stat Cards.

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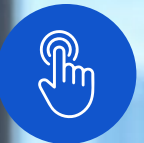
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