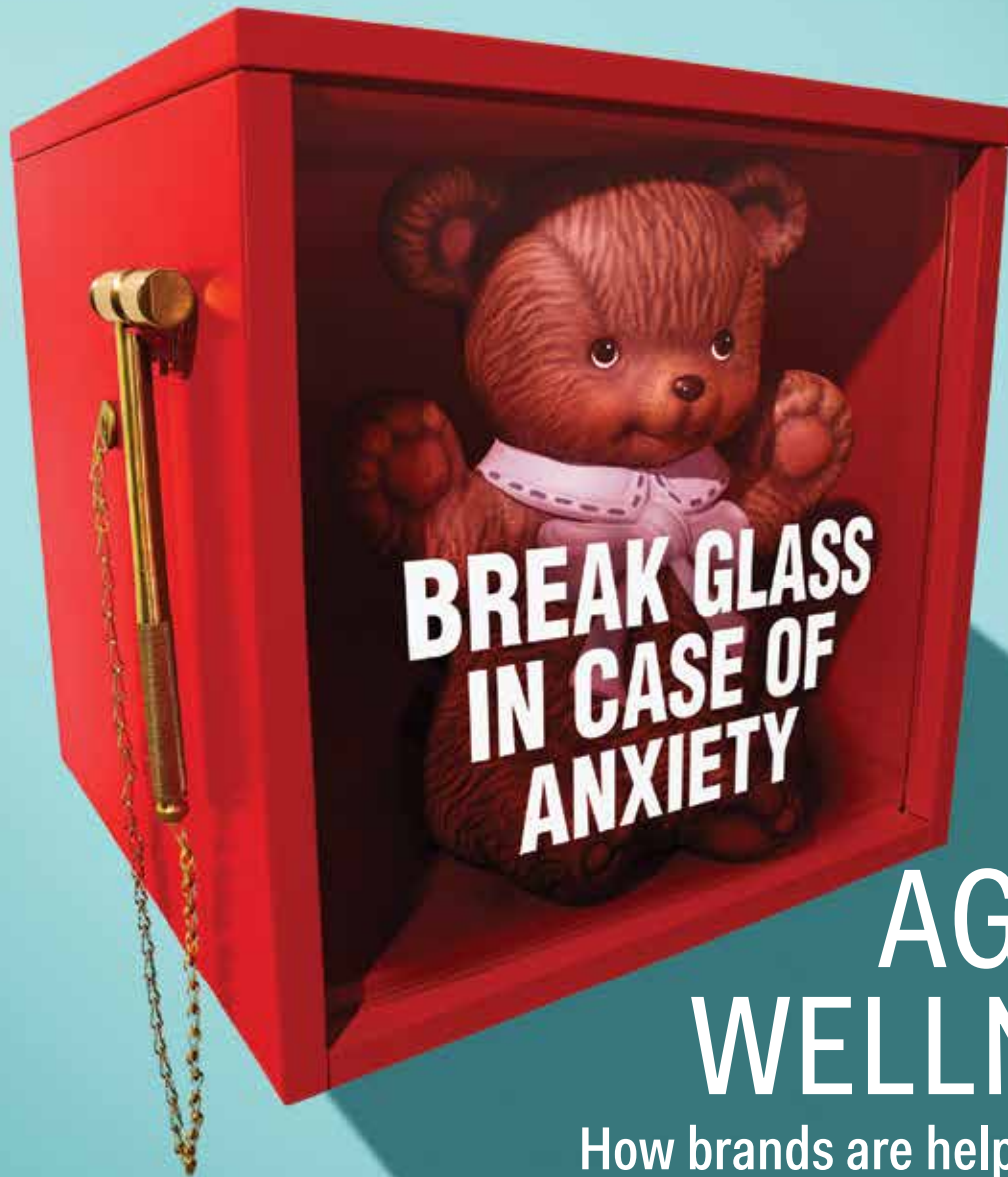


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THE AGE OF WELLNESS

How brands are helping us cope

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PLAYBACK



The bold "We The North" campaign by Sid Lee Toronto reignited passion for the NBA's only team outside of the U.S.

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We The Raptors

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ON THE COVER: Sometimes you just want to snuggle a soft, cuddly teddy when things get too much to bear (see what we did there?). Photographer Justin Poulsen pulled the "in case of anxiety" card to illustrate the general consensus on the consumer state these days. Don't worry, the adorable teddy was eventually freed from his emergency box shackles. Poulsen shattered the glass (likely to relieve his own daily stresses) for a close-up on p.10, where our cover feature investigates how brands are tapping into the wellness zeitgeist through their marketing, packaging and design.

All the lonely people

Bordering on mild agoraphobia, I sometimes feel like a social recluse. One day, my inner outlier will convince me to flee to the woods and hide from the big anxiety wolf in a remote cottage.

If my fantasy triggered spine tingles in you, I'm not surprised. Removing oneself from society with *Into The Wild* thoughts is a shared experience. Most of us are prone to some level of social isolation. It's that inner hermit, itching to come out when life stresses overtake and overwhelm. And we've been prepping for its escape for the last two decades. Maybe more.

In a recent *Fast Company* article, the author shared a crushing stat: almost 90% of people report using a smartphone during their last social interaction. Yes. I can personally attest to participating in this frowned-upon behaviour, as I'm

sure you can too. I can also relate to the notion that our planet's "social capital" is in decline. That same article talked about the collapse of community and people's lack of interest to join things like organized religions, neighbourhood meets, or even sports leagues. I, for one, would rather take the "virtual" spin class at the gym so that I may ride the saddle alone.

But are we doing ourselves any favours? Social isolation is the #1 leading cause of loneliness, which is "as important a risk factor for early death as obesity and smoking," says the *New York Times*. I wonder, when it comes to this "epidemic" (which we touch on as a part of our feature on wellness, p.10), have we gone too far down the hole to be able to climb out unescorted? Just like any challenge facing an era (climate change, gender disparity, etc.), sometimes a little push from a big organization can help correct mid-course.

"Movement marketing" isn't new, of course. For more than a decade, Scott Goodson of StrawberryFrog has postulated that "sparkling cultural movements" is a foolproof marketing strategy: build a brand through social change. That's never been more welcome than among today's world of socially anxious civilians. Just ask President's Choice.

It's one of a few for-profit brands tapping into the wellness zeitgeist through movement-based marcom. The company's "Eat Together" platform embraces values like community. And it follows a list of others that have attempted to treat similar symptoms of the "homebody" economy. Spending time outdoors (a rarity in our technological age) dulls anxiety and boosts well-being, so the scientists say, and Nature Valley, MEC, GoRVing, to name a few, have taken on mobilizing Canadians around disconnecting to de-stress.

Wellness will likely not be a passing fad. And plenty more brands will continue to build equity (and trust) by tapping into the growing consumer desire for well-being. For more traditional players, the trick will be authentic ownership. While newer entrants get a headstart (being born in a cause-conscious world), more established brands without a built-in purpose are slightly more challenged. It's best to not blindside consumers with your new wellness agenda by hastily jumping in the sandbox. Remember: slow, steady and stress-free wins the race.

Jennifer Horn, editor



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POST-MORTEMED TO DEATH. IS THAT
A REAL WORD? DOUBT IT. BUT 'TALENT'
IS. YOU KNOW, THAT THING YOU HAVE.
YOU HAVE TO HAVE IT. EVERY YEAR,
YOU MAKE IT SHORTER. FASTER. CHEAPER.
AND SOMEHOW, IMPOSSIBLY, BETTER.
REFLECT ON THAT FOR A MOMENT.
CHANGING WITH THE INDUSTRY AND
STILL WINNING GOLD? THAT CALLS
FOR A CELEBRATION THAT CHALLENGES
ITSELF TO DO THE SAME.**



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ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER'S NOTE

New year, new marketing strategies

EVERY FEW YEARS WE SEE large shifts turning industries upside down and inside out. So after this nonsensical year I've been curious about the future of work and what's in store as lines blur across verticals and business models; what the meaning of work will be; and who will be responsible for said work.

(No, I don't think robots will replace us all – well, maybe a few, but those positions will ultimately shift to another area of the industry not yet taken over.)

We're noticing that as brands bring more work in-house and ramp up content, the organization of agencies and partners has shifted too.

As a result, we're seeing an indie agency renaissance and that's evident in this year's impressive crop of 2019 Indie List agencies (p.43).

These shops are scaling up really fast, and having senior talent across teams allows them to rise to brand challenges quickly and create innovative, award-winning work.

One theme from this year's list is the collaboration with marketers at ideation and being a trusted go-to partner for brands looking to stand out. These independents are nimbly

investing in studios and rolling out flexible payment models to help meet brands changing needs, and the more established indies are getting singled out for innovation and attracting top-tier talent.

In this issue, we also take a look at the Marketers of the Year (p.15) who are transforming their brands, redesigning their teams and some even creating new marketplaces.

We've seen the wild west of weed begin to come of age and watched LPs navigate new rules in 2018. David Bigioni said 'Hi' to the new world by bringing out the personality and approachability of Tweed. GoDaddy's Jill Schoolenberg and McDonald's Antoinette Benoit are tapping Canadian truths to connect with local consumers, and Sharon MacLeod is fighting the good fight, challenging paternity leave perceptions and empowering Dads with Dove Men+Care. Finally, Anne-Marie LaBerge is transitioning BRP from a product-led marketing machine to focus on experiences that target the next gen of riders.

As we look ahead to the future of work, this year's Media Roundtable Series (p.32) dives into how industry

players can build a more sustainable marketing and media landscape in Canada – we'll be sitting down with folks from all corners to chat about what's needed to drive change and better collaboration. The kickoff to the series tackles the issue from the marketers' POV.

And as brands need more content to keep up with changing times, they also need new content strategies. ATOMiCon tackles the turning point in the industry as brands need to adapt and re-adapt marketing strategies in real-time. They need to expedite their feedback loop and make decisions on-the-fly. Sessions will arm the audience with the insights and tips to step up their content marketing games, and get briefed on the best new brand content programs. ATOMiCon is moving up two weeks to March 5th, so mark your calendars.

New year, new strategies?

Cheers,

Lisa Faktor, associate publisher


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BREWING UP BIG CHANGES

By Justin Dallaire

Ontario craft brewer Steam Whistle Brewing has built its legacy on a “Do One Thing Really, Really Well” mantra. But heading into 2019, the brand – now the largest craft brewer in Canada, with national distribution – is ramping up production and launching into new segments to capitalize on emerging growth opportunities.

“Unlike what I think you see a lot of craft breweries doing, which is brewery-led or brew-master led, this is going to be more of a consumer-led initiative,” says Tim McLaughlin, the brand’s VP of marketing.

While other brands have stumbled as they’ve tried to go from niche to national, the brewer wants to avoid missteps. So to ensure the strategy is based on a robust consumer segmentation model, Steam Whistle has partnered with Level5 Strategy Group, he notes.

The brand is leaving nothing off the table as it aims to grow by connecting with more consumer segments, including having a portfolio of four to six beers, a non-alcoholic offering, as well as looking for a partner in the burgeoning cannabis space.

The goal is to develop a portfolio that is complementary to its flagship beer, Steam Whistle Pilsner (which has the largest market share in Ontario), while enhancing selection in new fast-growing categories, such as dark and heavier beer varieties.

The push will inevitably require ramping up production – a challenge the brand is well-positioned to take on, thanks to its new facility in Etobicoke, Ont., which is expected to triple production and distribution. The new plant facilitated Steam Whistle’s entrance into the Quebec market last year – it also serves as the facility for its newly spun-off premium dark lager brand, Von Bugle.

Soon, the brewer will turn its “Roundhouse Park” in Toronto from being primarily a production space into more of an experiential one that includes a beer garden concept and second, larger event venue. 2019 is clearly the year Steam Whistle aims to do many things really, really well.

HOW TO TAILOR YOUR STRATEGY TO GEN Z

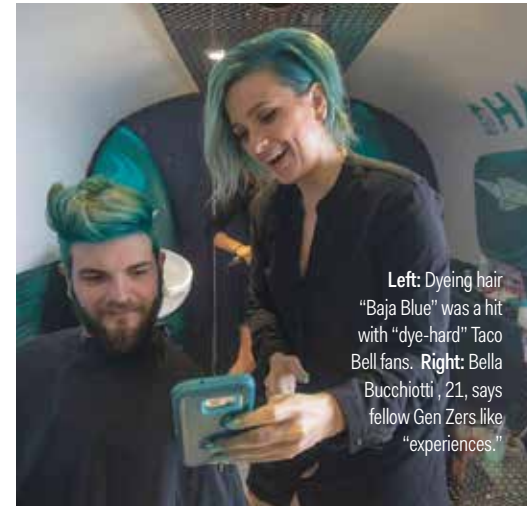
By Melissa Dunne

Malala Yousafzai and Kylie Jenner are both 21. That’s about where the similarities end for the activist/Nobel Prize winner and the reality TV/social media star. Gen Z is clearly not a monolith.

The cohort (made up of those born in or after 1997) is all about individualism and is set to be the most ethnically diverse generation in history.

Cassandra Napoli, an associate editor, digital media & marketing at WGSN and co-author of *The Gen Z Equation* whitepaper describes Gen Z as “elastic and iconoclastic.”

“They’re kind of fluid in all aspects of their lives, so they have flexible identities,” she says of the growing group that’s expected to comprise 32% of the world’s population in 2019, according to



Left: Dyeing hair “Baja Blue” was a hit with “dye-hard” Taco Bell fans. **Right:** Bella Bucchiotti, 21, says fellow Gen Zers like “experiences.”

Bloomberg. To prepare marketers for the growing gen, Napoli and her global trend forecasting company, broke the demo up into two aptly named targets, Gen Me and Gen We, in its whitepaper.

Gen Me

Think of Kylie Jenner as the poster girl for Gen Me: beauty-conscious and selfie-obsessed.

“It sounds quite vain, but it’s actually deeper than that,” says Napoli.

“They can’t deal with what’s going on around them so they’re... using imagery to kind of convey a fake world.”

Taco Bell is arguably one of the best at targeting this instant-gratification demo. The QSR attracts young fans that love memes, selfies... and teal hair dye.

Last summer, Taco Bell Canada used influencers on Twitch and Instagram to promote the launch of the Baja Blast drink and held in-person events where people could dye their hair "Baja Blue." The social and IRL experiences resulted in 32 million impressions and the new drink is now the top fountain beverage at Taco Bell restaurants in Canada, says Veronica Castillo, Taco Bell Canada's head of marketing.

"We like experiences and memories," says Bella Bucchiotti, 21, a Canadian influencer and content creator. "We live in those little Instagram squares. [Brands should] create experiences for us that our debt and rent can't afford us."

Gen We

On the other end of the spectrum is Gen We-er Yousafzai.

Gen We is more likely to follow the young activist's lead and post about #DayOfTheGirl than their #ootd (outfit of the day). Coming of age in the shadow of 9/11, the Great Recession and Donald Trump, they are anxious about the state of the world and believe they can change it, says Napoli.

While Gen We-ers are after shareable experiences, they're also looking for brands to stand for something (like A&W's ban on plastic straws or Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad), says Napoli.

Both brands also resonate with millennials, says Johanna Faigleman, an anthropologist and CEO of Human Branding. But she warns: "I think millennials were 'I'll spend whatever it takes to get my homemade pickled whatever in a mason jar,' but Gen We is more about substance over surface."

This younger cohort will shell out

"for something of substance that has really big meaning to them... but are not enticed by the trappings of it," she adds.

Lush puts its money where it's mouth is. Being socially conscious has been a part of the beauty retailer's strategy since its inception, so its new palm-oil-free soap resonates as authentic - key to targeting Gen We, says Napoli.

"[Gen We] will not hesitate to Google your brand and DM influencers asking for more information," she says.

"Using purpose as a marketing tool should be a long-term strategy and should be engineered to brand values."

Whether marketers are targeting Gen We, Me or Z, adds Napoli, this discerning cohort expects bespoke marketing that speaks to their individual interests, needs and desires.



KEEP EYES ON BRANDING TO SOAR ABOVE RIVALS

Lots of brands sell shoes online, but only Nike rose well above the rest last year. To stand out from competitors this year, CMOs need to go well beyond drawing up digital-based marketing strategies. Keith Johnston, VP and research director at Forrester, sat down with *strategy* to offer his tips on bringing your brand to Nike-level heights.

FOCUS ON FUNDAMENTALS

For years, tech was touted as the differentiating factor, but as it became more accessible, customer experiences built on it became homogenous, says Johnston.

For example, Disney's MagicBand and Carnival Cruise Line's wearable wristbands, which help customers navigate busy parks and cruise ships. From an experience perspective, there are few differences between the wristbands. As a result, in 2019, Johnston says there will be a "rebound in the fundamentals of marketing and branding" as a company's brand is given a more prominent role.

Most chief marketers will continue to focus on digital, he says, but innovators will seek forms of disruption not based in technology. They'll be looking to create real and perceived value by capitalizing on growing societal divisions (see: Nike's Colin Kaepernick ad) or by

embracing privacy as a core selling point. Moreover, brand vision and purpose will become the base for articulating a customer experience vision, Johnston says.

CMOs ARE KEY

Technology has divided the C-suite for a long time, says Johnston. As marketers adapt to tech-led disruption, they have been forced to re-evaluate their brand promise. Johnston says CMOs are going to have to collaborate more with others in charge of different parts of the consumer experience if they are going to deliver on brand promise in the year ahead. CMOs are in a good position to lead collaborative efforts in their companies, he adds.

"The CMO used to be the most endangered species in the C-suite," he says. "Now they have the skillsets to traverse the company and deliver on brand." **JD**



LIVING THEIR BEST LIVES

AS SOCIETAL AND PERSONAL PRESSURES MOUNT, CONSUMERS ARE GROWING INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS. HERE'S HOW SOME BRANDS ARE JUMPING ON THE WELLNESS TREND TO HELP THEM COPE.

BY MEGAN HAYNES

Deep breath in. Deep breath out. Scan the body from head to toe, pausing to identify what feels comfortable, uncomfortable. It's OK if the mind wanders. If the day's stress creeps in, just breathe it out.

So goes one of the five-minute guided meditations on the popular Headspace app. As of 2019, more than 16 million people have downloaded the program, which encourages short bursts of quiet focus throughout the day – five minutes here, 10 minutes there. The app offers a range of free daily sessions, while deeper meditations for specific outcomes (like managing stress, treating insomnia or even

stopping an itch), are part of its subscription service.

Other brands have taken notice of a growing appetite for mindfulness: Tea co. Twinings linked up with the U.K.-based Headspace for bite-sized meditations geared at women; Virgin Airlines and Air Canada offer the app's calming exercises on flights; and, Weight Watchers (now WW) partnered with the app on mindful eating/living sessions.

For WW, the partnership is part of its broader transformational shift towards holistic health, says Kevin O'Brien, president of the brand's Canadian office. Best known as a dieting company, its weight management program has long appealed to women age 38 to 55. "But, there are 36 million people in Canada, and more than 14 million of them are overweight or obese," he says. "They certainly aren't all women 38 to 55." And, as consumers shun the idea of diets, there's an even greater opportunity for WW, he says.

"The wellness economy globally is [worth more than] US\$4 trillion," he notes. "In the last year, WW was a less than \$500 million business. That's less than 0.1% [of the market]. There's a huge opportunity for growth for us."

These days, "wellness" is still connected to weight, but for consumers it's all about the mind, body and spirit, according to the Global Wellness Institute. No longer confined to the realm of "alternative medicine," the new definition is focused on enjoying illness-free, healthy lives – recognizing that all three aspects work together. It's also evolved from the Goop-loving, relatively elite (and largely

white female) acolytes who praise the healing powers of meditation, crystals and jade eggs. Driven in no small part by our growing anxiety over social, mental and physical well-being, wellness has gone mainstream.

There's no denying that Canadians are increasingly anxious: in its annual health survey, Sun Life Financial found that 90% of young adults are stressed out, while rates of clinical anxiety-related disorders have been on the rise.

There's a lot of factors causing rising anxiety levels, says Johanna Faigelman, an anthropologist and CEO of Human Branding. Political tensions, economic uncertainty and environmental changes are ever-present. And, at the heart of these concerns, the smartphone and proliferation of social media make those problems seem even closer.

"People can't escape the 24-hour news cycle," she says. "It creates a proximity to social crises that feel much closer to the average person today than in the '80s or '90s. If there's a shooting in California, it feels like it's happening next door because it's on your feed."

When faced with situations that elicit feelings of impending doom – like climate change or reckless politicians – people tend to turn inwards. "We look for ways to control ourselves as a way of regaining some of that control," Faigelman says.

Beth McGroarty, director of research at L.A.-based The Wellness Institute, concurs, adding that it's not a surprise that the Gwyneth Paltrow-created Goop (which launched in 2008 as a health-related e-newsletter and has sold consumers on soup cleanses

and wearable stickers to allegedly treat ailments) gained popularity alongside the dominance of the smartphone and the decline of the economy. And where there's consumer demand, there are companies popping up to meet these healthy mind and body needs, McGroarty says.

Just look at the likes of anti-anxiety products, such as the sleep-aid weighted Gravity Blanket, which was engineered to reduce stress and raised \$4.7 million on Kickstarter – one of the crowd-funding site's most successful product campaigns.

Spas, retreats and "wellness tourism" have seen a huge boom recently, growing to become multi-billion-dollar industries. Traditional travel brands have also taken notice: Hyatt bought spa brand Exhale for more than \$230 million; while IHG's Even Hotels (which carries the tagline "Where wellness is built in" and employs "wellness-savvy staff") unveiled eucalyptus fibre bedding for better sleep.

Organizations like the Well Building Institute have also popped up with a mission to put societal well-being at the forefront of architectural designs (through the use of things like natural materials and softer lighting).

The trend towards minimalism in design is three-fold, says Sarah Housley, senior editor, lifestyle at WSGN. Natural materials – like birch wood, copper and clay – create a soothing effect, which is why they're in so many stores.

"Handcrafted surfaces and tactile textures are really important to design at the moment, particularly to add to products that don't feel as emotional or as human

as we might like – such as home electronics," she says. "And multi-sensory wellness is gaining a lot of importance too – thinking about calming sounds especially, and how to make spaces quieter and less anxiety-inducing."

In 2017, for example, U.K. retailer Selfridges launched an in-store wellness space called The Body Studio, with a product selection focused on encouraging women to feel comfortable and confident in their bodies. The



Above: Brandless evokes wellness via its minimalist packaging for everything from tea to tortilla chips.

store design featured light wood finishes, mannequins in yoga poses, an in-store cycling and yoga studio, as well as panel discussions with the likes of Deepak Chopra and health guru Rhian Stephenson.

Amid the soaring complexity of our digital lives, products and brand design have also taken a decidedly minimalist turn. From the growth of Muji and Uniqlo to upstarts Casper and Quip, brands that have opted for simplicity resonate with the wellness zeitgeist.

Housley says simplistic packaging, like that of Glossier or Brandless, helps consumers deal with choice paralysis – providing an easy to understand design that doesn't overwhelm. "Transparency, both literally and figuratively, has been one of the biggest trends in packaging this year," she says.

The trend is also the result of merging wellness and aspirational living, says Housley. Wellness has – until very recently – been the purview of the elite, and packaging that's both clean (in terms of ingredients and design) and beautiful is the result. "There's a definite connection between clarity, simplicity and well-being," she says. "Living with less, but in a beautiful way, is a luxury that requires an investment of time or money, or both."

Beyond external pressures, people's own bodies and lifestyles are also becoming more anxiety-inducing. Stress levels are particularly high among women, who – as caregivers and working moms – often carry more workload than their partners, says

What makes up wellness?

WELLNESS REAL ESTATE:

The construction of residential and commercial properties that incorporate wellness – think offices with spas and sleep spaces, or condos with yoga rooms. A new commercial centre, Paradise Walk in Niagara Falls, Ont., for example, will have an oxygen bar (companies have long claimed that high O2 offers health benefits) and gardens, all designed to help improve visitors' health.

> **US\$2.3 billion***

WORKPLACE WELLNESS:

Programs from employers that tap into wellness. But they're more than just gym memberships and soothing office designs: Toronto-based Vibrant Marketing and InnoveLab recently launched ETA, a set of cards that are meant to challenge employees to think through their mental health. Cards encourage players to be positive and "Surprise your colleagues," by contributing to well-being in the office, or "Get grounded" through a meditation technique.

> **\$1.8 billion***

WELLNESS TOURISM:

Getaways that focus specifically on living well through spiritual retreats or spa weekends. There are even companies

like Renew, which help women recover from heartbreak. Launched by Vancouverite Amy Chan, the three-day New York retreat pulls in the broken-hearted for a weekend of fine cuisine, heart-healing yoga and even soothing llamas.

> **\$15.7 billion***

SPAS:

Canada has more than 4,000 spas spread across the country. Want to get your brand in on the trend? Learn from Hershey: at its Chocolate Spa at Hotel Hershey, patrons can get a chocolate fondue wrap, cocoa facial treatments, or even a chocolate exfoliating manicure.

> **\$2 billion***

FITNESS:

This includes social workouts, like CrossFit or SoulCycle, but they're not limited to the body. Launched in September 2018, the Brain Gym offers EEG headsets to measure alpha waves that help clients

meditate better. The Muse headset, from Toronto's InterAxon, can sense when people's mindfulness is drifting and prompts them to get back on their meditation track.

> **\$3 billion****



*Global Wellness Institute **Ibis Worldwide

in recent years, begun to shun the centre and frozen aisles, according to Packaged Facts, they're still looking for a bit of help in the home. In response, grocers like Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro have ramped up ready-to-eat high-quality foods (usually made daily without the long-lead best-before date), paving way for the grocer/restaurant "grocerant" trend.

What's more, people are also looking for healthier meal alternatives, as the prospect of developing preventable illnesses becomes more terrifying as they age. Among young adults, for example, 34% worry heart disease and stroke is epidemic, and 31% believe diabetes is rampant, according to a CAMH study. These aren't baseless concerns either: Statistics Canada found that for adults age 20 to 39, the risk of an expanding waistline has quadrupled in the past 30 years, with more than 26.1% of that population considered overweight. "People are living longer and longer, but with more and more chronic disease," says McGroarty.

This body stress isn't limited to young adults either, says Alyssa Rodrigo, director of insights at Labatt. Nearly half of all Canadians want to live healthier lives, her research has found, and that is manifesting itself in three ways: consumers are taking things out of their diets (like sugars or fats); adding things into their routines (like enriched minerals); or they're getting into social fitness (see sidebar).

For Labatt, this interest in wellness has led to its low-cal Michelob Ultra line enjoying high double-digit growth last year, doing particularly well among the under-35 set.

Mary Chambers, CSO at McCann. While 82% of adult women are in the labour force, 67% believe they manage the household "mental load" – like planning kids' schedules or grocery lists. In comparison, only 26% of men feel that mental load, according to McCann's recent survey of 2,600 Canadian.

As cooking and cleaning services become increasingly commoditized, the trend to offload some of the household stress will grow, Chambers says. Just look at the rise in meal-in-a-box delivery companies. Ready-made meals from grocery stores and fresh delivery services were the fastest growing food segments in the past year, jumping 20% to nab an 8% market share, according to NPD Group. While consumers have,

Society has also gotten better at focusing on mental health concerns by identifying the drivers. The latest is the loneliness “epidemic.”

A recent U.K. study from the British Cardiovascular Society found that loneliness is not only linked to depression, anxiety and suicide, but it can also cause physical health issues, raising people’s risks of heart attack and stroke. In response, the government appointed its first-ever Minister of Loneliness. Here, in Canada, at least one in five people suffer from social isolation, according to research from Simon Fraser University.

Building on the depressing modern-day insight, Loblaw-owned President’s Choice found that two out of three Canadians eat meals alone, even though 93% believe that eating meals as a family will lead to children growing up happier and healthier. In short, Canadians want to eat with other people – they just aren’t.

In response, the brand launched the “Eat Together” campaign in 2017, encouraging Canadians to get together for meals more often. Last year, the company promoted eating together during the workday lunch hour in a bid to banish the dreaded #saddeskunch. And, this New Year’s Eve, PC unveiled its latest “Eat Together” iteration, this time focusing on helping Canadians make New Year resolutions to share more meals in 2019. The campaign from John St. is living on TV, in stores and online, and encourages people to reflect on their meal partners for the year ahead, says Cheryl Grishkewich, VP marketing, President’s Choice.

“Eat Together” isn’t a

traditional marketing ploy, she says, rather it’s an attempt to start a movement to address the issue of loneliness. And while the campaign itself isn’t specifically a “wellness” initiative, she says the trend towards more holistic health is having a profound effect on the brand’s overarching product selection.

While it’s always offered a robust line of organic foods, for example, hundreds of new SKUs will be unveiled next year, Grishkewich adds. It’s part of the growing demand consumers have for foods that are free from pesticides or antibiotics, she says (PC is also rolling out more “free-from” foods, typically meats raised without antibiotics, as well as more vegan and gluten-free lines.).

The end goal, however, isn’t to push a “wellness” philosophy onto consumers. “We don’t want to be in a position to tell Canadians what’s best for them,” says Grishkewich. “We want to give them the choices so they can make the decision.”

Indeed, any push into wellness needs to come with a warning label, says Timothy




Clockwise: Loblaw taps into wellness by casting a light on the loneliness “epidemic”; Vibrant’s workplace wellness cards; Selfridges and Headspace calm shoppers via meditation boards.

Caulfield, Canada research chair in health law and policy, as well as the host of Netflix’s *A User’s Guide to Cheating Death*.

As people become more rigorous at tracking their mental and physical health, and as more companies sell wellness products, people can actually become, well, stressed out. “[Our society has an] obsession with always trying to improve and ‘live your best life,’” he says. “That’s a lot of pressure to put on people. The movement really puts the emphasis on the individual.”

We’re a time-starved population, and since “living your best life” is a very personal thing, people often look for shortcuts, he adds. They want a magical cure, and the wellness industry has done an excellent job at selling things people believe are solutions.

However, just because consumers are turning to wellness to help alleviate their anxieties, it doesn’t mean brands need to go full-tilt on all things holistic, says McCann’s Chambers. Consumers who are stressed out want to know how, and why, a product will make their lives easier or better – make that a bigger priority, she says.

So, sit back, breathe, and think through your health and wellness strategy, top to bottom. What feels comfortable, uncomfortable? There’s no need to stress about injecting some wellness into your brand. 

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THIS YEAR'S Marketers of the Year were tasked with keeping their brands top-of-mind among Canadians.

Each had a unique set of challenges and goals. But all five approached them with a steely determination and focus that enabled them, and their teams, to rise above the rest.

Dove Men+Care's Sharon MacLeod focused on celebrating fatherhood and promoting paternity leave to speak to young men here, and around the world. Faced with competing for attention in a new category, Canopy's David Bigioni got Canadians' high (pun intended) on the Tweed brand. Antoinette Benoit ensured Canucks of all ages and backgrounds are still lovin' McDonald's Canada, while Anne-Marie LaBerge is making over BRP's image for the next gen of 'brand worshippers.' Finally, Jill Schoolenberg injected new energy into GoDaddy's Canadian arm with several tongue-firmly-in-cheek campaigns.

This list of industry leaders is the result of research and industry feedback, narrowed down from a pile of candidates. Use these MOYs as inspiration as you enter the new year. And who knows, perhaps you and your brand could be at the top of our annual list next year.



MARKETERS OF THE YEAR

SHARON MACLEOD BUILDS BRIDGES TO NEXT GEN MEN

How the marketing maven is applying “Real Beauty” lessons to the Dove Men+Care line. BY MELISSA DUNNE

For Sharon MacLeod, celebrating fatherhood isn't just business, it's personal.

The global VP – along with her three older brothers – was raised by her dad after her mother died in a car accident when she was just a baby. So when MacLeod took over the Dove Men+Care global line in August 2016, honouring and empowering dads was a top priority. She knew that would resonate emotionally with consumers and ultimately drive growth.

MacLeod got her start in marketing at Unilever Canada in 1998 and spent the last two decades working her way up the company's corporate ladder. The marketer, who hails from Southwestern Ontario, moved to the U.S. in 2014 to take on the role of VP personal care for Unilever's entire North American region. Then, in 2016, she became global VP for Dove Men+Care and has since added marketing roles focused on brand purpose and philosophy, as well as hired a larger digital team. She works directly

with 12 staff in the New Jersey office and approximately another 100, who work on Dove Men+Care, as well as other Unilever brands scattered across the globe.

Dove, already well-known for its women's personal care products, branched out with a separate line for men in 2010. MacLeod has since focused on making the Dove Men+Care brand resonate with the male target on a more emotional level, just as the women's lines have for years. Having led the charge on

Dove's women-focused and uber-successful “Real Beauty” movement and campaign, as well as the brand's Self-Esteem Project in Canada, MacLeod proved that tapping into universal truths that pull at consumers' heartstrings works.

Kicking off on Father's Day 2018, MacLeod has been infusing purpose into the Dove brand through the “Dear Future Dads” campaign (created by Ogilvy, with Edelman on PR) that encourages more men





to take paternity leave. In a moving spot, men are featured talking about their emotions. There's a seemingly tough guy rocking a red bandana who says that after seeing his child for the first time, his reaction was "I'm a puddle. You own me." Next, a dad is tending to his daughter, who loves that he's her best friend. The kicker comes when a man covered in neck tattoos starts tearing up while talking about his son. The affecting 70-second ad shows that men can be both soft and tough.

MacLeod and her team did extensive research in the 50 countries where Dove Men+Care products are sold prior to the campaign launch. They found that the traditional masculinity paradigm is being chipped away.

The brand also worked with Virtue, a Vice Media-owned creative agency, to better understand that male millennial target, says MacLeod. "Millennial guys are in this position where their fathers are in the old traditional roles and they feel the pressure of that. Yet they do things very differently, so sometimes they're pushing back against an older generation."

While there was some concern about backlash from interest groups arguing that fighting for maternity leave and women's rights is more important, MacLeod was confident that championing paternity leave was the right call. She reached out to women's groups to gauge their reaction to "Dear Future Dads" before its launch and many were in full support – because having dads engage in child-rearing ultimately helps women too, she notes. And while the

#MeToo movement had picked up steam in early 2018, just before the campaign launch, MacLeod felt there was room in the public conversation to acknowledge the sins of the minority while celebrating the majority of what she calls "good guys doing good things." Her instincts were spot on. The campaign has so far tracked over one billion media impressions.

"The sentiment was remarkable. In all of our social listening it was 100% positive," says MacLeod. "I've never seen that. Ever."

Before the paternity leave push, and prior to MacLeod's arrival, the male grooming brand had already seen some success with campaigns that celebrated a multi-faceted masculinity. Its "#RealStrength" platform, for example, celebrated "real heroes" in early 2016, featuring men in acts of caring.

Showing, and celebrating, the softer side of masculinity has been a winning strategy: Dove Men+Care became the #1 male grooming brand in Canada in 2017 and increased its leadership position following the "Dear Future Dads" campaign, says MacLeod.

Its biggest competitor in Canada is Old Spice (owned by Unilever competitor, Procter & Gamble), which has taken a surreal tongue-in-cheek tone for years. MacLeod's decision for Dove Men+Care to be the antithesis of hyper-masculine brands, like Old Spice, has resulted in the brand growing 39 basis points in the past 18 months in North America (it also leads growth amongst all Unilever personal care brands globally).

MacLeod not only started a global conversation about paternity leave outside of Unilever, but within the global behemoth as well.

"We felt the only way we could champion it externally was if we were walking the walk as a company," she recalls.

Paternity leave programs differ wildly, not only from country-to-country, but company-to-company, with some not offering any time off at all. But now, at Unilever, every new dad gets a minimum of three weeks leave, says MacLeod. Even when companies offer paternity leave, men often don't feel comfortable taking it: company research found that 26% of Canadian fathers didn't take any time off work when their youngest child was born or adopted. So now the

company's global marketing departments hold events to encourage workers to actually take leave.

"I'm very connected to Canada, but when you go to other countries in the world it's very different," says MacLeod. "When you go to Japan, Brazil, Argentina, Germany, even the U.K. [it's not so progressive]. So I'm mapping the whole world to see where men are in this continuum of 'traditional' versus 'progressive.'"

Until attitudes towards paternity change, the global VP will keep going.

Celebrating dads, and ultimately, getting more men to take paternity leave is set to be a multi-year initiative, says the marketer. There will be another push this Father's Day and she's set her sights on having an even bigger impact with a full-length documentary in the works. *Jurassic Park* actor Bryce Dallas Howard is directing the brand's first



Top: Dove Men+Care focuses on "good guys doing good things."
Bottom: "Dear Future Dads" celebrates the joys of fatherhood.

feature-length doc and her father, acclaimed director Ron Howard, is serving as a producer. Dove Men+Care is financing the project and MacLeod is excited about taking a "fun and funny" look at fatherhood today.

"My goal was to re-engineer [Dove Men+Care] and the marketing and growth strategy," says MacLeod.

"The single biggest achievement I've had is championing and creating this purpose-led strategy."



DAVID BIGIONI BEGINS ON A HIGH NOTE

How the marketer got consumers in the new category to say 'Hi' to Tweed, not weed.

BY JOSH KOLM

As midnight rolled around on Oct. 17, 2018, David Bigioni was at a Tweed store in St. John's, Nfld., watching one of Canada's first-ever legal recreational cannabis sales take place.

"It was an amazing experience," says the chief commercial officer of Tweed parent company Canopy Growth. "There was such a buzz just being there with the team representing the business and the journey it has been on to get here."

For Bigioni, that journey began a little more than a year earlier.

He had been VP of sales at Molson Coors for roughly two years when he saw Bruce Linton, CEO of Canopy Growth, speak at a conference in June 2017. Bigioni – who had spent more than seven years in senior marketing roles before moving over to sales at the beer brand – had no intention to move into cannabis. However,

seeing Linton talk got him thinking.

"You are creating an industry and marketplace," Bigioni says. "This is a business that is Canadian and global, that's recreational and medical, that's disruptive to so many industries, with a mile-long innovation pipeline. There was just so much opportunity."

Bigioni joined the licensed cannabis producer as chief marketing officer in August 2017, becoming chief commercial officer a year later as sales functions were added to his remit. At first, he oversaw a team of roughly 20 staff, between brand, events, digital and an in-house creative team. That team numbers almost 350 today.

Part of that growth is because sales and customer care staff now report into Bigioni. But it's also the result of more than a year of "building capability and capacity" as Canopy Growth positions itself as a leader in the global cannabis industry, he says.

Working with primary agency partner Cossette, as well as digital shop Konrad Group and strategy consultancy Behaviour, Bigioni's first major task was to grow Canopy Growth's marketing capabilities and prepare its "hero brand" for a wider market.

"We wanted people asking for Tweed, not weed," Bigioni says. "This isn't a category that has traditionally been branded. It has been strain-led. So establishing brands is important to reframe the whole

category and what it represents.”

Even in a category as young as recreational cannabis in Canada, branding trends began to emerge by mid-2018.

Most LPs – having built their names in the medical space – created new recreational brands, typically making a lifestyle-inspired one for potential new entrants and another for current enthusiasts. Canopy Growth instead stuck with Tweed as its single lead brand for the rec market, targeting new and experienced consumers alike.

To introduce itself to the masses, Tweed launched a campaign during the summer, with OOH postings and digital ads greeting Canadians with a friendly “Hi.” The creative directed consumers to Tweed’s website, where they could find answers to FAQs ranging from the difference between THC and CBD to details about legalization. The campaign generated over 190 million impressions, with a 38% lift in brand awareness, a 95% month-over-month increase in site traffic and click-through rates 92% higher than the industry average.

“[Cannabis] is not an image or lifestyle play; that would be in beverage and alcohol,” says Bigioni. “What it is, though, is values and personality. The ‘Hi’ campaign is bringing out the personality and approachability and what the brand stands for in a tangible way.”

As one of the first brands in Canada’s legal weed industry, Tweed leans into that history as a company that took over a former Hershey factory in Smiths Falls – a small Ontario town that took a major economic hit when the chocolate company left. By using an approachable brand voice, the Tweed brand embraces “small town values” and having a positive impact on the community.

That approachable, community-focused identity comes through in its actions, too.

When it was still a medical brand, Tweed offered a discount to low-income families to make cannabis more accessible. Earlier this year, it launched the Tweed Collective and “The 4/20 Commitment,” a pledge of \$20 million to community-focused causes over four years. And, as legalization got closer, it developed a campaign with Uber and MADD that gave people 101 things to do instead of driving while high. It also began working with private recycling company TerraCycle to

develop a program letting consumers return plastic packaging back to Tweed stores.

“Little things like that aren’t about promoting or associating us with a lifestyle, but communicate our values by putting them into action,” Bigioni says. “Being purpose-built and belief-led is a framework I’ve used since I first joined Molson, and that’s what we have in Tweed.”

While Tweed is Canopy Growth’s hero brand, Bigioni’s purview also includes Spectrum for the international medical market and DNA Genetics targeting connoisseurs and those who care about



growing practices and winning cannabis competitions. The day before legalization, it re-launched its Leafs By Snoop brand as LBS, with a premium positioning around being “the gold standard” in cannabis and a plan to embrace “diversity and inclusiveness” in its marketing.

Canopy Growth closed its acquisition of Tokyo Smoke parent company Hiku in September, but Bigioni says that brand has its own marketing group that operates “semi-independently,” collaborating and sharing best practices – likening it to the Six

Pints craft beer division at Molson Coors.

With the rapid preparations for legalization complete, Bigioni says Canopy Growth is being more purposeful with its marketing investments. The company leaned heavily on partners like Cossette last year to build capacity. Now, Bigioni and his agencies are working to maintain an “entrepreneurial spirit” and ownership of the brand’s voice by finding a balance between in-housing and out-sourcing work. It’s currently building out digital marketing capabilities using Adobe Marketing Cloud, CRM and one-to-one marketing, and is also looking at content creation and event execution.

Bigioni began his career at Unilever, where, as a brand manager, he led innovation strategy, positioning and activations – and he’s looking to foster those skills in cannabis marketing. He admits that marketing training at Canopy Growth was done on an ad hoc basis leading up to legalization, but the plan is to invest in developing best practices as the brand navigates tight regulations.

“This is a business that is creative, and is doing in-house innovation and brand development and creating ecosystems and retail footprints,” Bigioni says. “As we bring in people from different businesses, we need to define ‘our way.’ What’s our philosophy around what extraordinary brands look like? How do we work with agency partners? And how do we define that process?”

Education is still going to be a part of Tweed’s brand, but so is building affinity. And one of the biggest opportunities to do that is through retail. The company is currently looking to open more Tweed stores in provinces where private sale is permitted, including one at its Smiths Falls facility (which is now selling chocolate in prep for the anticipated legalization of cannabis edibles, beverages and extracts in 2019).

“When you think of an industry where media channels are curtailed, having storefronts is already an important differentiator,” he says. “But we’re also trying to normalize a new category using a brand built around community... For us, [retail] also represents the opportunity to show our commitment to community by having a presence that demystifies us, gives us a place to answer questions and give back to the places where we do business.”

Top: Canopy Growth introduced the Tweed brand to Canadians with a friendly ‘Hi.’
Bottom: Retail is an opportunity for Tweed to express its brand, including at its Welcome Centre in Smiths Falls, Ont.

ANTOINETTE BENOIT'S GOLDEN STRATEGY

The CMO has Canadians,
from kids to grandpas,
lovin' the Golden Arches.

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE



Antoinette Benoit steers a large, fast-moving ship. From her office in Toronto's north end, the chief marketer of McDonald's Canada oversees a team of roughly 50 employees who manage everything from insight generation to integrated campaigns and CRM. Collectively, they put out around 50 campaigns each year: think of it as one campaign per person, for a full 365 days.

Managing that kind of output while maintaining its brand message has its challenges, of course, as the company looks to speak with almost every demographic

possible through segment-specific strategies that inform its marketing, products, restaurant experiences and media mix.

Benoit, who unexpectedly launched into a marketing career at Unilever and Colgate-Palmolive back in the early '90s (after initially planning to work in the non-profit sector), has

learned to trust the growing expertise of her internal team and agency partners – namely, Cossette and OMD – to get the job done.

"There are a lot of things I don't understand," she says. "But I know there's always someone I can ask who knows." Her role – and what she says she's best at – is "seeing where we should go and looking for people who can bring the technology, the storytelling and the vision together."

In the CMO's mind, the 64-year-old global burger chain still faces the challenge of "getting noticed when you're not a Canadian brand in a country where Canadians trust Canadian brands so much." But to say that it's on the right track would be an understatement. Having reached its highest sales growth and market share in over a decade, McDonald's Canada has certainly reaped the fruits of Benoit's leadership. Under her command, marketing ROI is up 33%, sales continue to grow and McDonald's Canada now serves three million customers daily, making Canada one of its top performing markets globally.

During her four years in the role, Benoit

has brought on new talent, new technology and new capabilities to prepare for the challenges ahead, including the need to create digital experiences for increasingly tech-savvy customers. A year after arriving in Canada from McDonald's in Europe, where she held various marketing roles, Benoit began bolstering the team's internal digital capabilities. Since then, the brand has tripled its digital media budget. In 2018, digital accounted for 40% of its overall spend.

Increasing the team's online competencies has been crucial as McDonald's pushes mobile ordering through its My McD's app, launched in 2016, which allows customers to order ahead, view deals, customize meals and pay with their phone. Over the last year, the brand saw a 23% increase in app downloads, thanks in part to a digital/OOH campaign for National French Fry Day that featured a live-stream of social comments as they were broadcast through a drive-thru speaker at the top of Vancouver's Grouse Mountain.

Looking ahead, Benoit also intends to bring McDonald's CRM capabilities in-house in order to better use the data it's currently





collecting from the app.

On the creative side, the QSR begins every campaign by generating insights internally, but under the strategic leadership of its creative agency, Cossette. From there, the team moves to a collaborative planning process with other business units to ensure priorities are aligned.

McDonald's embraced better audience segmentation company-wide two years ago, says Jammie Ogle, managing director at OMD, which has enabled it to balance connecting with customers on a macro-level, while also being distinguishable at a campaign level.

"Part of our success is having a clear brand vision, so all the teams have a clear articulation of what the brand stands for and our priorities," says Benoit.

To deliver on her goals, the marketer worked with Cossette to build an agency team dedicated to the account and united talent across creative, strategy, community management and delivery, says Kathy McGuire, SVP, managing director, Cossette.

From the fall 2018 "Nuggetiquette"

campaign, which showcased the eccentric ways McDonald's fans indulge in its classic menu item (Chicken McNuggets), to the "MacCoin" that could be redeemed for a Big Mac in celebration of its 50th birthday – it can be a challenge to find a single idea that unifies all of the brand's marketing efforts.

Being "always on" means risking losing the brand vision, notes Benoit. More and more, McDonald's has needed to articulate clear branding and messaging across all of its campaigns, she says, noting that her team is currently working with its agency partners on a new framework that she hopes will "help us be more disciplined and make sure that we are more of one brand versus several brands."

In summarizing her vision, however, Benoit says the brand's most successful campaigns have been around positioning McDonald's as a meeting place where "connections happen."

To show its commitment to being a diverse and welcoming place (empowered by a broader "come as you are" mentality), McDonald's filters all of its marketing efforts through the lens of wanting to show that it's a part of the fabric of Canada. The brand's most recent campaigns also revolve around everyday interactions between people and product, and they portray the QSR as an "enabler of feel-good moments."

The brand's "Moving Day" work in Quebec (where it depicted iconic menu items using brightly coloured moving boxes) was another example of McDonald's having "found our sweet spot of understanding what's relevant to Canadians, and tapping into what Canadians love most about our brand," Benoit says.

The closer her marketing team (and agency partners) can get to the core of the McDonald's brand, she says, the more the creative output is likely to succeed – both at home and abroad.

That helps explain why so many Canadian campaigns have recently been picked up globally. "Is it still a Big Mac?," for one, has inspired work in France, Brazil and Sweden. Similarly, last year's "BMxB" commercials satirizing highly stylized fashion and beauty ads have rolled out in Brazil and Switzerland. And 2018's "Follow the Arches," which earned Cossette a Grand Prix at Cannes, has

appeared in Latin American markets.

That idea was brought to McDonald's by Cossette, which saw an opportunity to solve a business problem (helping drivers locate a McDonald's restaurant) through sleek design via way-finding billboards on highways featuring deconstructed Golden Arches.

The sharing of work between markets is actually part of a larger company vision aimed at examining how others have

Opposite page:

The brand celebrated the Big Mac with a big "MacCoin" 50th anniversary campaign (complete with redeemable-for-burger-gold-coins)

Right: Quebec's Moving Day was an opportunity for McD's to get creative with its menu items.

Bottom right: McDonald's Canadian "BMxB" campaign, has also run in Brazil and Switzerland.



addressed key challenges, with the goal of then testing the approach locally, the chief marketer says.

"There are so many great ideas in the McDonald's system and consumer insights travel extremely well, especially for our brand," she adds.

When the QSR's Canadian arm is faced with pumping out 50 campaigns per year, Benoit says, it helps to be able to tap the creativity of other markets: "You don't steal shamelessly, but you steal smartly."

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ANNE-MARIE LABERGE TAKES BRP ON A RIDE

The marketer is transforming the recreational vehicle company from product-driven to experience-led.

BY MELISSA DUNNE

Warning: If you want to work with Anne-Marie LaBerge, you must go riding. You have your vehicle of choice, but ride you must.

Bombardier Recreational Products (BRP) has long promoted the products and performance of its fleet. However, since joining the Valcourt, Que.,-based company in 2016, the SVP of global brands and communications has shifted that focus to instead promote the riding experience. So to sell the exhilarating rush, everyone who works with LaBerge must experience the feeling first-hand.

"All our customers have a deep need for experiences," says LaBerge. "We like to say we calculate distance in emotion, not miles... You need to ride to understand this."

Candace Borland, president and managing partner of Anomaly Toronto, confirms this is not hyperbole. The agency became BRP's AOR after an extensive pitch process in the spring of 2017 and, yes, Anomaly staff have since ridden everything from Sea-Doo watercrafts in the Florida Keys to Can-Am off-road vehicles on farms in the U.K.

BRP currently sells its six brands to consumers in 112 countries around the world. And LaBerge travels, and rides, frequently to better understand these varied and complex market regions. She's ridden in the Swiss Alps, in the Amazon, and just outside of Dubai. She splits her time between the company's Valcourt headquarters and its Montreal office, and typically travels for one week each month in a bid to stay connected to all of the areas BRP products are sold.

In 2003, Canadian aerospace and transportation behemoth, Bombardier Inc., sold BRP to a group of investors. Ten years later, BRP went public, with company shares recently hitting an all-time high, thanks, in part, to LaBerge's marketing savvy. Over the last two years, the company's stock has risen 250% in value, from about \$26 to approximately \$65.

Up until LaBerge's hiring, BRP was very product-led. Ads typically featured close-up photos of vehicles, but no people. LaBerge changed that. Instead of putting the product at the centre of its marketing, she shifted the focus to put consumers – and their stories, emotions and experiences – at the forefront. A recent ad for the Can-Am Defender, for example, shows a rancher in the foreground, with the side-by-side utility vehicle in the background. The human-focused marketing has already paid off, with retail sales of the Can-Am Off-Road



vehicles rising 18% versus the 2% industry growth, according to BRP's Sept. 2017 investor report. In the first fiscal quarter of 2019, BRP reported revenues were up 16%, primarily driven by higher wholesale of year-round products. BRP powersport product lines saw 12% growth, while the industry saw a decline, according to a company report. BRP competitors vary depending on the product, but main rivals include Polaris, Yamaha, Honda, Arctic Cat and Harley-Davidson. "Yamaha and Honda are much

Top: "That Ski-Doo Feeling" is featured in an ad that highlights the happiness riding brings (and the possibility for snow in your play-off beard). **Bottom:** The Can-Am ad showcases the kind of down-home guy who uses a side-by-side utility vehicle in the foreground.

bigger. We're the underdog," she notes. "The way we're going to win is to be super, super focused in our approach."

Part of that has included bringing all six brands under the BRP umbrella (Ski-Doo and Lynx snowmobiles, Sea-Doo watercrafts, Can-Am on- and off-road vehicles, Evinrude outboard engines for boats and Rotax engines for BRP vehicles) and defining each sub-brand's purpose, promise and personality. A snappy 20-second ad posted on YouTube last February, for example, exemplifies the marketer's vision. In it, a person falls off a Ski-Doo amidst stunning snow-covered mountains as someone else giggles off-camera. A voiceover then says: "You can fall for many reasons, but only one reason gets you back up," followed by the tag "That Ski-Doo Feeling." The short, yet emotionally evocative, video has been viewed almost one million times on YouTube.

Before BRP, LaBerge spent two decades in several marketing positions at Telus. She left the telecom in May 2016 after almost seven years as its VP, brand and marketing communications, and she was determined to take a well-earned hiatus. The break didn't last long. Within mere months she joined BRP to help re-energize its brands, starting in October 2016. Today, LaBerge works alongside a global comms team made up of

approximately 20 people, including brand directors and a new digital lead.

Working with Anomaly and PHD/Touché, LaBerge plans to use very little traditional advertising in the future, instead focusing on building an "online megaphone" for the brand. Before the marketer joined, 90% of BRP's marketing budget went to traditional advertising. That's now down to 45%.

"Our goal is to build a very powerful megaphone to tell our product brand story," she notes, adding that she's pivoting the company to be digital-first in an effort to leverage rider communities online.

BRP doesn't merely have fans, it has "brand worshippers," notes LaBerge, with some going as far as getting the image of a Ski-Doo permanently inked on their body. You can't buy or imitate that kind of passion, so she wants to promote those brand worshippers online going forward. To do this, BRP is investing in its social strategy through an ambassador program, with influencer collabs set to roll out over the next three years.

LaBerge has also tapped consultancy Fahrenheit 212, which has offices in New York and across Europe, to come up with ways to appeal to the next generation of riders. "Millennials and Gen Z are not going to buy [BRP products] necessarily – they are about the sharing economy," she says.

To reach those consumers, LaBerge says the brand will build playgrounds, or "experience centres," where people of all ages can test-ride BRP's products. These new centres will be trialed in China, starting early this year. She also wants to build experiences around travel. Offering the option to rent a BRP vehicle and go riding in, say, the Gobi Desert appeals to the "sharing economy generation," she notes.

Shifting the company culture to one that celebrates emotion first and performance second has been an ambitious undertaking. But after laying the groundwork for BRP's new strategy, LaBerge is more convinced than ever that "selling experience beats everything." And she's just getting started.

"People, around the world, buy experience over products. That is what all of our riders relate to. We basically just tapped into what was already there."



Congratulations Anne-Marie LaBerge on being named
one of Strategy Magazine's 2019 Marketers of the Year.



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JILL SCHOOLENBERG'S SLAM DUNK

The GoDaddy VP transforms sports figurines and cozy pajamas into a long-term marketing strategy for the Canadian market. BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

Jill Schoolenberg arrived at GoDaddy Canada three years ago in search of a “big idea” to persuade small business owners (or even Canadians with a passion project on the side) that they, too, can succeed online.

As the brand's Canadian VP and country manager, Schoolenberg's task was to evolve the GoDaddy image to be more locally relevant, while showcasing the benefits of the web hosting platform's many tools.

She would accomplish more than she ever expected. By forging a partnership with Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE), she created an entrepreneur-inspired platform that has incidentally helped launch a handful of quirky businesses.

For years, GoDaddy had successfully exported its American brand and edgy advertising to markets around the world. In Canada, specifically, picking up an occasional campaign from the U.S. was enough to maintain consumer interest in the brand, says Schoolenberg.

But that began to change when the Scottsdale, Arizona-based company (which has become known as something of a legacy player in the web hosting space) made international expansion a priority in 2013. It started putting boots on the ground in some foreign markets – including India, the U.K., Australia and China – to support that expansion, and by 2016, it was serving customers in 53 markets worldwide.

As U.S. leadership became busy overseeing activity in emerging markets, GoDaddy's Canadian numbers began to stagnate, and the company realized it needed someone to oversee its efforts in this country, says Schoolenberg. “You really just can't do it all if you're not here.”

So, in 2015, GoDaddy appointed



Schoolenberg as marketing lead for Canada and tasked her with giving the company's image a distinctly Canadian personality.

Having started her marketing career at Procter & Gamble, later transitioning into the tech space through brand and sales roles at Microsoft, she understands the importance of translating “hardcore tech marketing” into more emotional consumer-centric work.

Knowing that Canadians love their sports – and that basketball, in particular, was growing in popularity – the marketer led the creation of a local strategy that leverages GoDaddy's global alignment with sports.

In the U.S., tapping into the sports market helped GoDaddy generate mass awareness. The company's founder and CEO Bob Parsons described the marketing formula in 2009 like this: "It's got to be edgy. It's got to be a little tasteless." But that strategy left GoDaddy open to criticism, with many customers wondering what the company actually does.

That's a problem that Schoolenberg addressed directly in Canada by bridging creative campaigns with ecommerce executions: first, pick an athlete tied to a major sports franchise, identify one of their passion projects, and then build a GoDaddy-powered website to turn those interests into a business. Second, support the venture with advertising spanning digital, OOH and in-arena signage.

In 2015, the Toronto Raptors were just coming off their highly successful "We The North" campaign (see p. 38-40). For Schoolenberg, the MLSE team offered an opportunity to tap into a growing national audience, one that didn't come with the

challenge of choosing between Toronto Maple Leafs and Montreal Canadiens fan bases. In other words, there was momentum to be leveraged.

In January 2017, working with Juniper Park\TBWA on creative, Wavemaker on media and North Strategic on PR, Schoolenberg led the launch of "Itty Bitty Ballers," which would set the tone for several subsequent Canadian-led campaigns. The creative featured the Raptors' Jonas Valančiūnas, who used the platform to launch his business selling miniature figurines of himself – thereby showcasing GoDaddy's ecommerce capabilities. The effort earned more than six million engagements and nearly seven million video views on social, resulting in a record 83% brand awareness.

Following that first push, in November 2017, GoDaddy promoted the burgeoning music career of Raptors player Norman Powell. The campaign was simultaneously authentic (he truly does love music) and showed entrepreneurs that websites can be used for more than just selling products – in

Opposite page: GoDaddy tapped into athlete's passions to demo how it can help turn dreams into businesses.

Below: The "Itty Bitty Ballers" campaign brought 83% brand awareness to the web hosting platform.



Powell's case, a music career, with the player promoting his newly recorded single "No Problem" via PowellOnThePiano.ca.

With two successful campaigns under her belt, Schoolenberg turned to a new frontier: French Canada. The brand was looking to promote the 2018 launch of the French version of GoDaddy's Online Store, so it teamed up with Quebec-born offensive lineman Laurent Duvernay-Tardif.

Broadly speaking, the strategy remained the same, with the brand showcasing how to turn a passion into a lucrative side-gig with GoDaddy's help. However, in Quebec, says Schoolenberg, consumers are more interested in the athletes (read: celebrities) themselves than in the teams. As a pro player with a medical degree – and who does woodturning in his spare time – Duvernay-Tardif checked all the right boxes. Working with Headspace Marketing's Montreal office, the brand created a campaign that saw the football player sell handcrafted wooden bowls, with proceeds benefiting his namesake foundation.

CONGRATULATIONS
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ittybittyBALLERS

CJ's PJs
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Since bringing the concept to Quebec, Schoolenberg has continued to emphasize the company's tangible business applications. Most recently, it brought the "Itty Bitty Ballers" concept into the bedroom with a "CJ's PJs" campaign featuring a sleepwear line by Raptors shooting guard CJ Miles.

The common thread of all this work is "the lighthearted humour affiliated with our brand," says Schoolenberg. Moreover, producing and selling memorabilia not only allows GoDaddy to give back – the proceeds are always donated to charity – but also demonstrate ecommerce benefits to small business owners.

As a manager, part of her approach has been to maintain a "very lean" internal team (the company won't disclose headcount), while creating an integrated agency roster. Pre-Schoolenberg, GoDaddy didn't have a creative, media or PR shop in Canada.

"A lot of people talk about their agencies as partners," she says. "But they really are our marketing team."

Working with agencies has also helped her tackle one of her biggest HR challenges: not having enough work for full-time positions across disciplines. Instead, she relies on dedicated resources from the U.S. office – including a bilingual marketing manager – who carry the company's Canadian goals and assist with executing original campaigns locally through its agency partners.

"What I've gone for is depth of expertise, between agencies and broad marketing generalists," she says, noting that the company also has internal centres of excellence, based in the U.S., that support global markets.

GoDaddy's Canadian work has inspired other markets, too, including the U.K. and Australia. In the latter market, the company launched a similar campaign – leveraging a celebrity to launch a small-scale business – that ended up selling 1,000 units of hot sauce, according to Schoolenberg.

"Being Canadian, we're accustomed to being the little dog to the big dog in the U.S.," she says. The fact that her team has developed a concept now being used in some international markets is one of her biggest accomplishments.

She also takes pride in the fact that launching "Itty Bitty Ballers" was a risky proposition – a single player being traded could upend an entire campaign – that has paid off for the brand. "I would say I'm probably fairly conservative in nature, and that was a big risk."



Cheers to you **JILL SCHOOLENBERG** on your
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The state of the marketing landscape

BY JENNIFER HORN

Each year – as the summer closes in and planning for the next year begins – *strategy* likes to take a pause and the pulse of the marketing landscape. We sift through insights and data pouring in from our annual Marketer Survey, which was taken by about 250 marketers in late 2018. And each time, we watch for brands bucking trends and any bumps in the road. In this case, our research has shown that 2019 will be a year when marketers put more eggs in their media baskets, grow an appetite for new tech tools, and drive diversity in the workplace. Read on to find out what else is predicted to unfold.

VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF MARKETING

Last year, marketers reported wanting to focus more time and money on two main advertising vehicles: digital and social media.

Budget was still being allocated toward platforms like TV and OOH, but it was almost business as usual, with fewer than 5% of marketers (on average) looking to ramp up investment in platforms beyond digital (37%) and social (19%).

But now, in 2019, marketers plan to mix things up.

There were more respondents (above 10%) looking to put more emphasis on areas like influencer marketing (20% this year vs. 5% last year); branded content (19% vs 5%); experiential (16% vs. 1%); search marketing (15% vs. 2%) and PR (13% vs. 4%).

When asked what areas marketers plan to focus less on, 39% (vs. 25% in 2018) say print, while 33% (vs. 17%) said TV. Respondents say they will also place less focus on radio (24% vs. 9%), sponsorships (22% vs. 7%) and OOH (19% vs. 8%) in 2019.



THE SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

Plagued with privacy issues and data scandals, 2018 was a rocky year for Facebook. Yet the social media behemoth continues to see investment from brands: 91% of respondents say they're currently active on FB (no change between years). That said, 25% report wanting to invest less of their time and money on the platform, while 14% say they plan to do the opposite and invest more.

Instagram is quickly catching up as the second most-popular social platform for brands: 82% say they're active here, up 10% from 72% in the previous year's survey. And that interest is only going to strengthen. A whopping 43% of marketers say they plan to spend more on IG.

YouTube will see 15% more marketers looking to invest in its platform, while 8% plan to do the same on LinkedIn. As for notable decreases, 23% and 16% say they will invest less in Twitter and Snapchat, respectively.

TECH ADOPTION IS THE WAY FORWARD

While 45% of marketers last year said they did not plan to invest in the top tech listed in our survey – such as blockchain, AR, VR and chatbots – this year, that number shrunk to a third (33%), indicating more investment in these new marketing tools.

Interest in virtual reality took a bit of a dive, with only 8% looking to invest in the tech in 2019, compared to 18% in 2018. New to the survey: programmatic advertising has the attention of about a fourth of marketers, with 26% saying they plan to



invest more in the ad buying space in 2019.

Wearables (5%), AR (4%), and blockchain (2%) remain low on the investment totem pole.

#MARKETERPRIORITIES

Research, research, research. Better R&D and product innovation has become more of a priority for marketers this year as they look to reach consumers and build their brands: 15% are making this a top focus in 2019, versus 8% in 2018.

Some of the main priorities for marketers include facilitating strategic partnerships to expand reach (25% in 2019 vs. 28% in 2018); developing a better social strategy (16% vs. 21%); and better media innovation/earned media (11% vs. 17%).

While those three things remain high on the list, some of that focus is being shifted slightly towards other areas like CSR programs (4% this year vs. 1% last year) and experiential marketing (7% vs. 3%).

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK

Marketers continue to look to agency partners to build their brands through advertising. While they primarily work with creative shops to craft campaigns – with the majority (58%) saying they have an “excellent” to “very good” relationship with those partners – 72% believe that their media partner’s strategic input is just as important as their principal creative agency. This is on par with the previous year’s survey; however, more marketers this year than last say that their input is more important (9% in 2019 versus 4% in 2018).

A sizeable chunk of respondents (15% in 2019 vs. 17% in 2018) also see the support of their digital agency being increasingly important for the development of their brands; followed by PR firms



(9% vs. 13%); research companies (9% vs. 8%); social media shops (6% vs. 10%); and data co.’s (6% vs 2%).

As for who’s creating branded content – more marketers this year than last say they’re using production houses (9% vs. 2%); branded content companies (9% vs. 5%); and media agencies (4% vs. 1%)

THE DIVERSITY DIVIDE

The struggle for gender and racial equality continues as the majority of brands still don’t have diversity and inclusion policies in place.

Only a third (32%) of marketers report that their company tracks and measures the number of women and/or visible minorities it employs. Another third (35%) say that it has implemented programs that

address the racial and gender divide. While 22% say their company is looking at ways to improve diversity, 20% of the respondents say that their company has not invested in inclusion programs, like bias training, at all.

Just a little more than half (52%) of respondents say that over 50% of their marketing team is made up of women. Almost a third (30%) say that more than 75% are female.

About 9% say women make up under 50% of the team, while 5% say there is less than 25%. The remaining 3% of marketers weren’t sure of the female to male composition.

Make sure to check the Creative Report Card issue in March to read about the agency landscape in part two of the Survey.



From Left:
ADRIAN FUOCO, Boston Pizza
JASON CHANEY, Koho
SARAH IVEY, Agents of Necessity

Reaching a tipping point

With budgets in flux and brand priorities ever-changing, *strategy* met with industry experts to figure how to create sustainable business models for brands, agencies and media companies. For all three to succeed, each needs to be healthy and profitable. So, in the first of three roundtables, we look at the issues through a brand lens. How can partners evolve to enable marketers to create better (affordable) programs in a mediascape with dwindling resources? Read on to learn what they believe is working, what's not, and where to go next.

How, and where, can agencies and clients collaborate more efficiently and effectively?

General Mills' Emma Eriksson: Well, there are lots more targeting opportunities, but you need content, right? I need [agency partners] who understand my target and I need to create a lot of content. That's where I've felt there have been great opportunities.

Boston Pizza's Adrian Fuoco: We have a content challenge as well. Within a campaign window, I've got to think about making one great TV ad and 15 other assets, and I have to spread the budget across all of them. So now everything is getting a bit watered down and maybe not of the same level of quality. Of course, nobody wants that.

The other challenge related to content is

knowing if we're actually producing the right content for the channel. When I go back to the 30-second ad unit from my training, I basically know how this thing should come together for it to work. But then when I'm buying ads on social, I'm not really sure what the right content is for each of the 20 products on Facebook, and I'm not always sure our media partners know either. That's because it's changing so rapidly.

And so there are these other discussions between the client and the partner happening directly, and the agency may not be a part of that, and that's also complicating things.

Agents of Necessity's Sarah Ivey: Do you think we're just trying to check boxes?

I think about the Nike campaign with Colin Kaepernick this year. In some ways it was so simple, and in so many ways it was complicated. But it took advantage of political discourse and it just tapped into culture in such an interesting way. But I look at that and I think, 'That was



From Left:
ALEX PANOUSIS, Havas Canada
SARAH THOMPSON, Mindshare
EMMA ERIKSSON, General Mills

advertising. Wow.' They ran it, got PR and my 80-something-year-old mother knows about it.

Mindshare's Sarah Thompson: Media agencies, especially my team, are pushing to create better things with our media partners. The challenge is that now I'm pushing my media partners. I want something more robust. I don't want your rate card with a simple, cookie-cutter answer to my brief. I want us to have a conversation of, 'I think there's something to this topic, and I think this brand has the personality to bring it to light,' and have a discussion and a dialogue very similar to Nike.

It's not a, 'I just need five articles and two videos and an influencer.' It has to be more complicated and we can't rush to get to a great result. Nike has permission. I want more brands to figure out how they can get permission.

Eriksson: I feel like, as a brand, you've got to aim for something remarkable, you've got to take risks, you've got to stand for something – I think that talking [with your partners] directly and finding the right fit prevents things from getting lost in translation, or in this bureaucracy of things.

Havas' Alex Panousis: So what are the companies like Procter and Unilever doing? Well, they're creating their own agencies. It's as if they think that they're going to do a better job. Part of our business is to commoditize, so frankly anyone can do it. But what we really need is strategy, ideas, connection.

Koho's Jason Chaney: The folly of the industry is partly procurement and marketers who think they're going to get more value by pressing on the cost of an agency, and also partly the agency who has acquiescently said, 'You're right, we have no value and to compensate for that we're going to hire a bunch of junior people so we can keep our margins going and I can fool you into thinking we're creating value' – when you're not creating value.

A lot of agencies are going to have atrophy. The opportunity is to hire more senior, capable people and stop making incredibly talented creative and media people administrators. Then make them do their work – and charge for it.

Panousis: I look back and I do think we've done a lot of that, for sure, but I also think we've been self-indulgent. We've taken things for granted, and at a time when we should have

been doubling down. And this is the problem we're trying to solve. Instead of taking clients to Cannes, we now go to anthropological talks that look at how to solve problems through heavy research, or a systematic way of uncovering the real problem.

Thompson: I think to Jay's point, there's not a day that goes by when they don't ask, 'What's your FTE?' and then you take a staffing chart and say, 'You get 5% of this person.' What is possible with 5% of a person?

On my own team, I have really smart, talented marketing science people and comms planners, so I don't care about the billable hour because we create value for our clients and that is sufficient. The money will get made somehow, somewhere, and you need to have the faith that it will follow.

Panousis: I disagree. I think that's part of the problem, because we didn't understand how to make money and how to charge. You don't go to a universally renowned architect and go, '\$750? Let's go \$700. \$650. Can you do it for \$50?' And then we say, 'Here's what we can do for \$50.' That's when we've hit rock bottom.

We dug this hole and now it's hard to get out of it. Those that get out of it are going to be the ones that take what WealtheSimple did, which is turning the model on the head.

Ivey: I actually think the whole trend in more project-based stuff is a Godsend for agencies, because you have a clear delivery model and then you staff for it. You're selling a product. And how do you style yourself like a product?

Thompson: There's a lot of that value-based pricing conversation on the agency side.

Chaney: I think there's a general insecurity about the actual ability to deliver. And I don't think a lot of people who know what they're doing are selling the fact that they know what they're doing.

When it comes to content, are we trying to do too much with too little dollars and is nobody pushing back?

Thompson: It's exactly what Jay's talking about. At the end of the day, we do a pitch with our clients where they get to see the brightest



minds at the agency and then they never see them again. And then you've got the junior talent who don't challenge the brief. They look at it and think, 'I don't know how to challenge this because I've never even been taught to have the soft skills to challenge the thinking on this.'

We end up in this perpetual cycle where it's not big things, it's a lot of little things. We're creating this overwhelming amount of stuff that nobody even has the time to digest. That part of it is what needs to stop.

You don't need to fill up every channel with every single piece of content.

I'm a big proponent of 'great creativity needs a great canvas.' But as much as we have all of the data and the insights and the information to be able to provide a great canvas, if you've never seen how people shop your client's brand in a store, how do you know anything that you're doing is working?

Get out of your agency and see what the world is actually like.

What are some of the biggest changes and challenges facing the media landscape today?

Thompson: The reality is our media spend dollars are now being controlled by three large players [Google, Facebook and Amazon] and they have sales forces that can have conversations with our clients at any time.

But the advertising experience has not improved in those environments.

What I think, and hope from a media perspective, is that the coming year becomes a place where we're spending more time actually considering how that affects brand equity and brand value, and not just, 'How can I optimize pennies every single day?'

Panousis: The challenge is – and I think someone really profound said this and I'll quote them – there hasn't been a significant product launch that has used television in the last ten years. It's like sound and motion isn't being used to launch the biggest brands in the world.

It's short-term thinking, and then the brand gets lost

because there's no proposition, which is what we used to be trained in when we got into this business. It was all about brands and ideas.

Chaney: As I think about it, I don't know if television is less effective or if we're just producing less effective TV content. I think that the creative's gotten a little crappy.

There's also a lack of recognition of the fact that TV is not analog anymore, it's actually a digital media. And so nobody's adjusted the content to that new format, which dictates that it's not 'brand out.' it's actually 'consumer in.' *Star Wars* was a two-hour commercial at the end of the day. And when you think about it that way, it's like you pay to see a commercial.

It's about creating value for the consumers, I just don't think people have come around to that. They've clung to the old rules of talking about the features. But it's not working, and they'll say: 'I don't understand why. The media must be broken.'

Thompson: And you end up in a place where you have a lot of brands marketing promotions, not marketing their brand anymore.

Fuoco: There is a short-term mentality around promotions and deals and offers. I've worked in two franchise-led organizations – Canadian Tire and Boston Pizza – and also publicly traded companies, and I find that in a world where everybody's expecting instant gratification in their media and everything else, it's hard for us to sell through brand-building ideas when, on the other hand, we can say, 'Well, we can go 50% off and drive in a whole bunch of orders,' and that seems to be where the desire for our business is going: 'Show me a short-term gain this quarter and we'll worry about next term when we get to it.'

Thompson: But then you're in a self-fulfilling prophecy because you're back in the quarter, doing it again.

With all of these concerns, has it hampered your ability to create meaningful long-term programs?

Eriksson: I don't think so. We've done it and we have the analytics. When we run MMM models, we look at sales lifts and those storytelling pieces still bring home the response that we're looking for.

Chaney: I don't think it's hampered us, but I think there's certainly a pressure given the illusion of measurability of more direct methods.

I think the opportunity is in having a better understanding of the mechanisms that play in the development of a company and brand, and how you

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measure the outcomes. You can't just measure brand development solely on the basis of converting customers in real-time. You have to look at a myriad of outcomes, including employee traction, shareholder value.

Eriksson: We measure things at General Mills by looking at sales impact and try not to get too swayed by impressions, engagements or clicks. They're important to learn, but in the end, we want to see the total sales.

Thompson: You don't want to feel like you're in a perpetual crisis. Because nobody has built anything good out of just reacting.

And I think, too, part of it is on agencies and clients. We need to bring back faith in our disciplines, which share the same vision and ambition of creating great work and putting it in front of people. We need to commit to it because doing something extraordinary for your brand doesn't happen in a month, it doesn't happen in six, or even a year – it takes time to gain traction and stay the course. How many people want to stay the course anymore?

Panousis: Yeah, but I think technology has brought on so much change that part of this short-term thinking is that a lot of us are stuck in this tunnel with no light. We're trying a whole bunch of things. We're measuring, but we're also using legacy ways to measure. So, MMMs, are they still relevant today?

Thompson: What other principles are we clinging to as an industry that we should get rid of? Let me just put one out for you: one of the principles behind advertising is based on always recruiting people to your brand. I'm questioning now whether that's correct.

Panousis: The other one that I'm going to throw out that always makes me laugh is that it's almost like every client I've ever had says the number one target is millennials.

Eriksson: It is such a turnoff for me.

Panousis: It's actually laughable. They're the only people that have money, they're the only people that matter. I'm invisible, I don't matter. That's another one where I'm not even sure it's fact-based. I read somewhere women 50-plus in CPG and luxury are the number one purchasers – they've got the money.

Ivey: A friend of mine works at Indigo. She said, 'I cannot find a 40-plus woman influencer on Instagram right now.' And that's ridiculous, right?

Chaney: I think the notion of demographics is ridiculous. I've always found it insane that people are like, 'We're going to target women.' You're ruling out 50% of your total audience. There are all these assumptions that we cling to. You'll probably find more shared values across genders in the right psychographic versus demographic.

Panousis: I think – and this is another myth buster – we're still in this world where, when we look at the



deterministic data versus the probable, we're still in the middle. We've got some data footprints, and your next customer could look like your best customer, and there is a whole bunch of that, but there's also a mythology.

When we talk about campaigns that are meaningful and insightful, how does that clash with the need and the drive for efficiencies?

Eriksson: You need high ROI, but I would say there are

different ways to get that. For me, it's about being a part of something that people want to talk about. Yes, you need to promote a sale, do e-commerce, and make sure you close the deal, but I think at the end of the day it's still about how storytelling adds value to consumers.

Fuoco: We've done very well with brand storytelling and ads that connect with people or make them laugh, but we also have great success with low funnel, always on, basic awareness. We're just cranking that awareness constantly. Especially in the restaurant industry, it can be very in-the-moment transactional.

If a [boxing or martial arts fight is] coming up, all we need to do is get the brand in front of as many people as possible in the preceding week and we will see results. And really, sometimes it doesn't matter what we're saying as long as we're visible.

Panousis: How do you get people to come to your restaurant on a Friday night? Yeah, you remind them of what they love. But if I'm on *The Globe and Mail's* website, and I see a box for a Boston Pizza ad – is that enough? Or do I need to hear your story? And then, it's looking at your audience and telling me something that would convince me to go. So, in marketing, what's your one-two punch? And do you even need one?

Fuoco: We're realists about who's coming into our restaurant and who's not. We're OK with that. For us, it's about targeting the people who are lookalikes to people who are currently coming into the resto.

The way that people eat is changing. You used to go to the resto, then it was home delivery, and now it's Skip the Dishes and Uber Eats. And then Hello Fresh, and the grocers are also upping their game in hot food.

So we're going through a massive change, and that's affecting us more than affinity for the brand itself. People aren't necessarily rejecting us, but they're like 'Well, I have ten other things that I also like now.'

Panousis: I think it's just so tough for marketers. Emma, I look at some of the challenges you're having at General Mills. You're working in very consolidated distribution models. And you're constantly being put up against one another. It's tough.

Then you look at financial services. We have five very profitable banks, they all have a niche, a constituency. But people wonder if banks are going to be over, and what comes next. If you look at the scale of Wealthsimple, it's small compared to someone like RBC. But is there a tipping point? And when does that happen? It might happen in the next gen.

And this applies to agencies – we too will have to go through that cycle of metamorphosis. ➤



CLAWING OUT A NEW NBA BRAND

AFTER 25 YEARS OF UPS-AND-DOWNS, THE **TORONTO RAPTORS** IS NOW AS MUCH A PART OF THE FABRIC OF CANADA AS HOCKEY, MAPLE SYRUP AND PARKAS. BUT IT WASN'T ALWAYS THAT WAY.

BY **MELISSA DUNNE**

ON MAY 15, 1994, A CONFIDENT JOHN BITOVE announced the "newest, freshest and hungriest look in the NBA," while surrounded by tropical plants on a stage at Ontario Place's Cinesphere during a half-hour TV special. The screen cut to show the first-person perspective of something quickly moving through a forest, arriving at a basketball arena. A curtain was pulled down and the Toronto Raptors name and logo were finally revealed following a months-long national naming contest.

The National Basketball Association's (NBA) first team outside of the U.S. launched its merch line the very next day, with items being sold in stores across five

continents in more than 40 countries. Canadian retailers sold everything from T-shirts to caps to coffee cups and shot glasses. About 100,000 T-shirts per week were being produced, according to a 1994 *Toronto Star* report.

"There was a real buzz in the city. Basketball was kind of reaching its zenith in terms of fandom," recalls Rod Black, sportscaster and host of the Raptors' unveiling, which took place 25 years ago this spring. "[However] people were cautiously optimistic this would work."

There was good reason to be cautious. The Vancouver Grizzlies team came to Canada during the same heady era as the Raptors. But the country's second NBA team didn't last, leaving for Memphis by 2001.

But before all of that, Raptors founder Bitove – along with fellow majority co-owner Allan Slaight and minority owners David Peterson, Phil Granovsky and the Bank of Nova Scotia – were true believers that the Toronto Raptors (and basketball) would not only survive, but thrive, here. They were right, but it wasn't easy.

The Toronto Blue Jays and SkyDome had run naming



Clockwise: Raptors' founder John Bitove at the SkyDome; the team's original logo beside its latest iteration; Raptors Uprising GC players; Raps' star Kyle Lowry; the "We The North" flag; an OVO Raptors hoodie; the team's home at Scotiabank Arena; the NBA's 28th team's logo on a court; a fiery scene in the "We The North" video. **Right:** The team's dino mascot.

contests in the '70s and '80s, inspiring Bitove to launch the Raptors' nationwide "Name Game" to build buzz for his future team. There were more than 2,000 entries, whittled down to the top ten: Beavers, Bobcats, Dragons, Grizzlies, Hogs, Raptors, Scorpions, T-Rex, Tarantulas, and Terriers. The ultimate winner was influenced by the immensely popular *Jurassic Park* movie in the summer of 1993.

To traditionalists' dismay, the Raptors' branding was a marked departure from the Toronto Huskies, a short-lived team from the Basketball Association of America (the BAA was a forerunner to the NBA) that lasted only one season in 1946. The Huskies logo featured a simple line drawing of its namesake dog and a staid blue-and-white colour scheme – a stark contrast from the 1994 Raptors branding, which featured a red dinosaur dribbling a silver

basketball on a purple background.

BATTLE FOR POSITION

But in the mid-1990s, the Raptors – and the NBA – weren't going after the traditionalists.

"Our target market from the day we got the team was to go after children, women and new Canadians. We were kind of leaving the older, white establishment to hockey," says Bitove, who left the Raptors in 1996 and has since invested in everything from satellite radio to QSRs. "With all three of those stakeholder groups, [the branding] resonated well. As you would expect, an older white person was scratching their head going 'What the hell is that?' And that's fine. That's what we wanted."

The Raptors came into being just as the NBA was resonating with the next generation of sports fans and finding new ways to monetize that fandom. The league makes money from ticket sales, but it also increasingly brings in revenue from TV deals, sponsorships and licensed merchandise. As the sport grew in popularity through the '90s and into the new century, league revenues grew in tandem. By the 2017-2018 season, the league's 30 teams generated a whopping \$7.4 billion

in record-setting revenue, according to *Forbes*. That's up 25% from the year before, due in part to the league benefitting from a \$24-billion TV deal with ESPN and TNT, as well as the NBA's growing popularity in overseas markets such as China.

In February 2018, the Raptors was the league's 12th most valuable team worth an estimated \$1.4 billion. But before it reached that valuation by *Forbes*, the Raptors had to fill the SkyDome (now Rogers Centre) – a difficult task since the 53,506-person stadium was meant for baseball, not basketball.

There were tons of marketing challenges in those early days, says Michael Downey, who joined the nascent team in 1995 as VP, sales and marketing. Toronto "was an uneducated basketball market," says Downey, who is now president and CEO of Tennis Canada. To help Canadians get better acquainted with the sport, Downey led what was internally dubbed "Basketball 101," and included handing out leaflets to fans on basic basketball etiquette and rules. There was also a mass awareness campaign, with Cossette as the team's first AOR.

The original owners paid a then-record setting \$125 million expansion fee, leaving little budget for marketing, notes Downey. As a result, much of the advertising in those early days were contra deals with OOH, print and broadcast media companies, says Downey. And since Slaight was also a broadcast mogul who had ownership stakes in several radio stations, the Raptors ran tons of radio spots, he says.

While the team's debut on Nov. 3, 1995 managed to draw 33,306 fans, Downey recalls later enticing warm bodies to the cavernous stadium by selling a "boatload" of \$5 tickets. Those cheaper passes almost sold out just a few days after the inaugural game, with Shopper's Drug Mart selling seats for \$26.25 a pop, according to a 1995 *Star* report.

By 1998, the Raptors were purchased by Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment (MLSE), which also owns the storied Toronto Maple Leafs. The 19,800-person capacity Scotiabank Arena, then called the Air Canada Centre (ACC), opened in 1999 as the home of MLSE's NHL and NBA teams. The new arena provided a much more intimate

game experience for basketball fans, says Vijay Setlur, a marketing instructor at York University's Schulich School of Business.

After the Grizzlies left for Memphis, the Toronto Raptors tried to capitalize on being Canada's only NBA team, but a more radical shift was needed, says Setlur.

After the initial excitement of having an NBA team in Canada faded, the Raps entered a long "dark period," he says. American NBA players viewed Canada as a



DINO-MITE PARTNERSHIPS

Scotiabank

The Air Canada Centre (ACC) changed its name to the Scotiabank Arena last year in a \$800 million, 20-year sponsorship deal. And the bank's Tangerine brand was named the Raps' official bank.



Sun Life Financial

The Canadian insurance company became the team's first jersey patch sponsor, starting in the 2017/2018 season as part of a NBA-wide three-year pilot program.

Drake

The rap superstar became the official global ambassador for the Toronto team in 2013. Since then, Drake and his hometown team, have partnered on everything from branded jerseys and to "Welcome Toronto" nights.



NBA 2K League

The team joined the NBA 2K League last year with its Raptors Uprising GC (Gaming Club). Co-founded by the NBA and Take-Two

Interactive Software, the league features 17 teams of gamers competing in regular-season games, tournaments and playoffs.

Nike

The NBA signed an eight-year partnership with Nike, which started in the 2017-2018 season. The iconic Nike swoosh logo appeared for the first time on NBA jerseys, including the Raptors, as part of a reported US\$1 billion deal.



McDonald's

The QSR signed a three-year deal with the Raptors last year, kicking off with the "Beyond the Arch" campaign. Every time the team makes more than twelve 3-point shots in a single game, fans with the My McD's app can get a free medium French fries the day after the game.

provincial backwater and openly griped about it.

"Combine that with the team not winning," he says. "It wasn't very positive. The brand was kind of waffling and not really progressing."

BRINGING THE HOUSE DOWN

The 20th anniversary of the first game in 2015 presented an opportunity to rebrand the team and shift perceptions, says Shannon Hosford, SVP marketing and fan experience for MLSE.

"There were a number of items we wanted to achieve, one was to be regarded as a global basketball destination, not only for fans but for players," says Hosford, who joined MLSE in 2000.

Agencies were invited to pitch a new brand identity. Sid Lee Toronto was the shop to get called into the game.

"We weren't just branding the Raptors, we were branding Canadian basketball," recalls Tom Koukodimos, ECD and partner at Sid Lee Toronto. "'How do you turn a hockey nation into basketball fandom?' The answer wasn't obvious, maybe it is now looking back, but we tried to lean into 'How do you land on something that unites?'"

The team at Sid Lee landed on now iconic "We The North," a battle cry that celebrates Canada's status as an outsider. The new branding launched early with a gritty 60-second anthem spot in 2014, featuring a voiceover proclaiming Canada ("the North") to be "in a league of our own, one step removed, just beyond the boundaries," featuring shots of Toronto landmarks, snow and people playing basketball. It ended with an image of the now ubiquitous black-and-white "We The North" flag.

The successful campaign resulted in the team selling out season tickets for the 2014/15 season, with about 12,500 sold. It also resulted in a stream of merch – from flags to hats to sweaters – becoming commonplace on the streets of Toronto and beyond.

"We had heard the laundry list of complaints by players... they didn't respect us," acknowledges Hosford. "So we took the opportunity to turn that narrative on its head and say, 'Here's all the reasons why we are great and why the North is amazing and is a destination' and really put our stamp on being an outsider and owning that."

The Raptors received international praise, and it didn't hurt that Drake had also become the team's first, and only, "global ambassador." Over the years the Toronto born-and-bred rapper has collaborated with the team on everything from Raptors x OVO jerseys to building basketball courts in underserved communities.

This partnership with a global superstar, in combination with the "We The North" movement has helped the Raptors connect with many demographics, says Setlur.

"That's where the cool factor comes into play when you're trying to reach a multi-ethnic audience; the Filipino community is different than the South Asian community, which is different than the Italian community," he says. "The one constant is no matter what the idiosyncrasies are for their ethnicities they all like to be following what's cool, what's now, what's popular."

The Raptors' decidedly urban brand has proven so popular that it's here to stay. "It's our brand identity. It's what we're entrenched in. It's similar to Nike's [Just Do It]," says Hosford. "We're never stepping away from 'We The North'. We create campaigns on top of 'We The North,' but that's our identity." 🐲

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The Indie List

IS THERE A DEFINED PATH TO SUCCESS FOR independent agencies? Making an entrepreneurial venture work is no small feat. Shops that compete against deep-pocketed multi-nationals often pride themselves on their agility and nimbleness, their openness with clients, and their hustling attitudes.

But if there's one recurring theme from this year's Indie List participants it's that independence frees up these creative, PR and media agencies to be better partners.

Being a small organization, by its nature, usually means the most senior staff at the agency are actively involved in the work and brand relationships. That means a lot of experience goes into crafting marketing that resonates – but also to build the client trust that's needed to make a real difference. It's not easy to disagree with someone paying your bills, but with deep industry knowledge, and the shop's reputation on the line, can come the conviction to say, “actually, I think you're wrong.”

But it's more than that. Independent agencies can take risks – try new billing models or team structures, get creative about accessing new technologies – and that innovative, flexible spirit helps deepen relationships.

It's getting tougher for brands to stand out and that take-notice strategy can be elusive to come by. But it certainly exists, and indie agencies are structured to be go-to partners for truly out-of-the-box ideas.

From itty-bitty five-person shops to 100-plus organizations, here are 12 independents that are carving out new ways to rise to brands' new challenges.



Zulu Alpha Kilo

The code to indie success

ZULU ALPHA KILO'S TENTH YEAR IN BUSINESS was, hands down, its most successful. Its breakthrough work for brands such as Tim Hortons, an influx of new clients and attention from business journalists and award show juries alike show this independent agency has definitely hit its stride.

It started in January after winning Tim Hortons. Zulu came out swinging with a powerful effort for the iconic brand. It found the only hockey team in Kenya and, seeing they had no one to play against, brought them to Toronto for a match with Sidney Crosby. International media picked up the story and it has entered global pop culture. The work even led to a 20-minute primetime documentary on Sportsnet produced by Zulu's in-house content studio, Zulubot.

Tim Hortons is just one success story in the making. New efforts for HomeEquity Bank, CAMH, Interac and Consonant Skincare all launched last year with innovative strategies. Take Zulu's breakout work for ParticipACTION, which is currently in-market promoting physical activity as a way to improve every aspect of life from sleeping to pooping.

Zulu has also steered the launch of Avrio Health's new Betadine Sore Throat brand. It positioned the spray and gargle products as fending off throat infections at their first sign with humorous TV and online content. In a market dominated by pills that treat symptoms that occur after sickness sets in, Betadine's launch is designed to create a whole new preventative consumer behaviour - gargling - from the very first cough.

Agency founder and COO Zak Mroueh says this flurry of new work is the result of how Zulu Alpha Kilo approaches creativity and its client relationships. Zulu seeks out brands that understand that

In May, Zulu was recognized by *Forbes* as one of 2018's best small companies and made its "Small Giants" list. Author Bo Burlingham followed that up with a feature article in its Top 100 Innovators April issue.

creativity can be a game changer when used with purpose.

"Our belief is that ideas are simply business tools that provide an unfair advantage to our brand partners. We love collaborating with marketers who want to break the convention of their category," Mroueh says.

This approach isn't just getting brands' attention. The business media has also taken notice. Zulu became one of "Canada's Best Managed Companies" with a feature in *Maclean's*. And *Forbes* recognized Zulu as one of North America's most innovative small companies, bringing the agency's 10-year entrepreneurial story full circle. When Mroueh was launching Zulu Alpha Kilo in 2008, he stumbled upon author Bo Burlingham's book *Small Giants*, immediately identifying with its stories of small businesses that found success by

"choosing to be great" instead of chasing growth for growth's sake.

The circle was complete when Burlingham himself visited Zulu's office last year to profile the agency for the April issue of *Forbes*, featuring the Top 100 Innovators. In May, *Forbes* also named Zulu Alpha Kilo to its list of 2018's top 25 small companies, the only Canadian firm to be recognized.

"Zulu Alpha Kilo is easily one of the most creative companies I've had the pleasure to research and write about in the 35 years I've been covering entrepreneurship," Burlingham says. "It is creative not just in the award-winning campaigns it puts together for its clients but in the entire way it conducts business. Great companies elevate their industries. Zulu Alpha Kilo has done that for advertising."

To cap off the year, Zulu took home *strategy's* Design Agency of the Year title and earned bronze in the Agency of the Year competition (after getting shortlisted in all three Agency Of The Year categories, including digital).

On the night of the *strategy* gala, Zulu released a follow up to its viral hit "Say No To Spec" with the "World's Worst RFP." The video ignited a debate over fraught RFP practices. That night the agency also launched SmarterPitch.com, a website and thought-leadership piece it created to improve the RFP process for both clients and agencies.

Looking back on 2018, agency president Mike Sutton says "of all the accolades this year, we're most proud of being the top Canadian shop on WARC's global list of the most effective agencies. This validates that our creative work is also having a major business impact for our clients."



For Tim Hortons, Zulu brought a Kenyan hockey team to Canada to skate with Sidney Crosby. It spawned a televised documentary and international attention for the brand.



Zulu's CAMH campaign encouraged us to reconsider how we treat mental health.



Using the surfaces and textures of the environment around its new flagship location, Zulu created a successful launch campaign for Consonant Skincare's third store.



New ParticipACTION work shows the benefits of exercise beyond the gym.



Zulu's integrated campaign for HomeEquity Bank empowered retirees to stay in their own homes and not succumb to pressures from family members or real estate agents.

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From left to right, partners Doug Robinson, Kristin Burnham, Adam White, Caroline Kilgour and Matt Syberg-Olsen.

doug&partners

Investing in commerce

FOLLOWING A STRUCTURAL SHUFFLE three years ago, doug&partners founder and CEO Doug Robinson turned his branding eye internally to figure out how to structure his agency to deal with the constant industry change.

Like many of the brands they work with – from current clients like GoodLife Fitness to former clients like Canada Goose – the Toronto-based agency is Canadian-owned and operated, and there's an entrepreneurial bent throughout the 17-year-old shop's DNA, Robinson says.

"It's an agile culture, built to meet the different needs of its brand roster," adds Caroline Kilgour, VP managing director.

"One of the things that works well here is we don't apply a one-size-fits-all 'process' to all our clients," she says. "We have senior management engagement with all our clients and we really pride ourselves on building bespoke solutions for them. I think it demonstrates that we've listened to their needs, we understand their business problems, and can operationalize against them."

The result, adds ECD Matt Syberg-Olsen, is that the agency tends to "swim upstream" by getting involved with clients earlier than in the traditional marketing-communication process. "We tend to attract clients who want to have deeper relationships," he says. "We're business problem-solvers – we don't just think of ourselves as creatives."

He points to recent work for GoodLife. Launched in September, the "#ChangeYourStory" campaign was created collaboratively with the brand team. Amid changing attitudes towards weight-loss and fitness, GoodLife pivoted its message to focus more on the emotional benefits of joining a gym and getting healthy.

"We didn't want to just have the typical 'skinny person standing in a big pair of pants' image that is so common on weight-loss commercials," says Syberg-Olsen.

The campaign lives in digital, social, print out of home and on TV. It features a bevy of real GoodLife members who speak

to their "pre-gym" selves, reflecting on how joining the organization and making time to regularly work out helped change their lives. The campaign focuses less on the weight-loss journey, and more on the emotional benefits people felt towards their health, confidence and self-esteem, signifying a shift from fitness to a more holistic view of wellness.

Though it is still early in the campaign, initial results are extremely encouraging, says Syberg-Olsen.

The shop also has a firmly held ethos that the same care and attention that goes into brand messaging is applied to tactical efforts, says Kilgour, who cites programs for Honda, Reliance and Go RVing as prime examples.

She elaborates on the Go RVing campaign, which encourages Canadians to find the freedom and discovery of childhood that's so often lost as we age.

The broader campaign taps a cultural trend toward authentic experience, with a child asking adults if they're happy with the grown-ups they've become. Set against lush outdoor imagery, the video of the main campaign shows millennials, families and zoomers rediscovering their "Wildhoods" through digital, TV and social driving to the website and price comparison tool.

"More and more people want authentic experiences, prioritizing them over material acquisitions," says Syberg-Olsen. "The creative reminds them to listen to the voice inside that's pushing them toward these experiences, and that they can answer it by going RVing."

In addition to driving double-digit increases in brand perception and affinity, the tactical elements of the "Wildhood" campaign are driving response-driven KPIs. Digital and social efforts are also driving website visits, conversations and use of the vehicle comparison and affordability tools to achieve double-digit percentage increases, year-over-year. And of course, the brand has also seen an increase in RV sales, despite higher interest rates and gas prices.

The crux of the campaign demonstrates the agency's overarching promise that its creativity drives commerce, says Robinson. "It's always been our mantra that there's a purpose to creativity, and that purpose is commerce," he says. "We exist to incite action. And we attract clients who want that."

"And the approach is paying off," he adds. Brands have begun actively pursuing doug&partners, rather than the other way around, while the shop has seen organic growth with existing AOR relationships as well.

"Marketers in Canada have limited budgets, but a proliferation of partner options," says Robinson. "And organizations are asking more of their marketers. But because our journey has always been about creativity for commerce, we're ready for these new marketing realities, and able to employ creative thinking and craftsmanship in the service of ROI."



The most recent instalment of the Go RVing “Wildhood” campaign asks whether the child you were would be happy with the adult you are.



doug&partners helped Miele launch the first experiential retail store in the world using mirrored cutouts to help people envision themselves in a Miele kitchen.



Targeting car buyers of all ages, the agency rolled out a series of videos for Honda featuring adorable animals to highlight the various features of the latest vehicle model.



The agency redesigned the York University Athletics and Recreation logo – the first rebrand since 2003. Since the relaunch, merchandise sales have soared.



In September 2018, d&p and GoodLife launched the “#ChangeYourStory” campaign to highlight holistic wellness – rather just the physical benefits – of going to the gym.



d&p and The Period Purse ask, “What would you do if you were homeless, hungry and menstruating?”

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Brent Wardrop and Dustin Brown lead the agency of 18, which includes a social and content studio.

Elemental

The collaborative indie

THE NEEDS OF MARKETERS ARE CHANGING, and agencies have rushed to keep pace. And for the 18-person Toronto agency Elemental, part of the solution lies in greater collaboration. While client-agency cooperation is easy to pay lip-service to, the agency has been working over the past five years to put in place actual processes that codify a collaborative approach, says Dustin Brown, partner and head of strategy at the agency. He points to the agency's "Briefstorm," method of creating briefs. Everyone comes together for an initial brainstorming meeting, and at the end of the session, not only do they have a brief, they have a client-approved creative idea.

The result of that relationship-building approach has been recent wins from major brands like Campari, Starbuck's Canada and Baffin, says Brent Wardrop, partner and CD at the 18-year-old agency. He points to recent work with loyalty program Scene. In October, the loyalty program launched a paid membership, and the agency rolled out a new identity for the line in the fall. Targeting a group of high-frequency movie goers in the 25 to 34 demo, the campaign taps into the insight that people like to feel special and get exclusive offers, highlighting the first-class, VIP nature of the program.

Doubling down on collaboration in more real-time messaging, the agency is also expanding its efforts with social media, bringing execution in-house to help create a smoother path to execution, says Wardrop.

One of the agency's main boardrooms has been transformed into a social content studio, complete with video and photography hookups, lighting and sound equipment and backdrops.

Brands are investing more money in creating high-quality content, yet the traditional billing and production outsourcing model isn't the most economical or efficient. "We can come up with the concept quickly, get approvals, and turn around the work within days, if not hours," Wardrop says. The new studio is pumping out three to five pieces of work per week, and added ongoing social media management for the likes of Scene and the Canada Goose-owned Baffin boots.

Amid the growth in social media production, the agency has also been investing in more ever-green content through its sister company Original, says Brown. "If social is here and gone in an hour, the stories we create through Original for brands are meant to live for much longer," he says. Launched in 2016, Original is headed by Matt Sadowski, a former actor, director and producer-turned agency copywriter. Sadowski's background in the film and TV business is an ideal foil to Wardrop and Brown's agency cred, says Brown. "We get caught telling stories in 15-, 30- and 60-second increments. Matt comes from a place where time doesn't matter," he says. "Telling stories – however long it takes to keep the audience engaged – is what matters."

Since the launch of Original, the agency has created over 20 videos for brands including The Drake Hotel, Girl Guides Canada, Herb, Canadian Film Festival and Canadian Journalism Foundation.

"We've got great teams at both Elemental and Original," he adds. "We live on the mantra of 'do great work together,' and after 18 years we've learned we're not going to get to great, unless we do it together."

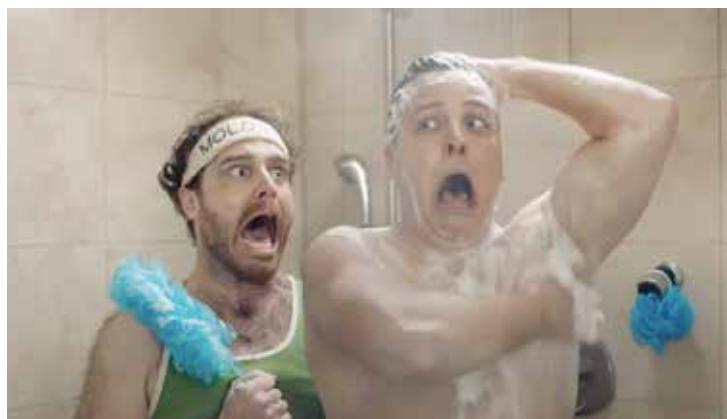
To help reach younger audiences, NO YOLKS noodles and Elemental created a social-first, humour-driven campaign (complete with memes and recipes, of course) that highlighted how yolkless noodles can pair with any ingredients.



The Scene creative featured a world awash in gold, because who wouldn't want to live in a golden world.



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Mackie Biernacki

Small size, big reach

Mark Biernacki and Steph Mackie hate the broken-telephone game. They hate it so much that five years ago, the duo began their own advertising agency.

The pair spent the better part of their careers at multi-national agencies, from Ammirati Puris to TBWA to Lowe Roche. But there were some constant truths about agency life that annoyed the creatives, not least of which that they often didn't have much face-to-face time with the clients. "Our best work was always when we sat down with the client usually off the record over lunch or coffee, and just talked about what was going on in their business," says Mackie.

"At the bigger agencies, there were usually an assembly line of people who would sometimes hinder us getting to the business problem," adds Biernacki. "It was getting lost in the broken telephone."

So the pair launched their own shop five years ago. They designed the agency to keep the costs super low, operating exclusively out of the Toronto membership club The Soho House. ("We don't pay for rent, wifi, hydro or printers," says Mackie. "That adds up to a fair amount.")

Even with substantial business growth year over year, the team hasn't grown by much either, with only seven full time staffers on board (including Mackie and Biernacki). Instead, they operate with a roster of freelancers and contractors, with the goal of putting as much of the costs of their services on the thinking and the doing – rather than the overhead costs of running an agency (contractors, for example, are billed for their time on projects).

And it's working, with new brands like Boys and Girls Club of Canada, Haventree Bank, Toronto Biennial of Art, Greenfield Global and Mackenzie Heath, joining the shop in the past year alone.

The result is not only a cost savings for the client, but also that the shop can stay nimble, picking and choosing the right talent for the specific project, rather than be beholden to people already on staff, adds managing director Melissa Tobenstein.

She points to a recent campaign for the cities of Windsor and Tecumseh, which are currently fighting a class-action legal battle. If the municipalities lose, they could become insolvent,

The agency used humour to address the stigma of moldy homes, with ads likening the growth to unwanted houseguests mysteriously popping up in the oddest places.

and Mackie Biernacki was tasked with informing potential claimants and urging them to make a conscious decision to "opt out" or to stay in – the first time a government had used ads in that way in Canada.

The agency had only 30 days to create and put the campaign into market, and then had 120 days to run it. It put together a custom team of traditional/digital strategists, media planner, web developer, project manager and extra creatives to bring this initiative to life. The countdown campaign focused on the fact that residents only had a declining number of days to help their communities and they needed to physically opt out of the process. While we can't talk about the results yet, the campaign surprised all parties and completely exceeded expectations.

The agency's independent roots let it tackle potentially unorthodox campaigns, and also play around with billing models, adds Mackie. While many clients still prefer traditional monthly billing methods (which MB typically breaks into "The Thinking" and "The Doing"), the agency has also charged clients based on results – if the brand succeeds, the agency succeeds – and in some cases, has even opted for partial ownership of the company.

Mackie points to recent work with TFC soccer player Sebastian Giovinco, who tasked the agency with building his personal brand in the hopes of attracting a wider audience and more sponsorship deals. While Canadians (and Canadian brands) have an affinity towards all things hockey, soccer is becoming increasingly popular, and it's an opportune time to be a soccer star, says Biernacki.

Building on the insecurities of Toronto sports fans over free agents (will they leave after one season? Can we really love this player that much?), the shop put the Italian native's Canadian roots at the fore of the communications, highlighting his participation in the Toronto community through press and social media as much as possible. Small bursts of what Mackie calls "tests," like a limited-edition hat featuring his personal logo, were seeded out throughout the year to help drive hype. Now that his popularity has grown by 68,000 followers (in five months, all done with zero media dollars attached), the agency is turning its attention to finding brand partnerships – and in this case, its financial success is linked to his.

The shop has since begun to attract more athlete clients, which are currently being reviewed to see if everyone works well together.

"We have a no sociopaths policy," says Tobenstein. "We need to know we actually can collaborate together. That's when our greatest successes happens."



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From left to right, Co-owners Susan Groeneveld and Jeff Groeneveld, Ric Fedyna, EVP Creative

WS Solutions with soul



WHAT DOES WS STAND FOR?

Ric Fedyna, EVP Creative at the Calgary-based agency got asked that a lot when he first joined a year ago. Friends, family, industry peers all wanted to know what the two letters meant. It was also something he asked himself and his colleagues in a planning session.

The identity search arose when the agency split from its U.S. partner offices Woodruff Sweitzer in 2017. The move was an opportunity for the 26-year-old Canadian agency to really hone in on its own client promise, Fedyna says, as it plotted its path forward.

A lot of what the agency does deals with food – from crop protection and fertilizers to beef production to farm equipment manufacturing – but WS doesn't want to just be limited to what people eat, so that it can maintain a broader client appeal.

This year, the 27-person shop rolled out its new tag line "We Solve. With Soul." across all its communication touch points. "It encapsulates what the agency is about and how we approach solving client problems," says Fedyna.

The agency works with more than 200 freelancers, says Susan Groeneveld, co-owner and EVP Strategy, allowing it to be channel agnostic. "We pride ourselves in solving the clients' problems first and creating an environment where the different groups are forced to engage with one another rather than run with separate P&L departments, so we are not creating silos and internal inefficiencies," she says.

WS has been growing over the past year, picking up new clients including a beef producer, pet health company Elanco and High River Brewery.

WS has added four members to the creative team, brought aboard a new content strategist and beefed up its insights and analytics team, bringing aboard new staff and promoting Graham Kahl to the role of EVP of the department.

The two departments work closely with Groeneveld to develop brand work. It's all part of its "360-approach" to marketing, with insights and analytics helping drive strategy, creative, PR, media, content and lead generation. She points to long-term client Morris Industries as a brand attracted to the agency for its model.

The Saskatoon-based company had invested a lot in a new product line up, as well as a new corporate leadership, and was looking for a way of differentiating itself from the pack.

The campaign was targeted at farmers, who are often second- or third-generation growers. "They've lived on the farm their whole lives," Fedyna says. "They want to pass it on to the next gen as well. They don't get to 'go home' at the end of a typical day. Their business is their life. The land is everything for them – it's a very emotional thing."

A lot of the competitors' marketing focused on the shiny, new equipment farmers could use, with little in the way of emotional connection with the target demo.

The agency unveiled the "Innovation Unearthed" platform in June, and launched a radio, print and digital campaign to support it. The creative featured a relatable Morris "spokesperson" – someone wholesome and approachable, who could stand in for the farmers. He hosted a mock talk show on which he interviewed guests that have an influence on growers' day to day lives, like the weatherman (who admits tearfully he isn't able to predict the weather at all); the company's lawyer (who prevents the host from divulging trade secrets by aggressively bleeping what he was saying); and even the company's head of innovation (who pours her heart and soul into explaining all the brand's innovations on a single piece of equipment).

The campaign only recently finished, and results are just starting to roll in with signs that it is exceeding all the KPI goals outlined. The push also picked up the best multi-media campaign honour at the 2018 CAMA awards and best cross platform campaign at Digital Alberta's Ember Awards. And the agency and brand have already turned their attention to 2019, beginning work on the next phase.

The shop is also currently working on a range of programs from a multi-channel creative campaign for Anuvia SymTRX, an environmentally friendly fertilizer for the southern U.S., to a new app for vets and cat owners on behalf of pet care initiative Cat Healthy.

As it continues to grow its own brand, WS is also focusing on building an emotional connection and putting its employee recognition program at the fore, making it a stronger part of its external communication with brands and prospective staffers.

Modelled after a secret society, the retention program is geared towards meeting the changing needs of its workforce – in this case the up-and-coming millennials who value being rewarded on a more on-going basis. The program offers employees "spontaneous" rewards for great work – mandatory birthdays off, monthly recognition platforms – and of course, the pinnacle of any secret society, a members-only awards gala. It launched in the spring, complete with branded black hoodies and, of course, a covert ceremony.

"I believe this kind of program will help attract better talent, which translates to better work for the clients," Fedyna says. "Ultimately, we're growing quickly and just starting to find our stride."



As part of an ongoing campaign for manufacturer Morris, the agency rolled out a new brand platform "Innovation Unearthed" across digital, radio and print featuring a clueless weatherman as well as spoofing other experts to appeal to its farmer target.



To help feed hungry children, WS undertook a CSR campaign for Alberta Beef Producers and Mealshare encouraging meat lovers to #MakeHungerRare.



Elanco's "Share Everything" campaign encourages people to get up-close and personal with their dogs, with the help of de-worming medication, of course.



The agency launched the new craft beer company High River Brewery, including naming and designing labels, with the creative playing off the town's well known history with floods.



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The 11-person strong Craft Public Relations team prioritizes experience and deep relationships with clients to get to great brand stories.

Craft Public Relations

Storytelling with purpose

LISA PASQUIN LOVES TELLING STORIES. Indeed, it's why the 16-year-industry veteran got into PR in the first place. But, as she moved up the corporate ladder at previous agencies, Pasquin realized that her day-to-day work was moving her further away from the craft of storytelling. So she started her own agency – focused on finding and telling brand stories.

Launched just three years ago Toronto-based Craft Public Relations is built on the philosophy that great brand work comes from strong relationships with agencies – but to get that deep partnership, shops need experienced employees at the helm, she says.

"A great partnership requires two equals coming to the table," says Pasquin. "You need someone who can provide honest counsel, who can challenge a client, who can take a brief and say 'I don't think what you're asking for is what you need, and here is why.' Being able to engage in that kind of dialogue requires a confidence and intelligence and strategic mindset that comes with experience."

The approach seems to be working with major client wins in the past few years, including Nintendo, Moosehead, Tetley, GE Appliances and most recently Canadian retailer Lee Valley. This year, the agency picked up IABC's Small Agency of the Year honour.

And despite its small size, Craft is achieving global reach. Pasquin points to recent campaign work with Nintendo to promote the brand's new Labo kit – an at-home DIY kit of cardboard that can be melded into anything from a piano to a fishing rod. The Nintendo Switch is hooked into the Labo creation and can be used to play games (like playing the keys on the keyboard, or luring a fish with the rod).

To promote the laboratory-like creation to parents and their kids, Craft tapped the king of kids science himself, Bill Nye, to serve as a spokesperson for the launch, including starring in Canadian cinema spots and being featured at retail. The partnership, brokered this spring, was such a hit that Nintendo extended the relationship into the U.S.

At the heart of every brand is a story waiting to be told, and amid the more complex ways of reaching consumers, PR is well

positioned – with its background in convincing skeptical journalists to write stories – to help companies tell those stories, Pasquin says.

"We firmly believe," she says, "that our number one job is to create shareworthy stories." She points to a recent campaign with Sam Adams. At its heart, the beer brand, which was one of the first craft beers in America, has an innovator mentality, though the Moosehead-distributed brew was often considered a mass player in the increasingly crowded craft category.

To help shift that perception, the agency launched a pop-up shop in Toronto, inviting four other start-up disruptor brands to share the space and showcase their wares, including reclaimed-wood eyeglasses, no-tie shoelaces, extra soft loungewear and hand-crafted leather accessories.

Targeting young, urban beer drinkers who straddle the mass and craft strata, a Sam Adams bar featured prominently in the space, offering consumers the chance to try its traditional lager and other recent product innovations. Over the course of the three-week pop-up, more than 4,000 people experienced the store. And, importantly, more than three million earned and social impressions were generated in support of the brand.

And while Pasquin has spent the past three years convincing consumers to share her clients' stories, for 2019, she's turning her attention towards Craft itself, hoping to showcase the agency's prowess over the coming months.

"We're building a place that's a destination for the best and brightest working in PR today – a place that invests in people and empowers them to do their best work," she says.

Pasquin's professional focus is key to fostering the deep partnerships needed to nimbly pivot.

"We're operating in a really complex environment. Reaching consumers and grabbing their attention is harder than it has ever been," she explains, adding that "marketers are hungry for seasoned, smart people who have a deep involvement in their business."

Craft brokered a partnership between "science guy" Bill Nye and Nintendo Labo that extended far beyond traditional PR.



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Brandfire

Ideas that connect and convert

IN HIS 25 YEARS IN MARKETING, Rob Levy has heard his fair share of marketers complaining about multinational agencies. Even today, in the age of digitally led, fully integrated campaigns, brands struggle to get work that balances awareness and effectiveness.

"Too often the creative agency is working against the digital team, for example, even if they're in the same network," Levy says.

It's an observation that has shaped Brandfire, which Levy founded in 2006. The agency began as just four people leveraging their experience in shopper marketing. But as clients began asking them to take on more branding and above-the-line work, it has grown to its current 30-person roster to provide fully integrated capabilities.

"Not enough people in the agency business understand that all marketing must spur action," Levy says. "It should create an emotional connection, but it should also convert – why you should consider buying a product, and why you should buy it now. You can only connect and convert with a true hybrid team of leaders from traditional agencies, all under one roof."

This has been the guiding principle behind Brandfire's launch campaigns, such as "Look Who's In The Club" for Canada Dry's flavoured club sodas and "You Can't Not Turkey" for the Turkey Farmers of Ontario.

But it's the company's work for Toyota Parts and Service that illustrates Levy's point best. The agency not only built a positioning that would differentiate the Parts & Service brand, but it oversaw all integrated elements.

"So much of the work in the auto service market is negative," Levy says, where rival brands try to drive service business with messages like "don't open your hood to strangers." The impact of that positioning, he says, has limited effectiveness. "It gets attention, but then what?"

Toyota Parts and Service, meanwhile, adopted the more positive-sounding "Bring Your Toyota Home."

"Research showed us that people who drive Toyotas do so

To overcome a big business challenge, Brandfire built an engagement program for both sales reps and car buyers to make service appointments part of the purchase process.

because they care about quality, reliability and durability and less about style," Levy says. "'Bring Your Toyota Home' works as both an initial call-to-action and a brand promise to those closer to purchasing service or parts."

Over the campaign's three years, that promise has guided the brand through business challenges. For example, when Toyota began using engines that use synthetic oil, it posed a potential revenue issue.

"People used to need oil changes every 8,000 kms, but starting with 2016 models, it changed to 16,000 kms," Levy explains. "Getting an oil change also typically happens with a full service, and waiting twice as long for that first check-up could affect car performance."

The Parts and Service team needed new car owners to visit within that 8,000-km window, so Brandfire built a program, "Make A Date Every 8," that brought the service and sales teams together to encourage those bookings before new cars moved off the lot.

Making that first check-up appointment part of the purchase process, sales reps were incented with a balloted contest to get car shoppers into the program. New car owners were similarly given instant-win promotions for signing up. The brand could then use customer data to track who actually showed up for that first check up. Those owners were given another instant reward for following through.

"In the first year of the program, we increased the likelihood of new car owners coming in for service by more than 85%," Levy says, all because the campaign was designed to both connect emotionally and convert consumers' behaviours.

"The key to our continued success is constantly adapting to what our clients need," he adds. "We always like to go beyond the brief to give them solutions that are out of the box and unexpected; this is one of the things our clients look for from us and we are happy to provide it."



When Canada Dry launched flavoured club sodas in Canada, it turned to Brandfire for a launch campaign across multiple platforms and in-store.



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After two years, NFA has grown to a full-time staff of some 80 people across the entire communications grid.

No Fixed Address

Continuing to grow with big talent

TWO YEARS AGO, NO FIXED ADDRESS BURST onto the agency scene.

Co-founders Serge Rancourt and Dave Lafond, both industry veterans, introduced a new agency concept, created as an alternative to the traditional model.

"We had the advantage of building an agency during a period of profound change in the industry," says Rancourt. "As the multinational networks continue to struggle with how to adjust to the shifting tides, we are able to reverse engineer our operation without the burden of having to undo cumbersome and outdated infrastructures. We are able to build freely from the ground up based entirely on what makes sense for market requirements, for our people and most importantly, for our clients."

The NFA positioning is embedded in its name, "No Fixed Address." It promises flexibility, open-mindedness and the ability to find the right home for clients' business challenges and opportunities.

Year two has been a very powerful validation of the NFA vision.

"We are thrilled with the response, from the kinds of clients we've been able to attract to the quality and scope of people who have opted to join our team," says Lafond.

"Our goal after year two is to consolidate and add further on the foundation we've built," adds Lafond.

Over the past year, NFA has turned industry heads with its growth and the calibre of people who have been attracted to the NFA proposition.

NFA expanded with new assignments from existing clients as well as new business across the discipline spectrum including: fully integrated responsibilities for rewards platform Ampli; creative, strategy and digital for retailer Lids and real estate company SmartCentres; media for Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre; PR for Disney; and Canadian creative and social media AOR for pizza chain Little Ceasars.

The agency also continued to earn international industry acclaim, winning Silver in *Ad Age's* International Small Agency of the Year contest.

content and then place it in the right context, which really means creating the right story, presenting it to the right audience, when they are in the right frame of mind in the right place to best receive that story. Simple."

In March, NFA added partners David Federico and Josh Budd formerly with J. Walter Thompson as the agency's new creative leadership team. Federico and Budd, whose experience goes back to the early days of digital and integrated thinking, became NFA's Chief Creative Officers and key members of the NFA exec team.

"NFA is helping to define a new agency model, based on the real needs of clients today, which means flexibility, full integration and a commitment to doing things differently ... and better," says Federico. And Budd shares that vision, saying it leads to more effective work.

And in August, NFA further expanded its integrated agency offering, adding public relations to its discipline range with the hiring of Sarah Crabbe who came to NFA from Citizen Relations, a leading professional in the Canadian PR community.

"NFA wants to integrate PR into the overall agency offering as an equal discipline partner ... not as a separate or allied service," says Crabbe. "One communications agency that can deliver everything from media to digital to social to PR, solely focused on what's best for the work and the client."

As it begins its third year of operations, NFA has quickly grown to a fully diversified staff of some 80 full-time people, representing expertise across the entire communications grid. Says Lafond: "The NFA platform is now well established ... and there's more to come."

But NFA truly set the tone for its second year in February with the addition of David Jowett, a prominent figure in the global media agency scene. Jowett became the new head of NFA's media service.

Beyond his experience in media and tech, Jowett brought a shared philosophy to NFA of a belief in simplicity and a commitment to client success through radical transparency and accountability.

Says Jowett: "Our job is to develop custom-made



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send&receive

Boutique brilliance

YOU MAY HEAR THE NAME ALFRED A LOT in 2019. It's a fledgling smart home lock brand owned by a hardware manufacturer (if you've ever slid a key card into a hotel room door, there's a chance you were using its products). But partnered with agency send&receive, it aims to be much more.

"They basically asked us to teach them how to exist as a consumer player," says send&receive's co-founder Andrew Carty. "They're trusting us with the keys to this new endeavour."

Seeing an opportunity to differentiate the brand in the smart home market, send&receive has just launched Alfred's first ever B2C campaign. It's positioned as a sleekly designed lifestyle product rather than a shiny new gizmo for tech-heads, which Carty says is how most of the competition plays its hand. The Toronto agency oversaw branding and promotion, e-commerce development, consumer strategy... all to take on big-name competitors such as Nest.

Carty and co-creative directors Simon Craig and JP Gravina founded send&receive in 2016, bringing together their years of experience at national agency networks. That expertise combined with a smaller, more flexible staff makes the agency ideal for clients like Alfred, Carty says.

"There are a handful of big clients in Canada that require large-agency AOR relationships with twenty people servicing their business," he says. "But our opportunity as an independent is to provide senior-level, big-agency thinking at a scale that's perfect for small and medium-size clients. Or, similarly, medium-sized projects for big clients."

The agency's work for The Burger's Priest shows the full scope of what send&receive can do.

Founded less than 10 years ago in Toronto's jam-packed foodie scene, the self-described "classic cheeseburger joint" tapped the agency to help with branding and marketing last year. It covered everything from photography, in-store design and product packaging to traditional and digital media executions, including a stunt during

Don't think you can wash a car with a disposable cloth? send&receive proved to drivers that Armor All's new wipes work fast when it set up stoplight car washes.

TIFF where the agency got stars to sign a burger on the red carpet.

The agency prides itself on its happy marriage of strategy and creative. Often overseeing projects from early conception right through to execution, teams work together to ensure creatives hear what strategy has to say about business challenges, and strategists fully understand the creative opportunities.

Armor All benefited from this thinking when it tasked send&receive to promote the launch of its wash and wax wipes. Much of the agency's work for the brand had been seen in-store at shelf-level with retail partners. But to launch the new car product, the agency recommended something bigger.

"Car owners knew Armor All when it came to cleaning inside the car: the dash and upholstery. But the Wash Wipes are for the exterior," Carty says. "We had to combat the thought that 'I can't wash my car with a disposable cloth.' We needed to demonstrate otherwise."

The resulting video showed a team of brand reps racing to cars stopped at intersections to give them a fast, full-car wash with Armor All's products, all before the light turned green – a stunt equal parts demo and sampling.

But the large-scale clients keep calling, and with good reason. The agency's three founders spent years servicing national brands at network agencies such as Lowe Roche, Grey and BBDO. That experience has garnered assignments from the likes of RBC for whom they created the FutureMakers brand for the bank's Technology and Operations group.

While those RBC-level brands keep knocking on their door, Carty and his partners believe that "every client deserves top-level thinking" regardless of size or budget.



An effective social presence plays a big part in send&receive's brand building campaign for The Burger's Priest, a hot restaurant that's growing beyond Toronto's trendy food scene.



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The agency's work for the Arthritis Society raised awareness of the disease and got people moving to participate in its annual fundraising walk.

Church+State

Out-of-the-ordinary thinking

CHURCH+STATE DOESN'T TYPICALLY TAKE PART in RFPs. You might think this really limits the small, independent agency's prospects, but the exact opposite is true. In the last year alone, it picked up six new clients across a range of categories.

"Sometimes you just can't communicate what you do best with a presentation deck," says Robin Whalen, the Toronto agency's president. "We believe the connections matter as much, if not more, than a presentation of creds and case studies"

Such connections have led Church+State to forge partnerships with the Hill Street Beverage Company, Manulife, Beauty Supply Outlet, Imagine Canada, Aldo and Bell Media... all within the last year. Oh, and a little retailer called Walmart Canada.

"The clients we attract are looking for a different kind of solution from an agency that gets more invested in the work and process," Whalen says.

Founded in 2011 when content marketing was emerging as a new approach to audience engagement, Church+State has evolved beyond those content roots. Thanks to a strong strategic offering under EVP, strategy Daniel Langer-Hack, the agency is truly full service.

For example, it's developed both the brand positioning and launch campaign for Bell Media's new b2b tool called SAM – short for strategic audience management tool – which is set to launch in January 2019.

The agency's out-of-the-ordinary approach also attracts businesses that are themselves looking to be something out of the ordinary. Hill Street Beverage Company, for example, makes alcohol-free wine and beer and is set to launch a line of cannabis-infused products in the new year. Church+State has been integral in developing the strategy

and brand positioning for these new products. That's no easy task, given the gold-rush vibe of Canada's new cannabis market.

"We see a lot of acceleration here," Whalen says. "Even leaving the exciting cannabis products aside, our strategy shows us that the alcohol-free market is growing because health and wellness is becoming a bigger issue."

This is not to say, however, that Church+State has left content creation behind altogether.

It boasts a strong integrated team under VP, creative director Lionel Wong comprised of multi-talented creators who can just as easily do web design as walk into the agency's studio to produce video content.

Whalen says building a team this way means they can oversee an idea from initial strategy all the way through production. That's been evident in its work for Blue Dragon and Pataks, AB World Foods brands that markets authentic Asian and Indian fare. Serving as the brand's AOR, Church+State collaborated to build their brand beliefs, creative platforms, brand strategies and now oversees all of its creative executions from tv to print to video and social.

And content will play a big part of the agency's future as well. Walmart Canada has tapped Church+State to produce always-on content for all its social channels. The partnership represents the best of what the agency is capable of: big, effective ideas that solve business problems and engage audiences.

"Everyone here over-indexes on passion for this business, because we want to find those clients that love what we love, that do what we do," says Whalen. "That's how we can remain nimble but still provide as much as we do."

That "no RFP" approach seemed to bring nothing but success in 2018. And there's no reason to think 2019 will be any different.

Microsoft wanted to show off its latest Surface model, so Church+State made eight six-second vids that each focused on a single feature against a catchy beat.



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A branded Hudson's Bay canoe crossed Canada as part of its Grand Portage, an event two years in the planning that not only raised \$1 million to complete The Great Trail, but connected with more than 150 communities coast-to-coast.

Brand representatives spent 66 days paddling and carrying canoes across Canada as a fundraiser to help complete The Great Trail (a 24,000 km national hiking and nature trail). Each canoe bore the company's coloured stripes as it stopped in more than 150 communities. To drive engagement in stores, they also stopped at 10 shopping locations in log cabin-inspired pop-ups where consumers could purchase Grand Portage apparel and memorabilia.

The work won a CMA Award in November for earning more than 200 million media impressions, 25 million social impressions, driving "significant" store traffic and raising more than \$1 million to complete the final stretch of the trail.

"Grand Portage worked because it created meaningful connections and conversations," Given says. "I couldn't believe how many people, when they saw that canoe with the iconic stripes, wanted to touch it and have their picture taken with it."

That focus on authentic engagement is behind work for clients such as CIBC, Hockey Canada, DHL and Rugby Canada (with which it partnered to bring a world tour event to Vancouver that hosts more than 76,000 fans).

There's more great work on the horizon too. Partnering with the not-for-profit Canada Media Fund, TORQUE aims to foster domestic and international demand for Canadian content. It's spent two years analyzing the media market to develop a strategy that builds a strong brand around the work of Canadian storytellers and creators. The goal is a long-term campaign that, when launched in February, will challenge people to rethink what CanCon truly is.

Beyond nailing insights that deliver on KPIs, TORQUE's Olympic roots mean imbuing genuine, emotional connections in all they do.

"Authenticity is an overused word," says Given. "But it should be at the core of any strategic discussion, any communication with your customers."



After successfully launching a new Rugby Sevens tourney in Vancouver, TORQUE helped DHL activate with rugby fans, running contests for game day passes to build hype.

TORQUE Strategies

A powerhouse partner

TORQUE STRATEGIES CERTAINLY FITS the definition of a "small agency," but there is nothing small about the impact of this strategy shop. The fifteen-person team, with offices in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary, has conceived effective marketing programs that earn national attention for top-tier brands. What else would you expect from the team that built a record-breaking sponsor program for the Winter Olympics?

Hudson's Bay knew this when they asked TORQUE to build its strategy for Canada 150. It was a big challenge. Bart Given, managing director at TORQUE, says a mismanaged effort could have made it look like the retailer was just trying to cash in on the event. Canada 150 was an overcrowded market of companies jumping on the bandwagon – a tough market in which to meet business goals.

"Everything we did had to focus on driving people to retail with a meaningful purpose," Given says.

TORQUE Strategies was launched to meet just such a challenge. It opened in 2014 as part of the TwentyTen Group, which was founded by Andrea J. Shaw and Bill Cooper, two of the minds behind the Vancouver 2010 Olympics' sponsorship program. They garnered a record-setting \$760 million in domestic sponsorship, and the company leverages that expertise to reshape how brands think about sponsorship.

The space is much more than logos on rinkboards. TORQUE was launched to turn sponsorships into partnerships. It was so successful that what started off as a strategic consultancy has evolved to meet increased client requests to build everything from on-site experiential events to national brand campaigns.

Finding the best strategy for Hudson's Bay turned out to be a great way to demonstrate this with "The Grand Portage."



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Tapping into the insight that people are looking for healthy, weeknight meal options, the agency rolled out an international product launch for T-fal, focused on the ease of use of the manufacturer's multicooker appliance.

While the focus is largely on creative and strategy, the shop also offers digital media buying in house to help the shop better manage the effectiveness of its creative, says Vena. Staffers can see, in near real time, how the creative is resonating and tweak the strategy as needed. "It stretches the media dollar that much further," he says.

"Our agency is appealing to our clients because our expertise in digital media buying means they get high-level performance and high-level creative under one roof. We are a complete integrated agency that can achieve business growth for our clients," says Vena.

Research also matters for the shop, with Vena pointing to recent broadcast work with T-fal to promote the kitchen appliance maker's latest international product launch, a healthy small kitchen appliance and national TV campaign for ActiFry.

A large component of the work involved conducting research into the target demo. Creative tapped into insight that people – particularly young mothers with families – are more interested than ever in eating healthy, and a number of barriers still remain to serving good meals, in particular, a lack of time.

The campaign, which skews towards women but is targeted at both genders, showcases the multi-food cooker as a way of achieving a better lifestyle balance. "Our target is saying 'it's not just me I'm taking care of, it's my family too,'" says Mariani. "That's where this product can help." Creative focuses on the beautiful, grain-led foods that the cooker can help create. Currently in market, the international push will run until end of 2018, and is supported by social and digital ads as well.

While TV still has an important role to play in marketing, a big focus for Feast is on keeping up with evolving technology and trends, and tapping into exciting new ventures for brands. Employee education is a huge priority for the agency, says Mariani, and the compact size of the team means that it's easy to disseminate learnings across the entire shop.

"Clients tell us they enjoy working with us because we are not complacent and our work is fresh," she says. "They don't want enthusiasm for the project to taper off. They need constant results in order to continue being competitive in their market. We really approach our work as partnerships with our clients."



Unveiled at the International Auto Show, the agency created 360-VR videos of the beautiful Bahamas for CAA.

Feast

The small, but mighty indie

FEAST IS PUNCHING ABOVE ITS WEIGHT at the national level. Indeed, it's been a big year with the Toronto agency nabbing national contracts for the Government of Canada, an undisclosed multi-national corporation and work for several branches of CAA. Over the past three years the agency has won more than 65 awards for its creative execution, and a recent short film for start-up brand Bgon (a university-focused buying and trading app) featuring a man wearing all his worldly belongings, has garnered international press.

The nine-year-old agency's recent successes are rooted in its effective integrated strategy and strong creative capabilities, says Rob Vena, CD and co-founder of Feast. The agency picked up CAA as a client based on the strength of its previous work in virtual reality, resulting in a recent campaign execution for the car association's travel arm.

To help promote CAA as a travel partner, particularly among younger members, the agency launched the "Fly, Float and Explore" campaign, centred on a couple in the Bahamas tracking their trip through 360 video.

VR in particular was a perfect medium to showcase the Caribbean's beautiful vistas, beaches and scuba scenes, says Lucia Mariani, CSO and co-founder at the agency.

The agency stretched the brand's budget by cutting 30-second ads and VR experiences for Facebook and YouTube, taking advantage of both platforms' newer 360 capabilities.

Originally launched at the International Auto Show in February 2018, the campaign rolled out live online and in stores this past summer. The end goal was to help drive traffic to stores, where consumers could get a virtual taste of the tropics – and it succeeded. More than 700,000 people engaged with the content, spending an average of three to four minutes watching the video.

"That's definitely something we're focused on as an agency – that longer-form and engaging experience, getting people to spend more time with the brand and the product," says Mariani.



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AGENCY OF THE YEAR AWARDS | 2018

The AOY gala celebrated Canada's best creative, media, digital, PR and design shops on Nov. 1. Cossette took home top honours as Agency of the Year, Zulu Alpha Kilo took the Gold in Design, Touché in Media, Colony Project in PR, while both FCB and Rethink snagged the top prize in Digital.



1. The show's co-hosts Steve Mykolyn and Rethink's Christina Yu. | 2. AOY winners took home paper-plane shaped awards, in and amongst the Brands of the Year, Campaign of the Year and New Establishment: Brand winners | 3. Bleublancrouge lands its first AOY trophy, a Silver for Digital. | 4. The Zulu Alpha Kilo team won AOY Bronze and Design AOY Gold. | 5. FCB Canada's Tyler Turnbull accepts the Digital AOY Gold award. | 6. John St. hauled it in, winning AOY Silver, Design AOY Bronze and Campaign of the Year for No Frills' "Hauler" push. | 7. Greenhouse co-founder Emma Knight accepts her Brand of the Year trophy. | 8. The Colony Project team took home the PR AOY Gold award. | 9. Budweiser's Telis Carayannakis takes the podium for his New Establishment: Brand win. | 10. Tim Hortons' Aidan Shankman also won a coveted NE award. | 11. Cossette scored a hat trick with its third AOY Gold. It also won Silver Design AOY, while Cossette Media won Bronze MAOY.

MEDIA INNOVATION AWARDS | 2018

The November event celebrated the growing role media plays in marketing with a gala at The Carlu. Via Rail took home Best of Show for its ongoing "Data vs. Car" campaign. The ambitious work was spearheaded by Touché, which itself took home the most Golds, a total of 10 awards. And its president Karine Courtemanche won Media Leader of the Year.



1. MIA attendees looking sharp in cocktail attire imbibe some libations before the event. | 2. Co-hosts and MIAs co-chairs Cathy Collier from OMD and Emma Eriksson from General Mills kick off the show. | 3. The Cossette team pick up one of many Gold "M"s for work on brands like SickKids and Honey Nut Cheerios. | 4. Andrew Saunders, CRO at *The Globe and Mail* helps present some awards. | 5. PHD and Honda take home a Gold for using predictive modelling to sell cars. | 6. Jungle Media with a Gold for Nike's "Play Less Nice" campaign. | 7. Touché president Karine Courtemanche graciously accepts her Media Leader of the Year award. | 8. FCB/Six ECD Ian Mackenzie and president Andrea Cook celebrate the shop's four Gold awards. | 9. BBR Montreal's Dave Gourde snags a Gold. | 10. Shannon Lewis, president of the CMDC, hugs it out with Jungle Media's Janet Xi, who won The New Establishment: Media prize. | 11. Touché took to the stage to accept one of its 10 MIA Gold awards.

PHOTOS BY MATT FORSYTHE



In the future, advancements in technology will allow advertisers to push their disruption agendas on consumers with reckless abandon. Saatchi & Saatchi hypothesizes what amendments to the Canadian Code of Advertising Standards in the year 2143⁰¹ may entail.

SE THE FUTURE, ADVANCEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY WILL ALLOW ADVERTISERS TO PUSH THEIR DISRUPTION AGENDAS ON CONSUMERS WITH RECKLESS ABANDON. SAATCHI & SAATCHI HYPOTHESIZES WHAT AMENDMENTS TO THE CANADIAN CODE OF ADVERTISING STANDARDS IN THE YEAR 2143⁰¹ MAY ENTAIL.

1. **Overlord Clause**
Advertisements must not in any way discredit, disparage or attack the kind and honourable Overlord Borg'Un or any of his generous laws or policies.
1. **OVERLORD CLAUSE**
ADVERTISEMENT MUST NOT BE ANY WAY DISCREDIT, DISPARAGE OR ATTACK THE KIND AND HONOURABLE OVERLORD BORG'UN OR ANY OF HIS GENEROUS LAWS OR POLICIES.
2. **Imitation**
No advertiser shall use cloning or body swapping to imitate any actor (either Space Union or Non-Space Union) in the creation of false product or service endorsements or in any such a manner as to mislead the consumer.
2. **IMITATION**
NO ADVERTISER SHALL USE CLONING OR BODY SWAPPING TO IMITATE ANY ACTOR (EITHER SPACE UNION OR NON-SPACE UNION) IN THE CREATION OF FALSE PRODUCT OR SERVICE ENDORSEMENTS OR IN ANY SUCH A MANNER AS TO MISLEAD THE CONSUMER.
3. **Non-Human-Biased Testimonials**
Testimonials, endorsements or other representations of opinion or preference must reflect the genuine, reasonably current opinions of Humans, Metahumans, Aliens, Cyborgs and fully sentient Robots.
3. **NON-HUMAN-BIASED TESTIMONIALS**
TESTIMONIALS, ENDORSEMENTS OR OTHER REPRESENTATIONS OF OPINION OR PREFERENCE MUST REFLECT THE GENUINE, REASONABLY CURRENT OPINIONS OF HUMANS, METAHUMANS, ALIENS, CYBORGS AND FULLY SENTIENT ROBOTS.
4. **Advertising to Children**
Advertising that is directed at children may no longer use thoughts, memories, or fears gathered directly from neuro-net BrainMining™ or information purchased from NeuroBook™ databases.
4. **ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN**
ADVERTISING THAT IS DIRECTED AT CHILDREN MAY NO LONGER USE THOUGHTS, MEMORIES, OR FEARS GATHERED DIRECTLY FROM NEURO-NET BRAINMINING™ OR INFORMATION PURCHASED FROM NEUROBOOK™ DATABASES.
5. **Mindvertising**
There must be a period of at least 8 hours every day where ads or flyers sent directly into the minds of targeted individuals must be put on hold to allow for standard human cryo-slumber. This does not apply to sentient Robots or Cyborgs with non-human brains.
5. **MINDVERTISING**
THERE MUST BE A PERIOD OF AT LEAST 8 HOURS EVERY DAY WHERE ADS OR FLYERS SENT DIRECTLY INTO THE MINDS OF TARGETED INDIVIDUALS MUST BE PUT ON HOLD TO ALLOW FOR STANDARD HUMAN CRYO-SLUMBER. THIS DOES NOT APPLY TO SENTIENT ROBOTS OR CYBORGS WITH NON-HUMAN BRAINS.
6. **Price Claims**
Prices quoted in advertisements in Canadian media, may no longer be quoted in BitCoin or Ethereum and must now be quoted solely in the galactic standard BorgBucks.
6. **PRICE CLAIMS**
PRICES QUOTED IN ADVERTISEMENTS IN CANADIAN MEDIA, MAY NO LONGER BE QUOTED IN BITCOIN OR ETHEREUM AND MUST NOW BE QUOTED SOLELY IN THE GALACTIC STANDARD BORGBUCKS.



THE CANADIAN CHAPTER OF THE
BUREAU OF GALACTIC ADVERTISING STANDARDS
IN THE YEAR OF OUR OVERLORD 2143⁰¹

This industry can be exceptionally hard on people at times. We get it.
We're in the industry too, and we're here to help. Let the work come second for once.



ATTENDING IS WINNING.

SEE THE WORK THAT WILL SHAPE YOUR WORK.

A+OMIC

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