

By Taren Grom

Creating GREAT CREATIVE

In this agency roundtable, creative experts provide their insights on the key ingredients that make up a great creative ad — that creative “something else” — how the creative process has changed as a result of increasing media channels, and where they draw creative inspiration.

The Creative Key Elements

One marketing expert has stated that in addition to hard work, there are usually four key elements in a great ad: a disruptive and relevant visual, strong brand identification, a brilliant headline, and “something else.” Industry creative experts discuss what they believe are the key elements in a great ad and provide what they believe is that something else.

NORBERT DE LACLOS

Chief Creative Officer, Natrel

The way information has permeated our lives from all sides, breakthrough creative is more important than ever before. And customers — patients and clinicians — are bombarded across a variety of medical content channels every day. With so much information out there, the risk of the audience tuning out or turning away has increased significantly. That said, if the client/agency team has pushed the brand to a truly compelling place and it is firmly established in the market, we don't necessarily need the “something else.” The key challenge at that point is maintaining brand consistency and exploring new channels. It's at launch that the “something else” may be needed.

LOUIS MASSAIA

Executive Creative Director, Palio, an inVentiv Health company

I believe that the something else comes down to whether or not the ad is capable of capturing a feeling. That's the magic factor, and it separates the good from the great. Advertising is an art form, and like any other art form, we have to factor in the intangible element that

makes people want to engage. So that something else becomes the sum of all the parts working together to create a presence that demands attention and makes the audience feel something.

JACK HYNDMAN

Head of Creative, Fingerpaint

The key elements of a great ad are one great

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LOUIS MASSAIA

Palio, an inVentiv Health company



insight; a real, definable point of differentiation; relevance to the target audience; one big idea; brilliant headline; killer image; great design; engaging user experience; unique use of selected media; and campaign flexibility across multiple channels.

The something else is simplicity. Charles Mingus said that “making the simple complicated is commonplace; making the complicated simple, awesomely simple, that's creativity.” Complexity is the necessary input to the creative process; simplicity is the output — it has to be in order for ideas and brands to break through in today's cluttered media landscape.

STEVE HAMBURG

Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

First and foremost, a great ad is powered by an enormous idea, and such ideas are generated as a result of insight, intellect, imagination, and, yes, inspiration. A great ad rewires the way we think. It delivers a cognitive jolt and gets our neurons firing in new and interesting ways. A great ad surprises us, wakes us up out of our slumbers, and makes us pay attention and take notice, which is no small feat in this distracted age of ours.

A great ad works holistically, with all the constituent parts working together in a kind of organic harmony. This makes a great ad a living and breathing thing. You can't alter one element without fundamentally changing the whole enchilada. It's possible to have brilliant copy and brilliant design without having a great ad. Why? Because it's not the individual elements but the interaction between elements that can give an ad the pulse of greatness.

Great creative excites us by taking us to a new place. And that, I believe, is the “something else” variable. Has the ad transported us to new feelings, thoughts, and perceptions? Has it given us a new and memorable experience? Has it expanded our cultural vocabulary? Great creative does more than entice and engage; it rewards and enriches. It tells a powerful story that we can powerfully relate to because, on some level, the story is about us.

RICHARD CAMPBELL

Partner, MRB Partners

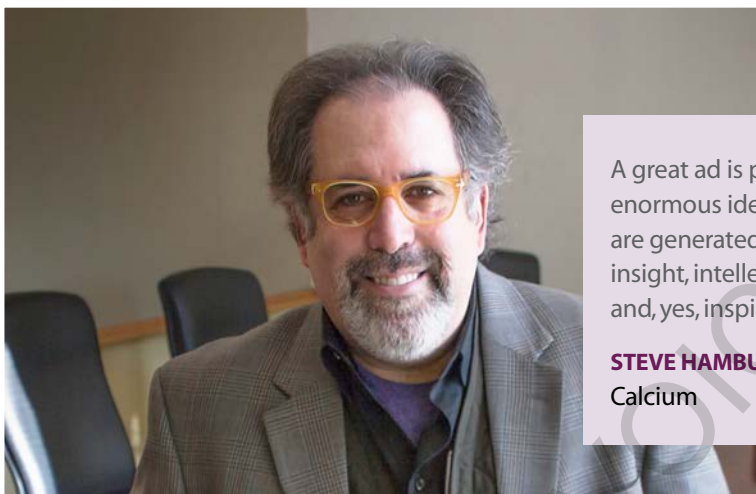
First, there needs to be a clear attitude. Brand personalities are often created by committee and stretched in contradictory directions: e.g., a warm-and-fuzzy revolutionary. By contrast, a finely drawn brand personality focuses creative energy and results in work that connects with customers. Second, there has to be a relentless focus on a single strategic benefit. Even a world full of feature geeks wants to know how a product improves lives. Single-mindedness is its own reward: By saying one thing well, it's easier for the audience to remember it. Third, there must be a tight fit between copy and art. Make one say something that the other doesn't, and copy and art will say more together than either alone. It's an additive effect. The moments effort for viewers to put the pieces together and “get it” provides a small reward that makes the story more memorable.

The something else is making the audience care. More than just being comprehended, the story has to engage the customers' hearts and minds to compel behavior. People have



We're using our creative abilities for the greater good — promoting products that are saving or improving lives. That in itself, is inspiring.

STEPHEN NEALE
AbelsonTaylor



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STEVE HAMBURG
Calcium

to understand what you're offering but also care that it's worth their interest. A former colleague called this characteristic resonance — not a bad way to express it.

BENTON INGERSOLL

Co-founder and Content Director, Minds + Assembly

Déjà vu is the missing element. Great ads evoke an echo of emotional identification in the viewer. You feel deep down inside that you've felt or known whatever the ad is conveying and that gives you a thrill, which then becomes associated with the brand. As for the other pieces — visual, brand ID, and headline — those may be elements of great advertising, but they don't have to all be present. In fact, there's such a thing as too much of a good thing. A super-clever headline paired with a super-clever visual is often super-annoying. The last thing is that execution itself, the photography or illustration, the type design and layout, can easily win the day.

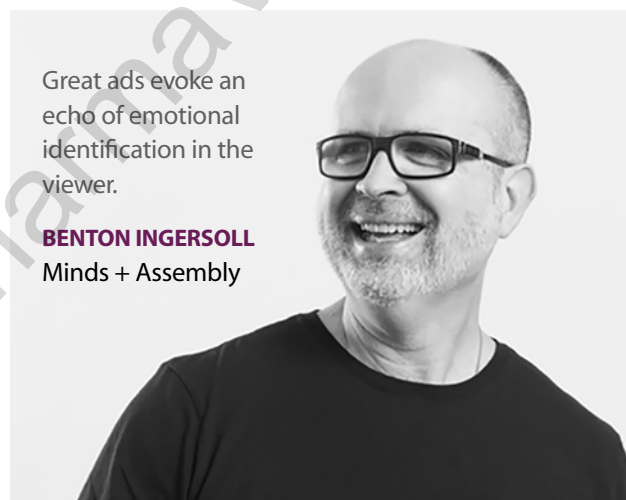
STEPHEN NEALE

Senior VP, Executive Creative Director, AbelsonTaylor

To us, a great ad must meet five criteria: it gets the message across quickly, it evokes a strong emotion, it's campaign-able, it's relevant, and it's distinct or breaks through the visual clutter. We think that engagement is the *je ne sais quoi*, the critical element that elevates great ad campaigns today. This critical element gets viewers to become participants. It moves them beyond the words and pictures, and regardless of the medium — print, digital, broadcast — gives them a reason to act and return, ultimately becoming loyalists.

Great ads evoke an echo of emotional identification in the viewer.

BENTON INGERSOLL
Minds + Assembly



GRAHAM MILLS

Global Chief Creative Officer, Digitas Health LifeBrands, Publicis Life Brands, and Heartbeat Ideas

What I look for is a sense of connection and identifying a purpose between the brand and the audience. Today, as brands become bigger than advertising, it's about feeding a long connection, such as how does this brand fit into a patient's life. How does it make a difference? How does the story fit into a patient's journey? We're not selling graham crackers; there has to be that connection.

The other thing I look for is simplicity. Sometimes I think we are coaxed into telling overly complicated stories. It's better to figure out what the one thing is that needs to be said and say that and then let the other stuff be discovered as people engage with the brand.

AMY HANSEN

Senior VP, Creative Director, HCB Health

No matter how much new technology and media mess with the definition of an ad, one

thing remains the same: it requires great perseverance to push through the mediocre, the see-say, the overdone, the obvious, the self-serving, the self-doubt, the judgment, the panic attacks, and the sheer exhaustion that threaten greatness. We hold in our imagination the power to move people, to give them chills or goose bumps; to touch their hearts and bring tears to their eyes. But it requires perseverance at every step — from mining that perfect precious insight, to rallying support around a big idea, to flawless execution.

KATHY DELANEY

Global Chief Creative Officer, Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness

The something else is the engagement factor. A great piece of work has to encourage people to want to learn more or to hear more of the story, to share it, to talk about it on other plat-



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KATHY DELANEY
Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness

forms. There has to be a virility to it, if you will, to make an ad truly great.

The Creative Process

With so many media — print, TV, digital, social, etc. — available today for message delivery, our agency experts discuss how the creative process has changed or not changed in light of so many channel options.

LOUIS MASSAIA

Executive Creative Director, Palio, an inVentiv Health company

The creative process is never the same because it's a personal and individual experience. People arrive at ideas because they are open to all influences, and so much of that happens on the subconscious level. Every day we live and interact with ever-evolving media that are modern conduits to our creative expressions. All those channels are hardwired into our ideation process. An idea isn't born as a perfectly

rolled out media plan; it has to be tailored to fit. It's helpful to understand where and when your idea might come to life.

STEVE HAMBURG

Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

The proliferation of media forms continues to alter the way people consume cre-

ative. Experientially speaking, a website is very different from a print ad, a TV campaign very different from an electronic sales aid. To maximize creative effectiveness, we must have a deep understanding of what makes each medium tick — or click — and a strong ability to tailor our creative expression to fit the unique properties of different mediums.

Even though the tactical aspect of creative thinking has changed, and is changing, one important aspect remains largely unchanged: the deep think, conceptual part. Really big creative ideas — RBCIs — are still generated the old-fashioned way, through deep thought and reflection; the dance of imagination and the grind of experimentation; through the relentless asking of questions; and through hard work and good luck. No matter how many new media channels are created, the core practices underlying the big idea creative process will stay somewhat constant.

GRAHAM MILLS

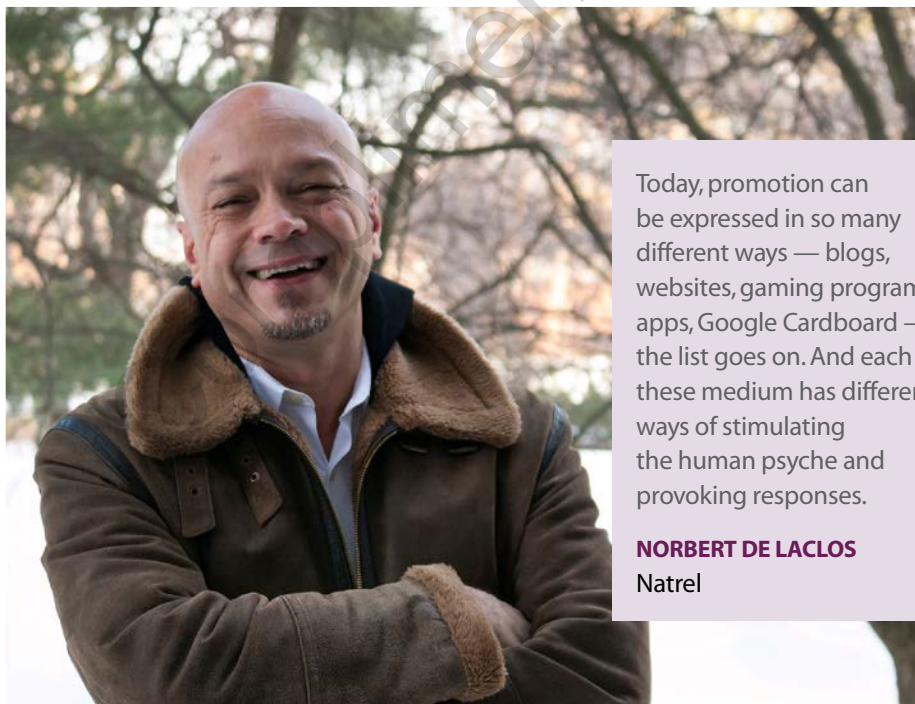
Global Chief Creative Officer, Digitas Health LifeBrands, Publicis Life Brands, and Heartbeat Ideas

Media is as much a part of the idea as art directing or copywriting or branding. If you try to create an ad without understanding the media it's going to be a struggle to understand not just what it is people want to hear, how they want to hear it, but really where they want to hear it. Should it be a TV ad? Should it be a documentary series? Should it be a print ad? Should it be a book? The challenge is to create something unique, absolutely relevant, and in exactly the right format for the audience that needs it.

NORBERT DE LACLOS

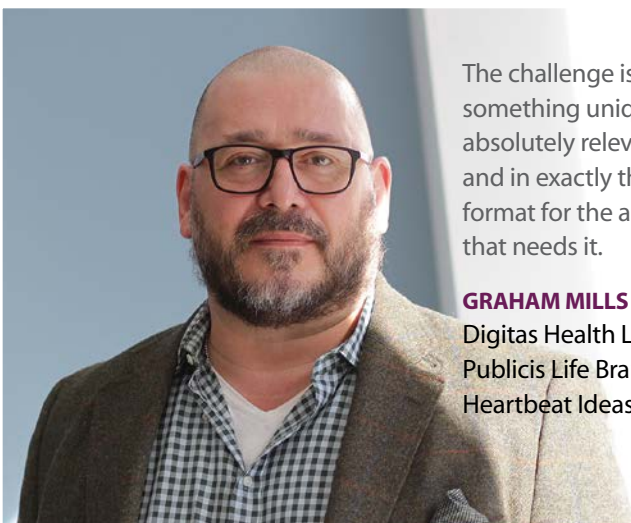
Chief Creative Officer, Natrel

Previously, the term multimedia described a very narrow scope of promotional expression. Communication was relatively static, flat, one-dimensional. Someone would create the print campaign and someone else would do the website. Today, promotion can be expressed in so many different ways — blogs, websites, gaming programs, apps, Google Cardboard — the list goes on. And each of these medium has different ways of stimulating the human psyche and provoking responses. Each generates a unique experience, with its own ripple effect. But if these diverse offerings are properly orchestrated, they can unite to become a powerful generator of behavioral change. So, brands must be built in a way that allows them to evolve with their audience, to follow the cultural trends, and adapt their visual and verbal storytelling to each new environment.



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GRAHAM MILLS
Digitas Health LifeBrands,
Publicis Life Brands, and
Heartbeat Ideas

Perhaps more importantly, today's rich and varied media environment offers many opportunities for the brand's personality to take center stage and shine.

JACK HYNDMAN
Head of Creative, Fingerpaint

The availability of so many media options has not changed today's creative process. At least, not for agencies that are incorporating integrated, multidisciplinary teams as a standard approach to breakthrough thinking. It's the age of collaboration. You can't cheat the depth of discussion needed to critically think through client problems successfully. The collective brainpower derived from integrated, multidisciplinary teams is necessary to ensure ideas are flexible enough to drive engagement across many channels.

RICHARD CAMPBELL
Partner, MRB Partners

Tactical options and media choices are constantly evolving. This means, more than ever, people need a clear product story based on a real customer need. There needs to be a central idea, a benefit story that the brand can consistently stand for wherever it goes and however it gets there. The plethora of media has changed how we evaluate ideas. Because the story has to be able to go everywhere, we have to weigh the leading ideas for their capacity to accommodate that need. The process now has to include a second creative process to see how flexible, portable, and extendable the ideas can be.

AMY HANSEN
Senior VP, Creative Director, HCB Health

The idea that we are creating ads feels very

old school. In today's world of infinite channels, platforms, and smart everything, it is our responsibility to our clients and their customers to create a meaningful and relevant brand experience. This requires a much better-informed creative process. Data and planning are essential inputs. They enrich content and tone, identify who and where the most receptive customers are, and when they might be most open to engaging with a brand's message. This information must be part of the creative brief so that you begin the process, not with a single interaction in mind, but

with the intent of creating enduring, respectful, and rewarding relationships.

BENTON INGERSOLL
Co-founder and Content Director, Minds + Assembly

For years, we've been blathering on about how "it's not the ad, it's the idea." Yet, in large part because of the way executions are tested, ads are usually the default when it comes to creating a new campaign. The rise of digital media and what we call native media, or new channels, has created the momentum needed to bring those aspirations closer to reality, despite the fact that creative testing remains mired in the past. In fact, how something is delivered has become as fertile a creative territory as what it is we're saying or showing. Another nice benefit of this movement is that there's more focus on both the customer truth and behind that, the problem we are trying to solve.

STEPHEN NEALE
Senior VP, Executive Creative Director, AbelsonTaylor

There are literally thousands of channels today, and they all compete for users' attention, which is the reason we've added the engagement element into our creative process. However, engagement can mean different things and is different in every channel.

Last fall we established a division called the Experience Design Group, which provides a focused view of how technology, analytics, and digital can contribute to campaigns and thereby break through today's marketing noise. The new division partners with planners, developers, and creatives to map out the user journey and uncover those areas that can lead to deeper engagement. But even though

our creative process now includes a larger group to accommodate the new channels, our objective remains the same — produce a great distinctive creative idea/story that resonates with the target audience.

Inspiration

Creating great advertising entails creativity and inspiration. Our creative experts talk about where they draw inspiration from and how they keep their creative teams inspired.

LOUIS MASSAIA
Executive Creative Director, Palio, an
inVentiv Health company

For me, creative inspiration just comes by simply keeping my eyes open and my mind in a place that lets inspiration in. Lots of internal dialogue also seems to work for me. For me, it's always been about allowing myself to take notice of the nuances that surround life and human behavior. It's the details that hold me engaged in advertising and in life — so an acute awareness level is the most important tool. This awareness helps me find the cracks in things, and that's where the most interesting stories lie. I also do not take for granted that creative inspiration seems to keep coming — for that I'm grateful.

The best advice I have for all creative teams is: don't force it. It can be so easy to get lost in all the possibilities. Always put the idea first,



We hold in our imagination the power to move people, to give them chills or goose bumps; to touch their hearts and bring tears to their eyes.

AMY HANSEN
HCB Health

the style and voice will follow. Then let the nuances give it its tone, its feeling. Advertising is just like music; it's a limitless art form, and it can be intimidating.

In my opinion, the most valuable commodity in this business, in every business, is original thought.

STEVE HAMBURG

Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

To me, the best creative is idea-driven, so I'm drawn to other forms of creative expression that are similarly idea driven — books, films, art, music. But great creative also tells a story, so I find inspiration in many forms of narrative, from movies and TV shows to all sorts of fiction, spy novels are a favorite.

And because design is such a critical component of great creative, I'm constantly educating my eye by seeking out outstanding, cutting-edge work in the world of fine arts, photography, graphic design, and industrial design.

Of course, the history of advertising itself also provides an abundant source of inspiration for my own creative work. I find that each of the major advertising eras has something unique and fascinating to offer.

GRAHAM MILLS

Global Chief Creative Officer, Digitas Health LifeBrands, Publicis Life Brands, and Heartbeat Ideas

I love talking to creatives from outside of the business. I love talking to musicians or artists, screenwriters — people who work in different formats and are creative in very different ways. I have a real thing for architecture and I love talking to architects about how they confront designing a building. I have one architect friend who told me he doesn't design buildings, he designs the spaces in between. I think this a really interesting principle for advertising as well. It's not just about creating ads, it's creating what goes on around the ad — the bigger experience.

JACK HYNDMAN

Head of Creative, Fingerprint

I am constantly curious and draw creative inspiration from all around me. I see things that spark my interest and inherently want to know more by digging deeper, deconstructing them, trying to understand why they work, and the strategy behind them.

I'm also always asking, "why not pharma?" A best practice to stay creatively inspired is to

stay thirsty and stay constantly curious. We share ideas all the time, both formally in inspiration meetings and informally where we just pass stuff around. We also share educational information across all sorts of topics. A while back we established a creativity lecture series where accomplished professionals specifically from outside the advertising industry are invited to talk about their processes, attitudes, point of views, and inspiration involved in their creative endeavors. This gives our team a different perspective by

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JACK HYNDMAN

Fingerprint



providing new and fresh ways to think about and approach creativity.

STEPHEN NEALE

Senior VP, Executive Creative Director, AbelsonTaylor

I'm really inspired by contemporary fine art. Artists like Jean-François Fourtou, José Lerma, and Banksy, to name a few, inspire me to see things outside of a regular environment and connect them to advertising in a new way. The best creative ideas I've come up with come from this passion for contemporary art.

All of our creative leaders inspire their teams in different ways. The one common thread is that we encourage our teams to connect whatever sparks their passion with assignments they're working on — whether it's love of movies, contemporary art, or progressive rock music.

Working in this industry can be challenging. Yes, our work is subjected to a huge number of restrictions. Yes, there are times when



The something else is making the audience care. More than just being comprehended, the story has to engage the customers' hearts and minds in order to compel behavior.

RICHARD CAMPBELL
MRB Partners

clients dictate the creative output. But in the end, we know that our work is different. We're working for a higher cause. We're using our creative abilities for the greater good — promoting products that are saving or improving lives. That in itself, is inspiring.

KATHY DELANEY

Global Chief Creative Officer, Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness

I draw inspiration from everywhere. We have an initiative here called Outer Space. It's a program designed to get people out of their physical office space, out of their head space, and open them up to new experiences that ultimately will stimulate them to be a more creative thinker. We take people down to the East Village to do a tour of the best graffiti spots. We have different storytelling classes that have nothing to do with brand storytelling. We go to events at museums to get people to experience things from the art world, from the literary world, from the food world. Taking those little mind breaks can open you up and get you inspired.

I also make sure that all of the teams here have a healthy dose of pro bono time that they get to work on in their spare time to keep them fresh. I also do something called Throw-down Thursdays here where I get everybody together. I give a brief, and I give them one week to come back with one idea, which means they really need to edit their ideas down to the best one and then they get one minute to present it to the entire team. This has been a big success and has allowed people just to get out of their day-to-day jobs and open and stretch their minds creatively on a totally different project or problem. ^{PV}



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WHY GIVE LESS THAN 100%?

You could hire a separate digital agency to build your website. Maybe another to manage your social media. But multiple agencies struggling to keep content aligned while also trying to pilfer each other's work is a recipe for inefficiency. And disaster.

Why not give 100% to an agency that's successfully incorporated digital media into its clients' branding mix for more than 15 years? One whose only agenda is delivering the right content, through the right channel, to the right audience. Who's 100% committed 100% of the time.

100% COMMITTED TO YOUR BRAND
IT'S THE WAY WE THINK



AbelsonTaylor

By Taren Grom

CREATIVE Insights

Agency executives discuss how to guard against pressures from watering down a great creative concept, how to help clients stay engaged in an open and collaborative process, and keeping the talent pipeline flowing.

REGULATORY OVERSIGHT AND CLIENT PRESSURES ARE OFTEN CITED AS LIMITING FACTORS FOR CREATING GREAT PHARMACEUTICAL ADVERTISING. AGENCY EXECUTIVES TALK ABOUT HOW TO GUARD AGAINST WATERING DOWN A GREAT CONCEPT.



RICHARD CAMPBELL
Partner, MRB Partners

The best defense against concept erosion is the clarity of the idea. When there is a well-defined core to hold on to, marketers can adapt to obstacles as they arise.

It's also important to circle the wagons around the idea. Get all of the team members at the client and agency committed to preserving the idea. Everyone has to know what the work is trying to achieve. And be proactive. Game out the potential threats to your core idea and create a response repertoire in advance. It might not work all the time, but it's an approach that will certainly improve your chances for success.



NORBERT DE LACLOS
Chief Creative Officer, Natrel

First, agencies must educate themselves on every aspect of the specific brand environment as well as the larger therapeutic arena, with an eye toward regulation and potentially sensitive topics. From here, agencies can push the creative right up to the very edge because they will have the knowledge and rationale to defend and support it. This approach allows teams to play way outside the sandbox, but confidently, not recklessly. And when agencies

present these ideas to the client, they should set the stage for each concept, having all of the rationale and support at hand; ideally, they should leave this support behind for the client, in tandem with the creative. The client should never be left to figure out how to get something through the medical/legal process on his or her own. They should feel completely confident presenting interesting and edgy creative to those above them. Working this way fosters a satisfying partnership because the client is even more involved — and vested — in the creative process. And if the client/agency is truly passionate about an idea but the medical/legal teams have objections, the team should encourage dialogue with the appropriate individuals to explore and collaborate on ways to save a great idea. This is the kind of “added value” that, in great agencies, is always present.



KATHY DELANEY
Global Chief Creative Officer, Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness

I do think sometimes the regulatory oversight is so daunting that it can water down even the best of ideas. This is why it's important to keep everything idea-based. Brands and agencies need to think of ways of getting out that brand messaging outside of a 90-second TV spot with 30 seconds of fair balance in it. I think brands have to go out there and create experiences for people. Perhaps in the unbranded world that allows you to have a little bit more leeway in what you say and do.

STEVE HAMBURG
Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

Bold creative is frequently viewed by pharma as constituting “risk;” it's vital to change that perception to



“opportunity.” That's because bold creative, which, by definition, is highly impactful, engaging, persuasive, and activating is more likely to be effective and “move the needle” than dull or safe creative.

Adhering to legal and regulatory constraints is a fact of life; yet, even within that conservative framework, an opportunity exists to better show clients why taking constructive risks can be in their best interests.

Legal and regulatory pressures aren't the only source of creative “watering down”; creative research (i.e., concept testing) is also a contributing factor. This kind of creative testing, ostensibly designed to select the most meritorious of creative ideas, often has an opposite effect: it can reward creative that is the most predictable and safe, that respondents (physicians or consumers) feel most comfortable with and less challenged by. Novel or provocative ideas are often dismissed as being too “different” or “polarizing.” The net result of all this is a strong downward pressure in terms of creative novelty and boldness. Agencies should be constantly on guard against this, helping clients understand that what may “win” in creative testing might not actually be the best creative for driving their businesses forward.



AMY HANSEN
Senior VP, Creative Director, HCB Health

This is nothing new, and I think the answer is pretty simple: Step into your client's shoes. We talk all the time about the importance of understanding doctors and patients but we should be equally commit-

ted to understanding our clients and the pressures they face every day. Have empathy. Get to know their regulatory hot buttons so you can help your client navigate them successfully. Recognize the inner conflict they experience of trying to do something innovative that will allow them to put their mark on the world, while also having to abide by regulatory and bureaucratic constraints. It is our job to help guide them through this so that they can do both.



JACK HYNDMAN
Head of Creative,
Fingerpaint

“Beware the lollipop of mediocrity; lick it once and you’ll suck forever.” The famed Beach Boy Brian Wilson, known for his creative excellence, said that. So how do you fight all the off-ramps to mediocrity while driving on the road to great work? First, you have to hire creative talent that is self-driven and has a self-imposed high creative bar. Second, you need to be brave enough to put your boldest and best work forward to the client despite the potential for it to be run over by regulatory. And you have to fight for it. If you are not confident about your work or hedging against it, why would the client feel compelled by it? The pressures of pharma marketing cannot be used as an excuse for mediocrity. You have to accept the challenge and drive up as close to the edge as you can, otherwise we are doing clients and their products a disservice.



BENTON INGERSOLL
Co-founder and
Content Director,
Minds + Assembly

Pressure reveals flaws — in space shuttle tiles and creative teams alike. Yet, without pressure, there is no progress. Getting to great advertising is both a sprint and a marathon. You have to start strong and maintain stamina throughout. The only things watering down creative ideas are the people producing them, on both sides of the fence. If the idea emerges so hobbled at the end of the process that it is unrecognizable and has lost any connection to the simple truth underlying it, then it probably wasn’t the right idea. A clever

line is not an idea. A clever visual construct is not an idea. We all know what we’re facing going into every new creative challenge. So, embrace the pressure and enjoy.



LOUIS MASSAIA
Executive Creative
Director, Palio, an inVentiv
Health company

Strong visual thinking is far more bulletproof than just a copy platform — words are always susceptible to change, all the way to the finish line. But a strong visual thought that telegraphs the specific story increases the odds of an idea crossing the finish line in its original form. I also think that injecting a sense of honesty and authenticity gives credibility to how ideas look, feel, and sound. The more credible the idea feels, the more comfortable clients are in supporting the thinking through the regulatory process.



STEPHEN NEALE
Senior VP, Executive
Creative Director,
AbelsonTaylor

We’ve noticed that when our creative leads keep close tabs on the concepts throughout the entire executional process, including med/reg review, it helps preserve the quality of the work. These individuals are incredibly experienced and adept at addressing the regulatory issues while still maintaining the idea. In the ideal world, agency presence at med/reg meetings would be a standard practice and all members of the group would be active participants. But since that’s not the case, building a relationship with med/reg and getting the support of the client’s brand team, which then invites agencies to participate in these meetings, is the next best thing. This helps ensure that the final creative product is as strong as it was when it was first submitted.

AGENCY ADVICE FOR CLIENTS TO HELP FOSTER AN OPEN CREATIVE PROCESS

AMY HANSEN
Senior VP, Creative
Director, HCB Health

Create “incentivizations” for responsible risk. Short of



that, just decide to be open and then be open. And if you are in a management position cultivate that mentality among your team. In Creativity Inc, Ed Catmull refers to initial ideas as “ugly babies”

They need to be nurtured, cared for, and encouraged. If clients and agencies can do that together, you’re going to get bigger, better, stronger, more beautiful ideas. So hold your judgment until it’s necessary and give the ideas a chance to breath and grow.



RICHARD CAMPBELL
Partner, MRB Partners

Be a fan of ideas. Examine how you react to the brands you use. How did you get to feel the way you do? Collect ads and campaigns that you love, that affect you, that reinforce your feelings or change your mind about a product. Meet off-site with your agency and your team to share ads you love, don’t get, or downright hate.

Speak in one voice. There are always a lot of voices on the client side responding to a creative presentation. Often they contradict one another. The agency never knows whom to listen to. Plan ahead. Look at the presentation, excuse the agency, talk among yourselves — junior people first so they can speak freely and not feel they have to repeat what the boss said. Write down the feedback, iron out inconsistencies, and have one person deliver the direction to the agency. Your direction will be clear, and the agency will be able to do more with it.



NORBERT DE LACROIS
Chief Creative
Officer, Natrel

I think the most important words are transparency, trust, and respect. And this goes both ways. Clients need to be forthcoming with key information, providing as much as they can to help the agency more effectively build the brand. Whenever possible, clients need to communicate the rationale behind decisions that might affect the journey of the brand.

They need to trust in the depth of the agency's experience, resources, and talent. And they need to respect the work that results from those assets.

Agencies, for their part, need to maintain open lines of communication and not be afraid to ask important questions or make possibly difficult or unexpected recommendations. They must trust that the client has a rationale for decisions and feedback.

Perhaps most of all, each side should respect the other, recognizing and considering the various influences and pressures surrounding all who work in this fast-paced and ever-changing business! This is how true partnerships — and great creative — thrive.



STEVE HAMBURG
Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

Clients should realize that the best creative is often provocative and disruptive, as opposed to safe and comforting.

So give bold, adventurous ideas a little space and time before saying “no.” You may discover that these ideas really grow on you.

When evaluating creative, it's okay to think with your gut in addition to your mind. That will give you a more well-rounded and holistic sense of what's working and what's not. It will also make you more receptive to a broader range of ideas.

Physicians are supposed to be rational, data-driven creatures, so, in creative testing, don't be surprised when they don't get all goopy and emotional over an imaginative piece of creative. But read between the lines and understand that physicians may be more affected by imaginative creative than they're likely to admit.



JACK HYNDMAN
Head of Creative, Fingerprint

Get close to your creative team. Build strong relationships with them in addition to the account and strategy teams. Clients need to embrace the creative team and agency at large with open arms and give them room to run and be imaginative. Why pick a sports car and keep it in the garage? No agency

wants to be treated as a production studio. Be the client everybody in the agency wants to work for. Collaboration, open dialogue, constructive feedback, honesty, and an occasional good time frame will let them know you're in it with them.



BENTON INGERSOLL
Co-founder and Content Director, Minds + Assembly

Find an agency you can trust. Be honest and tough, but fair. If you truly desire something great, be ready to stand up for the work inside your organization. Become a champion of the work.

Measure your agency on the extent to which they can rekindle or continue to stoke the pure joy of marketing for you.



LOUIS MASSAIA
Executive Creative Director, Palio, an inVentiv Health company

Clients are all so different, so I don't think there is one piece of advice that would work across the board. But I do think that a great marketer should have a strong opinion. At times when distilling creative or making decisions on what to move forward with, clients tend to put themselves in the minds of other key decision makers. This can make it difficult to align on a vision because their gut reaction is diluted. Some of my greatest creative accomplishments have been achieved through a trusted collaborative relationship with a singular, empowered client.



STEPHEN NEALE
Senior VP, Executive Creative Director, AbelsonTaylor

First, we believe in a single-focused position statement. A targeted statement leads to ad campaigns that meet our five creative criteria. When the position is tightly focused, client evaluation of the work becomes incredibly helpful.

Getting feedback that's subjective — “it's too dark,” “too blue,” or “too bright” — leads to the opposite effect. A lot of times in our industry, agencies tend to

give in to these subjective requests because they don't ask the right questions or are afraid to start a dialogue. We encourage our account and creative teams to nurture their relationships with clients so we can get to a point in the creative process where clients agree with us on the value of a single-focused position statement in ads. An open creative process requires courage, collaboration, and a focus to achieve the common good—an outstanding ad that moves brands.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT IS CRUCIAL TO KEEPING AGENCIES FRESH. AGENCY EXECUTIVES TALK ABOUT HOW THEY MENTOR AND ENCOURAGE UPCOMING CREATIVE TALENT.



RICHARD CAMPBELL
Partner, MRB Partners

Often, young people just get scut work. So give them regular opportunities to shine. Preparing for new business

itches is a great way to get young people and their ideas in front of senior creative management. And they'll feel like a part of the effort to move the company forward.

Match young people up with a mentor from a different discipline. They spend a lot of time with their supervisors as functional mentors, so open their horizons by having them spend time with different creatives, planners and account staff.

Once a month, feed them free lunch and get them to talk about work beyond their everyday tasks. Show them what you think is great. Let them show you stuff they think is cool. Who knows? You might learn something.



NORBERT DE LACLOS
Chief Creative Officer, Natrel

I push team members to honestly express themselves. Sometimes there are roadblocks such as lack of confidence or feelings of intimidation. I find that sharing examples of creative in any format can help to unlock new ideas.

I also try to continually expose my teams to

new approaches; this often cultivates a sense of curiosity that encourages them to explore new directions. But the key here is that the examples I show are just that: examples.

I want my teams to give birth to and nurture their own ideas. I don't want them to give me back what they think I'm looking for. I want that purity of individual expression every time. I try to stress that there are so many different ways of looking at the challenge before us. At the same time, I ask that they come with a rationale behind their thinking, that if they believe in it, they should be prepared to defend it, to push back with excellent reasons to believe. I think this is the only way that they truly become vested in the creative process, from initial thought to finished product. I enjoy seeing the look of satisfaction on their faces when their concepts are chosen for presentation to the client. That is a rewarding experience for all of us.



STEVE HAMBURG
Partner, Chief Creative
Officer, Calcium

To me, mentoring is first and foremost about sharing a passion for doing outstanding work. Transmitting that passion is a big part of keeping both senior and junior personnel inspired and motivated.

For me, it's important to be not just an evaluator of creative but also a creator of creative. Being in the creative trenches with my teams is a great way to share the skills and techniques I've cultivated over the years; it's also a great way for me to gain new skills from them—to be inspired by their new ideas and perspectives.



LOUIS MASSAIA
Executive Creative
Director
Palio, an inVentiv
Health company

It is important to understand the talent at the table. I pay attention, listen, watch, ask questions — all in the glory of learning how they think, how they approach work, and to discover where their natural interests lie.

Identifying individuals' interests and strengths allows for a much better sense of how to motivate.

I love collaborating with the vast array of talent at Palio. The biggest sin in advertising is getting in the way of a good idea. So I try and lead by example in that regard, and let genuine, constructive thoughts take flight from all involved.



BENTON INGERSOLL
Co-founder and
Content Director,
Minds + Assembly

Push them to the absolute breaking point—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually — then slowly build them back up — just kidding. (Sort of.) For us, the first and perhaps most important part of talent development is making sure that you have the right talent to begin with. Is the chemistry right? Do they share our desire for risky, different work? Are they curious and open-minded and eager to learn? Can they admit when they're wrong? Are they invested in others as much as themselves? Would they be fun to work with? These are a few of the questions we ask ourselves.

Then, when they are a part of our molecular family, we actually do push hard to reveal the best. But we will always have each other's backs. No matter what.



AMY HANSEN
Senior VP,
Creative Director,
HCB Health

I find younger, smarter people to do the mentoring for me. I'm kidding. Sort of. Here's the thing: The more unique experiences, opportunities, and perspectives you can expose young creatives to, the more they are going to thrive. I can't do that alone. I can give them the space to experiment, to find their voice and their passion. I can support them by identifying training and development opportunities both inside and outside our agency. I can teach and influence through small daily interactions. And I can try my best to lead by example — and then get the hell out of their way. But I can't teach them all of the skills that they need to succeed in the future. For that, I need help and the best I can do is to make sure they get it.

The Gallery — Our experts showcase a few of their favorite campaigns.



RICHARD CAMPBELL
Partner, MRB Partners

One of our favorite campaigns was one we created at our former agency. The goal was to introduce Daichi Sankyo (DSI) to the oncology market. This corporate campaign featured dramatic and distinctive images of cancer pathology along with quotations from famous leaders. The theme of the quotations chosen was persevering in the face of difficult challenges, and the headline told everyone in oncology that DSI was "Joining the Fight" against cancer. Oncologists like to feel that a pharma company is committed to them and their patients. This campaign brought DSI into the market in a dramatic, memorable way. And it was one of the rare occasions when a piece of pitch creative made it all the way to market.



NORBERT DE LACLOS
Chief Creative Officer, Natrele

My favorite was a TV spot created to appear during a Super Bowl halftime. It was one of the first healthcare ads to dare appear among the giants of communication (Budweiser, Coke, Microsoft, etc). It was also the first TV ad co-produced by the American Heart

Association (AHA), one of the most influential healthcare institutions in the United States. Our target audience was the very core of the Super Bowl viewership: middle-aged men who tend to eat and drink too much and who may be at risk for having high blood pressure. Our goal was to motivate this target to visit the AHA site and take an unbranded test to see if they had high blood pressure. After that, visitors were encouraged to visit the King Pharmaceuticals website for more information about their antihypertensive product. I decided to experiment with the creative process and invited the entire agency (smaller shop) to participate. This approach led to much collaboration across all departments — everyone pitched in to help us meet our extreme deadline. And because we worked closely with both the client and members of the AHA, the spot went through med/legal with no changes.

And the results? The client called us Monday to report that 3 million people had taken the test online. And because of the increased publicity about the ad (ranked No. 3 among all spots), this participation number rose to 11 million just one week later.



KATHY DELANEY
Global Chief Creative Officer, Saatchi & Saatchi Wellness

There is a beautiful campaign for Botox/chronic migraine done by Saatchi. It's based on an insight that we came up with from migraine sufferers and how they feel

completely crushed and debilitated when migraines hit. The rituals these patients have to go through are pretty unbelievable.



STEVE HAMBURG
Partner, Chief Creative Officer, Calcium

I think the Belsomra TV campaign — with those furry little “sleep” and “awake” creatures — is intelligent and memorable, and it tells a somewhat complex scientific story in an utterly charming, simple, and compelling way. This is a campaign that effectively draws you into its distinctive world, where you are entertained and stimulated while receiving important information about the product. Idea-driven creative at its best.



JACK HYNDMAN
Head of Creative, Fingerpaint

I have been following Langland (UK) for a while. They have a knack at turning apathy into empathy by bringing emotion forward in their work. It's relevant, approachable, and thought-provoking, not just a presentation of data or focus on a brand's functional benefits. Their “Exposed” campaign helps link patients and the psychological effects of their disease to physicians, so that they have a deeper connection with their patients and ultimately provide greater care. It stops you in your tracks and begs you to be engaged. Even if you don't know someone who suffers from

psoriasis, you come away with empathy.

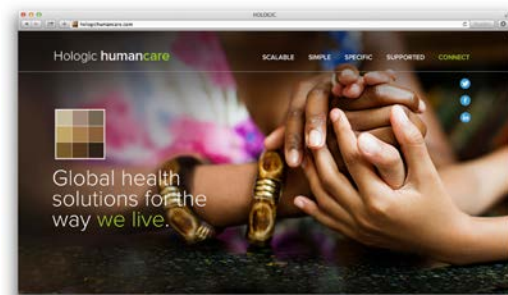
BENTON INGERSOLL




Co-founder and Content Director, Minds + Assembly

We have a tremendous amount of respect for the body of work that Andrew Spurgeon has created and led at Langland. From the outside looking in, it seems that they build upon a simple truth and then execute the heck out of it, somehow ending up with a recognizable visual style. They commit to an idea. And they get their clients to do the same, which says a lot for their planners and account people. One example is the campaign they did a little while ago for Sativex.

What I particularly like is the tiny little doubletake you have as a viewer/participant. It's something that you see in much of their work. Simple and powerful.



LOUIS MASSAIA
Executive Creative Director, Palio, an inVentiv Health company

Recently, Palio was given the opportunity to bring Hologic's global health commitment to life. It celebrates the human spectrum as well as their unique spectrum of services. 

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Executive Director, MIT Center for Biomedical Innovation

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