

Shifting Focus From Award Winning to World Changing Creativity

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Razorfish Australia ECD Christian Behrendt on why there's never been a better time for creatives to help change the world

A few years ago I would never have considered writing an article about 'world-changing' creativity.

It sounds a little cheesy and, in my opinion, has been misused for years by the marketing and advertising industry to make campaigns and promotions sound bigger than they really are.

Plus the fact that until now, the work I've been a part of probably hasn't really had any real meaningful impact on the world.

But that's all changed thanks to a world-first AND world-changing project I recently launched with an international bunch of smart, innovative thinkers.

A project that reminds me about the bigger and broader opportunities creatives have nowadays – and the responsibilities that come along as well.

The project is called GetTheMayor.com and it is a future platform for citizen engagement that lets citizens get involved in helping shape the future of their city. In this initial launch, that city is Heidelberg, Germany.

How? By giving everyone the chance to influence the Mayor of Heidelberg's weekly schedule and have him visit a place of their choice in order to put the city's focus on the issues concerning Heidelberg they are most passionate about!

Within four weeks of launching, nearly 10 per cent of Heidelberg's entire population had visited the platform, generating thousands of votes, leading to real meetings between the Mayor and citizens – and most importantly – giving the Mayor concrete actions to focus on.

And with 50 per cent of the users aged between 18 and 34, #GetTheMayor helped activate a younger demographic that has never engaged with the traditional platforms that cities and governments usually offer.

Through this project it has become clear to me that we everyday creatives, working on everyday briefs can use our talent, professional network, access to clients, budgets and tools to launch ideas that can have a real and positive impact on the world.

On a very high-level, this made me realise that my creative value-set has developed over the last decade, shifting away from 'award-winning' to 'world changing':

The Past

'Award-Winning' Creativity

Back in my earlier advertising career, winning a Cannes Lions Award was the ultimate goal and a guarantee for a fabulous career, fame, wealth and respect. But with the creative industry transforming, the value and perception of awards is changing with it and might not be as powerful as it used to be.

The Present

'Business-Transforming' Creativity

Then, a few years later, I moved over to digital and was exposed to a new way to tackle briefs – with a stronger focus on finding ways to help our clients take advantage of all the great opportunities digital, mobile, technology and social media were bringing to their business – shifting slightly away from 'award-winning' and more closer towards 'business-transforming' creativity.

The Future

'World-Changing' Creativity

But with opportunity comes responsibility. Today, projects and work for clients and brands can not only serve business goals, but can also support a city; it's community and can even have an impact on the wider world at the same time. And it's the creative industry's responsibility to come up with solutions that successfully perform in each of those areas.

For everyone that still thinks 'Good for you, but I still wanna win awards!' there is some great news: the best way to win over a Cannes Lions jury is to come up with a world-changing idea!

MY RULE-OF-THUMB:

When you aim for 'World Changing Creativity', there is a good chance your idea is helping some kind of 'Business to Transform' for the better. And if you tick both these boxes chances are very high that you will find yourself winning s@!# loads of awards.

And don't worry, this shouldn't be the kind of article that tells everyone to quit his or her job and join a non-profit!

My point, rather, is that all of us should not miss out on some of the richest and most rewarding creative opportunities that are out there – literally helping change the world and the communities we are living in through creativity, technology and collaboration.

There has never been a better time to be a creative than right now. With all of the free digital tools, platforms and ways to connect and collaborate with like-minded people that are available, every one of us could realistically create or become part of something creative that changes the world we live in to make it a better place.

Named one of AdWeek's World-Wide Top 10 Creative Minds in Digital in 2011, Christian Behrendt is the creative lead of Razorfish, Sydney – an Australian full-service digital creative agency that specialises in digital, social media, mobile, UX and design. He is the founder of "#GetTheMayor", a worlds-first citizen engagement platform that lets all citizens get involved in helping shape the future of their city.