

strategy™

bold
vision
brand
new
ideas

THE FUTURE *IS FLUID*

ARE BRANDS READY
TO GO BEYOND
THE BINARY?



+

**THE NEW
SUSTAINABILITY**

BELL RINGS IN 140 YEARS

JAN/FEB 2020 • \$6.95





ATOMICON

A can't-miss event for anyone in the content space

March 3, 2020 // Toronto

**BRAND
CONTENT
UPFRONTS**

**CONTENT
MARKETING
SUMMIT**

**ATOMIC
AWARDS**

From the latest and greatest content marketing programs and best-in-class branded content success stories, to effective audience-building strategies and new content development trends – hear everything you need to know to step up your content game.

Tickets on sale!

For special rates for brand marketers and media agencies,
contact Lia Minquini at lminquini@brunico.com

atomicon.strategyonline.ca

UPFRONT PARTNER



PRODUCED BY

strategy



Plant-based products are the building blocks of Lego's sustainability story.

10

Gender fluidity

Gen Z is moving the gender conversation forward more than any other cohort – but are brands ready to go beyond the binary?

14

Going (genuinely) green

In the first meeting with *strategy*'s CMO Council, we explore the ever-important eco movement among consumers and brands.

18

Bell turns 140

The telecom gets better with age, thanks to a commitment to consistency and an impressive team tenure.

4 Editorial The simplicity of a nuanced issue • **6 Upfronts** Indigo's gifting hub and Rogers' new tech headquarters act as feedback loops, while Milestones gets real close with consumers • **8 Seven drivers, ten years** How consumers will think, act and buy in 2020 and beyond, according to Mintel • **48 Art for a cause** Design AOY-ers put digital pen to physical poster for Gender Creative Kids • **50 AOY and MIAs** The paper plane and golden "M" winners in pictures • **74 Back Page** FCB/Six presents 100-year-old data solutions



ON THE COVER:

For years, the gender binary has limited people in the ways they express themselves; how they work and play; what they buy; how they dress; and where they go. But just as they become less pigeon-holed when it comes to their interests and roles, the incoming Gen Z is adding fuel to the discussion around identity. In turn, brands are challenged to respond with inclusive images and messaging that speaks to the authenticity these consumers crave. So this month's cover (created by Brunico art director Andrew Glowala) speaks to what experts recommend: to avoid the perils of binary thinking, remove gender altogether. And yes, that includes the tired pink and blue clichés.

It's complicated even though it's not

The first step in solving any problem is admitting there is a problem. Some issues – like our planet is dying – are generally accepted; while others – gender dysphoria is real – are less so. The former is backed by science and foolproof. Gender identity, however, is a socio-cultural construct and a lot more nuanced.

Take Billy Dee Williams. Just before the holidays, the 82-year-old *Star Wars* actor was widely reported as having “come out” as gender-fluid after telling *Esquire*: “I say ‘himself’ and ‘herself,’ because I also see myself as feminine as well as masculine.” Williams’ disclosure supported the fact that gender is not only fluid among the Gen Z and Millennial enclave, the Greatest Generation is also

speaking up. A week later, however, the actor retracted his statements, asking *The Undeclared*: “What the hell is gender-fluid?” Williams stressed that he was simply “talking about men getting in touch with the female side of themselves” but then went on to conflate gender identity with sexuality, saying “I wasn’t talking about sex, I wasn’t talking about being gay or straight.”

It’s that complicated.

While confusing for some, the evolving and expanding gender spectrum is by no means a passing fad. Nonbinary erasure – the refusal to acknowledge genders that sit outside the gender binary of male and female – is a problem that requires recognition. Because it’s not just a human concern for today, it’s quickly becoming a business concern for tomorrow. Gen Z (or “The Plurals”) is coming. They’re growing up in a pluralistic society, which means having a deeper understanding of diverse people and ideas. They’re pushing against nonbinary

erasure and, simultaneously, binary thinking.

Therein lies the concept behind this month’s cover of *strategy*. With limited space to address the nuanced issue that includes the business implications of gender identity, we chose simplicity. The cover endorses a solution many experts have been plugging: forget gender altogether.

Reporter Kristyn Anthony spoke to anthropologists, researchers, media pundits and marketers for the cover feature (p. 10) to explore this idea of removing gendered thinking. They recommend brands see consumers not by their pronoun, but by their person. Just assume gender-neutrality and that everyone is “they,” and then follow the behavioural/psychographic/lifestyle/anything-but-gender data.

Not only does the removal of blanket male and female targeting move the industry forward on inclusion by inviting those outside the binary into the conversation – it also removes stale gender-based stereotypes that still, to this day, plague advertising (read: stationary bikes as gifts for skinny wives from creepy husbands does nothing to improve the prospects of equality).

It’s that simple.

Jennifer Horn, editor



strategy

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 31, ISSUE 1
strategyonline.ca

SVP, PUBLISHER | MARY MADDEVER | mmaddever@brunico.com

EDITOR | JENNIFER HORN | jhorn@brunico.com

ART DIRECTOR | TIM DAVIN | tdavin@brunico.com

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER | LISA FAKTOR | lfaktor@brunico.com

NEWS EDITOR | JOSH KOLM | jkolm@brunico.com

SPECIAL REPORTS EDITOR | JUSTIN DALLAIRE | jdallaire@brunico.com

REPORTER | BREE RODY | brodymantha@brunico.com

REPORTER | CHRIS LOMBARDO | clombardo@brunico.com

REPORTER | KRISTYN ANTHONY | kanthony@brunico.com

CONTRIBUTORS | RAE ANN FERA, WILL NOVOSIEDLIK

MARKETING CO-ORDINATOR | NATALYA CHERNOVA | nchernova@brunico.com

EVENT PRODUCER | AIMAN KHAN | akhan@brunico.com

SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER | MARNI ARMOUR | marmour@brunico.com

ACCOUNT MANAGER | KARISHMA RAJANI | krajani@brunico.com

CORPORATE

PRESIDENT & CEO | RUSSELL GOLDSTEIN | rgoldstein@brunico.com

SVP & EDITORIAL DIRECTOR | MARY MADDEVER | mmaddever@brunico.com

VP & PUBLISHER, REALSCREEN | CLAIRE MACDONALD | cmacdonald@brunico.com

VP & PUBLISHER, KIDSCREEN | JOCELYN CHRISTIE | jchristie@brunico.com

VP ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE | LINDA LOVEGROVE | llovegrove@brunico.com

CREATIVE SERVICES & DIST. MANAGER | ANDREW MAHONY | amahony@brunico.com

CUSTOMER SUPPORT SUPERVISOR | CHRISTINE MCNALLEY | cmcnalley@brunico.com

HOW TO REACH US

Strategy, 366 Adelaide Street West, Suite 100, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1R9
Tel: (416) 408-2300 or 1-888-BRUNICO (1-888-278-6426) Fax: (416) 408-0870
www.strategyonline.ca

CUSTOMER CARE

To order a subscription, visit strategyonline.ca/subscribe. To make a change to an existing subscription, please contact us by email: strategycustomer@brunico.com.
Tel: (416) 408-2448 Fax: (416) 408-0249. 8799 Highway 89, Alliston, ON L9R 1V1.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

STRATEGY IS PUBLISHED SEVEN TIMES PER YEAR BY BRUNICO COMMUNICATIONS LTD.
In Canada: One year CA\$80.00 Two years CA\$144.00
(HST included. Registration #856051396 RT)
Single copy price in Canada is CA\$6.95. Please allow four weeks for new subscriptions and address changes.

COPYRIGHT AND TRADEMARK

STRATEGY and the tagline “Bold vision brand new ideas” are trademarks of Brunico Communications Ltd. All rights reserved. Nothing may be reproduced from STRATEGY in whole or in part without written permission. Reprint requests should be sent to rgoldstein@brunico.com. © 2018 Brunico Communications Ltd.

POSTMASTER NOTIFICATION

Canadian Postmaster, send undeliverables and address changes to:
Strategy, 8799 Highway 89, Alliston, ON L9R 1V1 strategycustomer@brunico.com
U.S. Postmaster, send undeliverables and address changes to: Strategy PO BOX 1103
Niagara Falls NY 14304 Printed in Canada. Canada Post Agreement No. 40050265.
ISSN: 1187-4309.

Member of 

Funded by the Government of Canada



What do you get when you cross a **copywriter** and a **data scientist**?

Something truly different.

— Ali Vahit Esensoy
Senior Director, Data Science

Adrienne Jackson —
Senior Copywriter

At Klick, we don't put aside our differences, we welcome them into a culture of brilliant collaboration. This is where the best and brightest come to rise to their full potential, and champion others to do the same. Ours is a company that is exceptional, not just because of what we do, but because of how we think differently together.

—
Ready for something different?

Send your resume to workdifferent@klick.com



There's
something
different
here.



REAL TALKING CONSUMERS

Like most ad agencies, Toronto's Juliet has spent a lot of time leading focus groups. "[But] it's an onerous process, it's an expensive process," says the agency's senior strategist Kaiti Snell.

For that reason, Juliet created Real Talk – a research platform that looks for strategic insights by getting consumer feedback on an ongoing basis via messaging platform Slack. The shop has used Real Talk for work on Peoples Jewellers, Roots, Wholly Veggie, FreshCo and Coca-Cola. And most recently, it helped shape a new platform for Recipe Unlimited's Milestones Grill + Bar.

Traditional research can help the chain understand the changing food industry, says Jimmy duDomaine, director of marketing at Milestones, but Real Talk allowed the brand to "develop stronger, more relevant creative that our guests contributed to directly."

Juliet works with casting agent Shasta Lutz to cast groups of six to ten people, based on a specific brand challenge. They might be obsessive bargain-hunters or eco-conscious fashionistas, for example. The agency communicates with panelists frequently and openly through Slack for weeks, testing creative concepts on-the-go and returning to the group three or four times during development. Participants respond from their home and are in constant communication, which leads to greater trust, openness and richer insights for brands, adds Snell.

Research showed that Milestones customers viewed the brand as "good" and "safe," but not highly differentiated. Real Talk enabled the team to delve deeper into what drives millennials to pick a spot to eat, ultimately revealing that many appreciate the simple things in life, such as a reliable restaurant – despite expressing themselves as individuals who like to experiment. "My friends have a lot going on these days. It's hard planning a day to meet, so I'd rather choose somewhere I know is good," said one person on the panel.

The process helped Milestones discover that being a reliable and uncomplicated restaurant offers a certain respite to maturing millennials, eventually launching an online and OOH campaign that plays off of the simple pleasures of dining out – such as a casual happy hour with friends or a favourite meal that's consistent every time. **JD**

ROGERS' 5G PLAY

By Josh Kolm

Emerging technology is going to be extremely important for the future of Canada's telcos. They have invested billions into 5G technology, be it in upgrading infrastructure or researching new innovations the pending wireless upgrade could facilitate. Many of those innovations will be in IoT, which will run on their WiFi and wireless internet; while IPTV platforms will continue to air content from their TV channels.

That makes it equally important for telcos to help customers see the opportunities that exist in tech – and for companies like Rogers to understand barriers to adoption. The new Rogers 302 flagship store at Toronto's Yonge-Dundas Square aims to facilitate that.

"It's bringing the idea of 'make more possible' to life by actually showcasing to our customer what this technology means to their lives," says Bruce Herscovici, VP of branded retail at Rogers, referring to the company's brand platform. "With connected living, it is becoming increasingly difficult to help



Clockwise, top left:

Rogers is helping consumers and businesses see how 5G, IPTV and connected tech could fit into their home and work lives.



people understand the applications and why it should matter to them. This is showing people what happens instead of trying to talk about it."

Upon entering, shoppers see the store's exhibition space, where Google is currently showing how its connected home tech works in different household vignettes, as well as advanced features of its Pixel phones. A value-add for OEMs, Herscovici says the space will be reconfigured every six to eight weeks to feature other brands, like Samsung and Apple.

An “immersive zone” is meant to show the different experiences 5G can facilitate, such as a holographic concert with Tyler Shaw created with Live Nation. That area will also be updated, albeit on a less regular basis, with other 5G-focused experiences from other partners and owned properties, like the NHL or The Shopping Channel. Right now, it is more of a simulation, but more 5G-powered tech will be in the store once the upgrade rolls out in 2021.

The second floor is business-focused, a first among Rogers' 2,500 retail locations. Part of it is dedicated to clients – a video wall navigated by motion control allows them to learn about the impacts of 5G on their industries – but it also has company boardrooms and will be the site of executive briefings going forward.

The store's traditional retail elements have also been enhanced with touchscreen tablets and a living room showing Rogers' Ignite IPTV service and connected home hub.

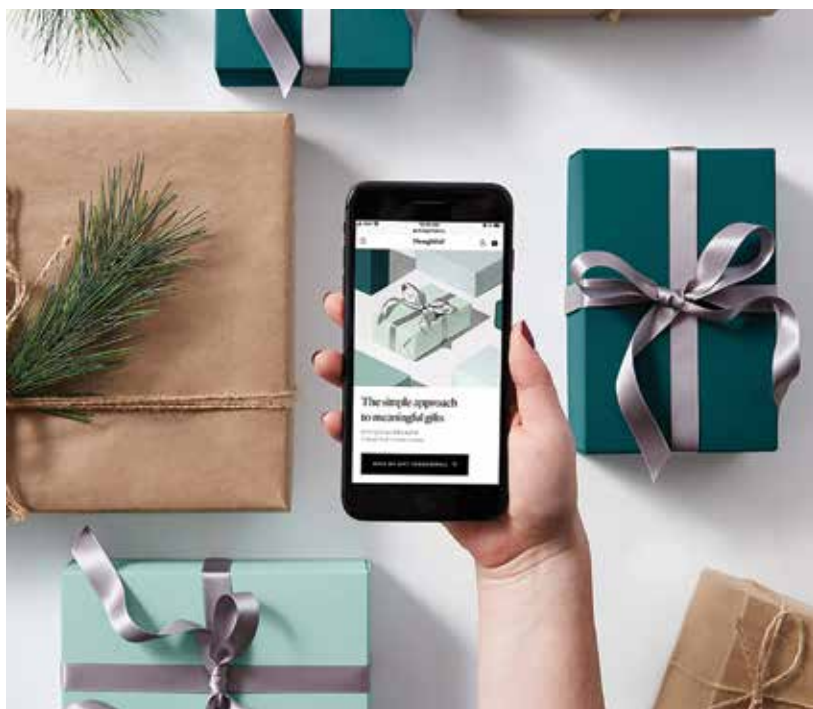
The store is also meant to feed insights back to Rogers as a testing lab, says Anne Martin-Vachon, chief retail officer at Rogers. That could include retail-focused insights – like how to design other flagship locations or



adapt parts of it to more traditional stores – but also ones that touch the rest of its business, such as new ways to drive awareness for other Rogers properties, customer pain points and different compensation models for staff.

“There are 20 live tests that will be going on the minute we open the door,” says Martin-Vachon.

“Executives are going to be upstairs a lot, it is close to the head office, and 50 million people are going to walk past this store next year. If we want to test a new thing, we can come down and do focus groups at the snap of a finger.”



INDIGO GETS THOUGHTFULL

Thoughtfull is an ecommerce platform for finding meaningful gifts. You wouldn't know by looking at it that the site is run by Indigo, as there are no signs of the retailer's branding.

Thoughtfull is similar to Kobo, says Andrea Limbardi, an 18-year veteran of Indigo and who now heads up the platform, which debuted in November. Like the e-reader service the retailer later spun out into its own company, the gifting platform is an internally incubated idea with the potential to grow in response to consumer demand. It's also an effort to offer consumers guidance during the gift-buying journey.

“We have this paradox of choice that brings a lot of stress,” says Limbardi. “Sometimes [brands] will help solve it during typical gifting holidays, but there's no one solving for ‘non-calendar’ occasions. Our products are hand curated, which gets you to something unique without scrolling through thousands of search results.”

The focal point of Thoughtfull's website is the gifting assistant, where users enter information about a recipient to receive a personalized gift list and related articles. Shoppers

can browse through a traditional ecommerce interface, but even there, products are grouped into categories like “foodie,” “self-care” and “creativity.”

Some of the products are not available through Indigo, such as wine and cannabis-related products, as well as subscription boxes and experiences like cooking classes and spa treatments – it's an opportunity for Indigo to test out new categories. Most of the products, though, are also found in Indigo's assortment, which it has diversified with home, fashion and tech products in recent years to compete with ecommerce brands.

Limbardi says even offering existing products through a platform tailored to gifting represents a new strategic opportunity. Consumer research revealed gifting is a year-round opportunity, as it includes holidays, but also birthdays, anniversaries, housewarmings and gifts “just because.”

Limbardi adds that Thoughtfull will also naturally feed insights back into Indigo and will help to unveil new trends and identify in-demand products. **JK**

Consumers in 2020 and beyond

As one decade comes to an end, it's time to look ahead to the next. In its *2030 Global Consumer Trends* report, Mintel examined data through the lens of three forces: (1) the world's aging population, (2) the rise of the middle class, (3) and the speed and pull of urbanization, says Gabrielle Lieberman, director of trends and social media research. Together, these themes underpin developments across seven drivers of change over the next ten years. *Strategy* paints a picture of what that looks like.

wellbeing

In 2020 and beyond, beauty and personal care products move away from improving or changing appearance and toward internal and external wellbeing. Alcohol consumption continues to fall among young people, as they begin to favour alternatives (such as mocktails and functional beverages) that support their desire to “clean up” aspects of their lives, says Lieberman. Red meat also moves “from mainstream to luxury to taboo,” as consumers grow more concerned about its health and environmental implications. “But you [won't] see mainstream, full-vegan diets,” Lieberman says. At-home DNA testing kits, which are prohibitively expensive, will become more accessible, enabling brands to drive personalization at scale. Already available in Europe, “blood-based solutions” across the beauty, food, drink and personal care categories emerge, giving customers the benefits of personalized products tailored to their genetic makeup. “It's a way of adding a little bit of [me] into an existing product,” Lieberman says. “It's how brands can be creative with personalized solutions that are actually sustainable for [their business].”

This driver concerns the external environment and its impact on consumers. “We're seeing a lot of re-wilding of urban spaces, modular and moveable homes,” Lieberman says, and over the next decade, its influence


is felt on categories such as home furnishings. Brands that offer returnable products on a subscription basis, like home-grown Pivot Furniture, could benefit; so too will established companies, like IKEA, that design products more fitting for micro-homes. Looking ahead to 2030, the pull of urbanization transforms open spaces and the city sphere, as consumers use publicly owned and shared spaces to relax, unwind and disconnect from technology. As a result, pop-up commerce gains traction and shopping spaces “become multi-sensory, social sanctuaries,” according to Mintel, contributing to the drive away from passive shopping experiences toward experiential retail. At the same time, more “like-minded interest groups form globally via the internet,” which counterintuitively contributes to social isolation. “There's a lot of change and disruption and social turmoil that is happening in the world right now, and we do find that when that happens... people get with their like-minded people,” Lieberman says. According to the World Health Organization, loneliness is on track to reach “epidemic” proportions.

surroundings

technology

As the population ages, and the older gen delays retirement, brands continue to develop technologies that meet their needs. In 2020, the senior segment begins to better understand the conveniences offered by voice and home assistants that offer more independence. From now

through 2030, large retailers adopt 5G technology, transforming consumer expectations and leaving small mom-and-pop shops that cannot afford to transition behind. 5G is likened to the Amazon effect – which forever changed customers' view of delivery and product availability – setting a new bar that every big and small retailer will look to match, Lieberman says. Mintel says consumers wanting human interaction may also revolt against increasingly cashless and frictionless systems, which could result in discount and convenience stores being the only acceptable places for unmanned retail operations – humans will continue to staff everything else.



“Cancel culture” and “call-out culture” have emerged as consumers begin to feel more empowered to stand up against companies and leaders they don’t agree with. This will continue into 2020. But, over the next ten years, Lieberman says the research suggests there will be a “pushback to the pushback,” as consumers tire of the cycle of reactive discourse. Expect the pendulum to swing the other way in the early 2020s. “The discourse will become a little more thoughtful,” she says, but that doesn’t mean brands will be able to “kick up [their] feet and not worry about it.” As for privacy, personal data exchanges and online trading platforms become more popular, giving consumers control of how their information is collected, stored and sold. “When we ask, especially younger consumers, about privacy and data, it’s a lot of, ‘Oh, yeah, that’s just the way it is,’” notes Lieberman. “But we’re also simultaneously starting to see them say, ‘Wait a minute, can I get something in return for that?’”

rights

identity

Over the next year, teens and young adults continue to challenge traditional notions of gender and sexual identity. A greater number are identifying themselves with labels such as transgender or gender-fluid – a change that is expected to accelerate between now and 2030 – and calling into question traditional gender-based marketing (see p. 10). The power of Gen Z as a segment still tends to get dismissed, Lieberman says, because the cohort remains fairly small in pure numbers. But they are growing in influence every day. “We do caution: don’t ignore them, because they are a vocal group.” The impact will be most immediately felt in fashion and beauty, but other categories such as food will not be spared, according to the analyst.

Consumer perception of value re-centers around sustainability, as the trend moves toward “slower, minimal consumerism that emphasizes durability, protection and functionality,” says Mintel. Lieberman adds that Gen Z is willing to spend more on products that will last longer and have less environmental impact. “Fast-fashion is something that will absolutely fall out of favour – we’re seeing that now – and will be replaced by not only higher, luxury retailers, but also the second-hand economy. It’s interesting that those two are growing simultaneously, but if you see how they’re connected, and the common thread about impact on the environment and sustainability, it makes sense,” she says. In the future, more brands prioritize people and the planet over profitability, and consumers place greater emphasis on the emotional, rather than functional benefits, of their purchases, says Mintel.

value

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

experiences

Technology drives a lot of experiences, infiltrating everything from leisure to retail. But as people become more connected, they’re also looking to interact with brands offline. This places nostalgia at the forefront, with the focus returning to older traditions and celebrations that bring people together. The desire for something shared helps fight against loneliness and isolation, Lieberman says. Collective experiences will become more popular in the future, “but there’s also this desire for the nothing experience, this desire to disconnect.” The experience pillar also sees e-sports “rise to the top as one of the most lucrative entertainment markets, with competitiveness being the core driver,” according to Mintel. The movement will precipitate, Lieberman says, thanks to 5G’s ability to solve connectivity issues and make multiplayer options more accessible on mobile. “Sometimes, when you think of gaming, you have that old, tired notion of boy in the basement playing by himself – but this is not what this is. It’s becoming a much more collaborative and a much more social experience than ever before.”

ARE BRANDS READY FOR A GENDER-FLUID FUTURE?



As gender continues to evolve, *strategy* looks at who is evolving with it, from targeting to advertising to retail experiences.

BY KRISTYN ANTHONY

Make-up and beauty is marketed to women. Sports and beer are marketed to men. To some, those sentences may seem wildly out of touch, slightly discriminatory even, given the evolution of gender in the past decade. But, as companies reap data and rely on their findings to reach diverse audiences, some are moving in the direction of progress, setting a new standard for brands clinging to traditional visions of gender that could potentially alienate consumers.

A report from Toronto-based Wattpad, titled *The Gen Z Census*, found that as this new consumer cohort comes of age, the industry is lagging on reaching them in an authentic way and much of the disconnect lies in gender identity.

In the report – which surveyed roughly 500 Canadian youth born between 1995 and 2009 – little more than half (56%) identified as straight or heterosexual, while the remaining 44% used terms like bisexual, questioning, pansexual, asexual, lesbian and gay. Many said they know someone who identifies as transgender (51%), non-binary (44%), gender-fluid (33%) or gender non-conforming (33%). Nearly half said they know someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns, like “they/them.”

Perhaps most notable was the 52% who reported they did not feel adequately represented in

marketing and branding. "It's unsurprising that they don't feel well-represented in the media," the report notes, because "respectfully showcasing trans people and gender non-conforming individuals has become a rather recent concept."

The key to understanding the gravity of Gen Z's shift to a more gender-fluid future is to understand the fundamental notion of authenticity "that has really taken over culture," says Johanna Faigelman, cultural anthropologist, CEO and founder of Human Branding. Her market research consultancy uses applied anthropology to advise global client brands across industries.

"There is this whole focus on lifestyle in terms of who you are," Faigelman says. "It's much more about your values now and how you live your life."

There is more of an emphasis on individuality, as seen in pop-culture, branding and marketing, thanks to the rise of social media and, in particular, the influencer, says Faigelman. As cultural and social trends translate into new consumer behaviour, she believes the challenge for advertisers lies in avoiding alienation. "Rather than saying 'for her' or 'for him,' we have to cater to how people identify themselves," she explains.

Everything – not just gender – needs to be viewed through a non-binary lens, Faigelman adds, because the younger someone is, the less likely they are to see things in black and white terms. "That's something marketers really need to be aware of, especially in this time where, politically, we're going back to very outdated notions and scary times," she says. "There is a lot of risk today for marketers to alienate by being too binary."

THE TRAILBLAZERS In late 2018, Amil Reddy, community investment manager at MEC was approached by the retailer's creative team to help market its holiday list of products, which is traditionally a gendered selection of "gifts for him/her."

"[The team] wanted a genuine perspective," says Reddy, who identifies as non-binary. The result was a digital guide, titled "Gift Ideas For Them" and featured MEC items like smart socks, a multipurpose Leatherman tool and a daypack modeled by folks who identify outside the gender binary.

At the time, Reddy thought it was simply an experimental marketing approach. But an email from the parent of a 12-year-old who identifies as transgender thanking MEC, opened Reddy's eyes to the bigger impact of the ad, which pushed the boundaries of representation in marketing. "I didn't think about how a young person would be affected by that," they say. "[Younger people] really want brands to speak to them authentically and be purpose-driven."

To that end, MEC tends to target audiences by different activities, says Reddy; not variables like gender or ethnicity, because no matter who you are, "if you love climbing, you love climbing."

Still, Reddy is cognizant of the ways in which the retail industry, in particular, still clings to the binary; even at MEC, gendered clothing sections are very much

"THERE IS A LOT OF RISK TODAY FOR MARKETERS TO ALIENATE BY BEING TOO BINARY."

Johanna Faigelman, CEO and founder, Human Branding

a part of its stores. In recent years, however, gender-neutral clothing lines have begun to crop up from the likes of Zara and Target, moving beyond traditional colour palettes and iconography that have beset adults and children who identify outside and inside the gender binary. Think t-shirts of all colours depicting animals of all kinds, instead of blue shirts with dinosaurs for boys and purple shirts with ballerinas for girls.

U.K. online-only retailer Asos partnered with influencers to "look through the eyes of customers," CEO Nick Beighton said when launching its own unisex line, Collusion.

As gender identity continues to evolve, some brands have begun to adjust. MEC, which has built much of its stores around



experiential retail, now has universal washrooms and receptacles in the men's room for sanitary napkins, because people of all genders menstruate – something Procter and Gamble also recently highlighted when it removed the Venus symbol (signifying femaleness) from its line of Always sanitary napkins last October.

In a statement, the CPG brand said it is "committed to diversity and inclusion and are on a continual journey to understand the



Clockwise:
Starbucks employees now wear dedicated pronoun pins or add them to their name tags; Lyft's "Two Is Too Few" campaign supports all expressions of gender identity; a participant from Mastercard's "True Name" spot discusses the struggle of not having your name match your identity.

Mastercard announced it would permit its customers to use their chosen or "true names" on credit, debit and prepaid cards. (For transgender and non-binary people, using their birth or "dead names" can be an issue of safety or have a negative effect on their mental health.)

That same month, Lyft enabled users to choose their correct pronoun through the app. And through a partnership with the National Center for Transgender Equality, the company is offering legal support for drivers who are transitioning to have their correct gender marker on their driver's license.

In October, multinational investment bank Goldman Sachs launched an initiative to encourage staff and clients to "bring your authentic self to work" after two employees came out as transgender. Pronouns will now be listed in an internal employee directory and flags will be made available to attach to the desks of members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies.

However, jumping on the proverbial bandwagon or treating the evolution of gender as a trend is a dangerous play for brands, Faigelman says. Using a trans person in a campaign is not a bold move that fixes everything, she warns. "Millennials and Gen Z are an absolute nightmare for marketers

needs of all of our consumers," however its website still only depicts images of traditionally female bodies and some products continue to be described using words like "feminine hygiene."

P&G also featured Toronto-based trans man and activist Samson Bonkeabantu in a recent campaign for its Gillette razors, putting a spin on a milestone – one's first shave – traditionally reserved for cisgender men, as it explores a healthier and more diverse view of masculinity.

At Starbucks, baristas now wear name tags with their pronouns. In June,

because they see through 'B.S.' immediately," she says.

Dipanjana Chatterjee, VP and principal analyst at Forrester Research says marketing institutions are also responding to gender stereotyping, pointing to a recent decision by Advertising Standard Authority, a U.K.-based watchdog, to ban ads from Volkswagen and Philadelphia Cream Cheese for perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes. In the VW spot, the brand characterized men as reckless and incapable of providing care for children, while Philadelphia pitted men against women, deciding men are more prone to being adventurous. "In a world where the best practice for a brand is to be uniquely intelligent at the level of the individual, having to resort to gender as a proxy is just plain awful marketing," says Chatterjee.

Hiring and tapping into the perspective of people from across the gender spectrum can help brands avoid that kind of tokenism, Faigelman points out. Reddy, whose position with MEC also includes a role on the diversity and inclusion committee, says "you lose authenticity by speaking at, not with these communities... There has to be reciprocity. Now a brand talks to young folks and young folks want to talk back."

"COMPANIES NEED TO ASSESS THE EFFECTS THAT WILL RIPPLE THROUGH AN OPERATION WHEN PREPARING FOR A DIFFERENT GENDER MODEL."

- Dipanjana Chatterjee, VP, principal analyst, Forrester

Faigelman agrees and stresses that input from those with lived experience is imperative to make progress. "It's the same question that was asked about women 50 years ago in the workplace or ethnicity in the workplace," she says. "It's the equivalent of deeply trying to understand a group without even talking to them."

BEYOND GENDER In a world of binary data points – female versus male – where does this leave the industry when it comes to reaching Gen Z, a demo more open and confident in its gender fluidity?

Marketers need to better understand what drives this influential generation, says Amanda Dorenberg, partner and chief information officer at FrontRunner Technologies who heads up data and programmatic media strategies. At the moment, she believes the marketing and media industries aren't yet equipped for a gender-fluid future. From the language that is written in an RFP to that used in meetings, conversations tend to revolve around male versus female, she says. "It's not a conversation in the agency world to speak in a fluid way."

And because there are multiple gender identities within the concept of gender fluidity, Dorenberg says brands should mine data that looks at different lifestyles, rather than identities. In the last five to seven years, she says, an interest in more expansive behavioural and psychographic data sets has grown. "That's where the data science gets more interesting," says Dorenberg, because certain characteristics are attributable to a particular generation. For example,

"it's widely known that Gen Z is non-traditional, they have a stance for social impact, social good," she says.

At Spotify – a popular platform among the younger gen – data collected from its listeners has expanded beyond gender, enabling greater insight of its users to target content and advertising, says Brian Berner, head of North American advertising sales for the audio streamer. For example, in August, Spotify Ad Studio launched interest targeting or real-time context targeting, new features that connect advertisers with people based on psychographic and behavioural audience insights that go beyond traditional demographics. Examining how or when people stream music focuses on an action or a mood gleaned from a person's use of the platform rather than a static data point like gender, which Berner says better aligns with a brand's value proposition.

Sarah Thompson, CSO at Mindshare adds that shifting to behavioural insights rather than ones based on gender is valuable not only for Gen Z, but all generations. "[Brands] want to reach those who are most receptive to the message and that has less to do with gender and more to do with interests," she says. "That means challenging the brief and really considering who we are trying to reach." 

A WORD OF WARNING

"It's very important to be authentic and not [see gender] as some sort of marketing gimmickry. There have been instances reported of some of the leading brands running Pride campaigns while funding anti-LGBTQ politicians. Other than being caught red-handed (the fall out from which is difficult to evade in our socially networked digital world), it calls into question the effectiveness of their insincere strategies. It's also important to understand that there is much more than marketing that needs to change. It's reframing the entire brand experience, including all the underlying operational, process, and technology elements. For United Airlines, for example, to offer "undisclosed" or "unspecified" as gender options, in addition to male and female, for ticket holders requires a much deeper effort than just changing words on a form. Companies need to assess all the effects that will ripple through the operation when they prepare for a different gender model and prepare for them accordingly."

- Dipanjana Chatterjee is the VP, principal analyst at Forrester and has analysed 33 million online conversations around gender to extract where brands are out of sync and how they should rethink marketing.



NO
BULLSHIT
ADDED!

THE NEW SUSTAINABILITY

MYTH
FREE!

CONSUMERS ARE SMART, SOPHISTICATED AND CAN SMELL GREENWASHING A MILE AWAY – WHICH MEANS SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS NEED TO BE GENUINE AND THEY NEED TO RUN DEEP. *STRATEGY* TAPPED EXPERTS AND ITS CMO COUNCIL TO EXAMINE THE NEW REALITIES OF GOING GREEN.

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

It would have once been considered an innocuous mistake. In an Instagram post in late 2019, actor Chris Pratt posed flexing next to exercise equipment, announcing a partnership with Amazon – while holding a single-use plastic water bottle. After being called out by Jason Momoa of *Game of Thrones*, Pratt apologized and clarified that he simply needed something to occupy his hands for the shoot. He typically takes a reusable bottle to the gym.

Pratt's faux pas was raised during *strategy's* first meeting with its inaugural CMO Council, an editorial advisory board, as a reminder of how hard and fast the tides have turned against a material ubiquitously used in household and consumer goods.

"I've never seen an issue move faster than that one," says advisory member Matt Kohler, who is also the VP of marketing at The Clorox Company. "On the business side, on the consumer side, on the government side – it feels like everyone is universally against single-use plastics now."

Research by Dalhousie University in June 2019 found that nearly 94% of Canadians want to reduce their consumption of single-use plastic food packaging. Nearly 90% were in favour of government regulation to help them achieve that goal, while more than 70% supported banning plastics entirely.

The province of Prince Edward Island and the cities of Victoria and Vancouver passed laws restricting certain items, such as plastic bags and straws – though Victoria's has since been struck down in court – while the federal government has proposed taking similar action as early as 2021.

While legislation catches up to consumer sentiment, some companies have taken initiative: AB InBev, Walmart, Nestlé, PepsiCo and Clorox are but a few of the giants that announced new or expanded plastic waste-reduction targets within the last year. And in early 2020, Loblaw will bring Loop – a TerraCycle recycling program – to Canada, joining a chorus of CPG companies with similar plans, including P&G, Unilever and Nestlé.

It's worth asking why single-use plastics has seen such swift consumer backlash, when there are arguably more impactful targets than straws and grocery bags. One reason might be that plastics invoke a "deeper sense of, frankly, anxiety" in consumers and are seen as one of the easiest ways to take immediate action on environmental issues, says David Photiadis, senior advisor with the Delphi Group.

But removing single-use plastic is really only the tip of the iceberg. Going green is a goal that now spans every aspect of a company's operations – from the people responsible for applying packaging best-practices, to the truck drivers delivering product, and everything in between.

"It's not [commonly] recognized how long this journey actually is to get to a point where you start to see the genuine results and potential differentiators [for your brand]," Photiadis says. He adds that he's seen companies venture down the path toward

ALDO PLAYS THE LONG GAME

BY RAE ANN FERA

Aldo has made great strides in demonstrating its commitment to fighting climate change. In 2019, it launched a marketing push that touted the fact that the company had achieved climate neutrality. It also launched its first sustainable shoe collection, RPPL (pronounced "ripple"), eliminated plastic bags from its stores, launched a circularity donation program, and its Call It Spring brand became completely vegan.

These changes didn't happen overnight, of course. In fact, Aldo's journey towards sustainability began nearly a decade ago.

The first significant step toward climate neutrality followed Aldo's first CSR strategy from 2012 to 2017. A year after prioritizing sustainability issues, the company measured its carbon footprint to set a baseline for improvement. That led to energy-efficiency changes that significantly reduced store and office emissions, such as using renewable energy, as well as improvements to its packaging and supply chain.

It was later under the leadership of CEO David Bensadoun that the Aldo Group became Climate Neutral for its offices, stores, distribution centers, e-commerce and product transportation.

Valérie Martin, VP, communications, culture & CSR at the Aldo Group says climate change is a universal problem that affects everyone, which was enough to convince the company to implement change. "The decisions made in the fashion industry – from both businesses and customers – dictate the impact on people and the planet. When the CSR team put together a sustainability strategic plan and presented it to David, there was no hesitation to give the green light. Now, our purpose and CSR goals are fully integrated in our business strategy. We want to be a brand that proactively works to find sustainability solutions in fashion."

Martin says Aldo's sustainability progress also comes from recognizing the opportunities that come with being a leader. "Social consciousness has always been infused in the Aldo Group's actions," says Martin, pointing to the company's early history advocating for AIDS research in the '80s when few were willing to be publicly associated with the issue. "We are aware that we still have a lot of work to do, but we strive to be an agent of change and influence society not only in fashion but also in social responsibility."



sustainability and then take a different tack after not seeing immediate results. “Sometimes you start over three or four times before it really starts to stick.”

Sure, the upfront monetary investment is big. But the time investment is just as important, Photiadis says. And this also applies to companies that have been investing in sustainability for a decade or more: “You’ve hit the low-hanging fruit [like eliminating plastic straws]. Now what’s next? There’s a whole other level of strategic thinking and innovation that goes into hitting these deep reduction targets that companies are setting and society is increasingly asking for.”

Achieving organizational change requires leadership from the CEO, say the advisory board. The companies that have progressed the most on this issue – Unilever, Lego, IKEA, Aldo, Danone – have done so under the leadership of CEOs with a vision. However, the experts agree that getting buy-in from the c-suite remains a challenge, because ROI can be difficult to prove.

“Getting going can be really hard,” says Jackie Poriadjian-Asch, former CMO at Ecobee and *strategy* advisory board member. It can take years before an ROI becomes evident. “You hear a lot about triple bottom line – and the idea of sustainability being a win-win – which I believe is true but can sometimes be translated into expectations that programs are ROI positive from day one; right out of the gate. I’m not sure that’s realistic or sets companies up for success.”

Given the complexity of the challenges, tracking emissions is often a good, albeit expensive, place to start for many organizations. Measuring your brand’s environmental footprint often requires hiring third-party consultants (or internal staff with science degrees) and can take years to master, as Aldo learned when tackling its Scope 3 emissions.

“The first biggest challenge [is] choosing the correct metrics and figuring out how to measure where you are today,” says Kohler. “Once that’s done, you can set ambitious targets and begin to close the gaps. But you

have to know what you’re trying to measure and where you stand in order to make progress.”

“If you’re serious about sustainability, you’ll realize very early that a significant portion of your impact happens outside your building,” Kohler adds, speaking of the role manufacturers and suppliers have to play. “For most businesses, the environmental impact of their business can be something that they don’t own or control. And if you’re serious about it, you’ll lean on those folks as well.”

Once a brand understands its footprint, it can lay out its vision for the future. Marketers then face the challenge of communicating those CSR initiatives (many of which involve science-based targets) in a tangible way for consumers to understand. Is a 30% reduction in emissions over ten years a meaningful goal to have as a global conglomerate? How do you tell that story in a compelling way when competitors are boasting a 35% reduction?

Poriadjian-Asch, Kohler and Photiadis agree that as consumers become more discerning about sustainability claims, and as investors show more interest in genuinely green businesses, greenwashing is happening less frequently. The challenge for an organization is ensuring that it meets consumer expectations before they begin to talk about their sustainability efforts – otherwise they risk backlash.

“Fundamentally, our role as marketers is to celebrate and elevate the great work

that’s happening within the organization,” says Poriadjian-Asch. “I think it’s troubling if sustainability initiatives live solely within marketing – it should be a company-wide commitment with innovation coming from everywhere. Incidentally, the best opportunities come from places like product development and manufacturing, often outside marketing as well.”

For now, sustainability is a purchase consideration for consumers – but for the most part, price and convenience remain the heavyweights. “Everyone wants to do good,” notes Poriadjian-Asch. “We see that



Top right: Plants made from plants currently make up 1% to 2% of Lego pieces. **Bottom right:** IKEA’s sustainability initiatives are led from the top down, with CEO Torbjörn Lööf as one of the execs leading the charge.

REBUILDING LEGO, ONE BRICK AT A TIME

BY RAE ANN FERA

For generations, Lego's plastic bricks have been an indelible part of childhood. Now, the toyco has taken significant steps to address the fact that, from a sustainability perspective, its toy is a little too indelible for the planet.

Its most public move came in 2018 when it released a range of sustainable botanical pieces, which is made of plant-based polyethylene. However, they're limited to pliable items, such as Lego plants, and represent 1% to 2% of its pieces. Still, it was a significant step in Lego's goal to produce wholly sustainable bricks by 2030.

The seeds of the goal to make a lower impact product were sown in 2012 when the company conducted an environmental profit and loss study that looked at the overall impact of Lego's life cycle. The findings revealed that focusing on materials could yield the biggest impact and led to the 2015 declaration of that 2030 goal.

"We want to bring learning through play to children everywhere. In order for us to do that we knew we needed to make a product that isn't affecting environmental sustainability," says Tim Brooks, VP, corporate responsibility at Lego Group. "If we want to inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow, we can't compromise the future they will inherit."

Brooks says this sustainability mandate is both top-down and bottom-up. From the top, there's an unwavering commitment to the goal, and from the bottom, there's the understanding that materials are where most of the impact lies. It's also not a financially driven decision, he says, but it is financially anchored.

"We want to spend on sustainability therefore we need to figure out where we get the biggest bang for our buck, what is the most sustainable and biggest



impact we can have," he says. "What makes the challenge interesting is, if you want to change the materials, you have to change the design of the project, the packaging, the way you sell, the way you take [the product] back at the end of its life. [It's] not just simply finding a new plastic material."

The biggest challenge for Lego is finding a sustainable alternative to the 20 different plastics used in the production of its 2,350 elements. The most pervasive plastic and most difficult to replace is acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS) and is used in roughly 80% of its pieces. ABS is what provides Lego's legendary clutch power (the ability to stay sturdy while being easy to pull apart), colour consistency and shine – qualities that sustainable alternatives have yet to provide.

Lego's lofty goal revealed easier-to-achieve opportunities. Brooks said the company looked at packaging, which is a significant proportion of the company's environmental impact, and realized change could come sooner. So it committed to sustainable packaging by 2025. "That means renewable and recyclable packaging, which means getting single-use plastic out of our packaging as well," he says. "It's hard but less hard than the bricks."

If making materials sustainable is one part of the equation, Brooks says company policy that addresses climate change is another. Lego announced in 2017 that it had reached its 100% renewable energy target three years ahead of schedule. It now has three wind farms and solar panels on all its buildings, while new builds are made to be sustainable from the ground up.

It's also educating consumers on how to reuse their bricks versus recycling or throwing them out. To do so, it launched a pilot project in the U.S. called Lego Replay where people turn in unused bricks that are then sent to charity for reuse.

"Lego is one of these rare things that have been compatible for generations," says Brooks. "It's that level of amazing compatibility that means those bricks can be reused."

Above: Lego trees made from plant-based polyethylene – and held by Tim Brooks – are part of the company's goal to have its bricks be completely plastic-free by 2030.

consumers do value brands that are sustainable. And they say they would pay more for it. But then when you actually look at the receipts, it doesn't always come through that way. So that's the struggle."

Consumers generally look for green products of the same quality, that offer the same functionality and at a similar price-point as their non-green equivalents. But there are signs that they may be willing to open their wallets for sustainable goods in the future: a 2019 study by Nanos Research found Canadians were willing to pay more for sustainable versions of everyday items such as coffee cups, however only by a slight amount. Over two-thirds said they would pay at least 1% more – 31% would accept a hike as high as 5% – while a quarter did not want to see prices budge at all.

In the future though, the experts believe brands that offer longer-lasting goods at higher price-points are

poised to succeed, as consumers grow increasingly interested in craftsmanship, heritage and keeping the same products around for the long haul. "You're seeing a lot more pride in craftsmanship and specialty small batch brands drawing in consumers," says Poradjian-Asch. "An appreciation for that level of care and quality leads to a willingness to pay more. Part of what we are witnessing alongside sustainability is minimalism – people are choosing fewer things that they love and that they plan on keeping around for a longer time." ❧

The CMO Council was formed in 2019 as an advisory board for the *strategy* brand. This feature kicks off a new series covering a range of topics – from innovation to diversity – under the board's guidance and published throughout 2020.



HOW BELL JUST GOT BETTER

THE 140-YEAR-OLD COMPANY HAS FOUND LONGEVITY IN A MARKETING VISION THAT SEES ITS MULTI-FACETED BRAND AS ONE.

BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

There are only a handful of brands that enjoy the historical legacy that Bell Canada does. There are also very few that have enjoyed its near-monopoly status for so long.

Up until 1983, Bell was pretty much the only big telecom in town. To be sure, there were regional carriers and hundreds of tiny local telecoms, some with as few as 50 customers. But after a wave of consolidation during the '60s, Bell had bought many of them up. The regulatory pendulum swung in the opposite direction in the '70s and '80s, as AT&T divested itself of Bell Canada ownership and the brand was repatriated in 1975.

The '80s saw the leap to mobile. The first mobile

phone customer in Canada, a travelling funeral director from Peterborough, Ontario, purchased a \$2,700.00 mobile phone and took out a service subscription with Bell Canada in July 1985. The next year saw the emergence of what would become Bell's biggest competitor in mobility, Rogers Communications.

Western competition emerged in the form of Telus, which after its 1999 merger with BCTel became the second largest telecom in Canada.

The '90s and early 2000s were a time of diversification. With the launch of Sympatico in 1995 and prepaid brand Solo Mobile in 2000, followed by the creation of Bell Globemedia, the Bell enterprise had grown multiple arms and legs.

With interests in telephony, mobility, media (print, digital, TV), sports and home security, Bell had become a multifaceted communications provider to both consumers and businesses. It had become a brand of many brands. But that was about to change.



Clockwise: Bell lives its brand promise of “Just got better” through a mental health partnership with True Patriot Love Foundation; the company was Canada’s largest telecom in 1963; spokescritters “Frank and Gordon” retired in 2008; doctors send an “electrocardiogram” to demo Bell’s phone service; the Olympic spot that relaunched the brand; OOH ads with Bell’s now-ubiquitous branding; basking in Raptors glory; a “little, lovely and light” Bell extension phone; in 2019, Let’s Talk Day tracked one billion messages of support.

FROM MANY TO ONE

The year 2008 marked the ascension of George Cope to the role of CEO of Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE). Cope had come up through the ranks via mobility, with executive roles at ClearNet and later Telus, before taking the helm at BCE. At Bell, he was joined by three colleagues with deep branding and marketing chops in the telecom space: Wade Oosterman, Rick Seifeddine and Devorah Lithwick. All three had come from Telus.

This team brought three important things to the brand table: a long-term view, a commitment to consistency and a strong belief in the power of design.

For the five years leading up to 2008, Bell campaigns had relied on the animated beavers “Frank and Gordon” created by Cossette, who, while cute and cuddly, did not fully represent what the brand had become. “The beavers were too narrowly focused. They were funny, a little bit goofy, some people really liked them,” says SVP brand Devorah Lithwick. “But as we looked forward at the changing landscape of our products, services and customers, we realized that we really wanted a more universally appealing brand, one that would not just be externally motivating to consumers and business, but internally to employees as well.”

It was time for a reset.

That assignment fell to Zulu Alpha Kilo. In 2007, Zak Mroueh, after nine years as creative director at Taxi, set out to start an agency of his own. Mroueh was well-known to Oosterman, Seifeddine and Lithwick because of Taxi’s long relationship with Telus. Tasked with the Bell rebrand in 2008, Lithwick contacted the creative director and asked if he’d take it on. That led to a meeting with the three new custodians of the Bell brand.

Mroueh had still not officially announced the launch of Zulu, but he had the trust of the marketing team. They gave him a month to crack the new brand. He clearly remembers the brief.

“We were tasked with creating a design platform with a visual vocabulary that could last many years,” he says. “The client wanted the vocabulary to ensure that every time someone saw a Bell message they would know where it came from. Next, they wanted the platform to be cost-efficient. The beavers were too expensive because they were voiced by celebrities. Finally, they wanted to keep it simple. But that first point about brand recognition was the one that really stuck with me.”

Mroueh jammed with his design team around the logo, which had already been redesigned. “We kept looking at the logo and then it hit us. We realized that you could

create a flexible template that would play off the logo by revealing different pieces of it from one message to the next,” says Mroueh. “You could use the shapes created by pieces of the logo – a corner here or a cross stroke there – as illustrative components within the overall image, which was always a photograph.”

Zulu coined the phrase ‘Bellements’ to describe this partial reveal of the logo. “For television, we proposed this world where every story would always take place on a white background in and around a giant Bell logo,” he explains. “And then we said, ‘What if we extended that idea? Always put it on a white background, whether it’s print, TV or online?’” And there it was: brand recognition, cost control and simplicity rolled into one.

The launch of the platform happened during the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The campaign cleverly integrated photos of athletes in different events with various ‘Bellements’ to make the connection between Bell and the Olympics and to reveal the new platform.

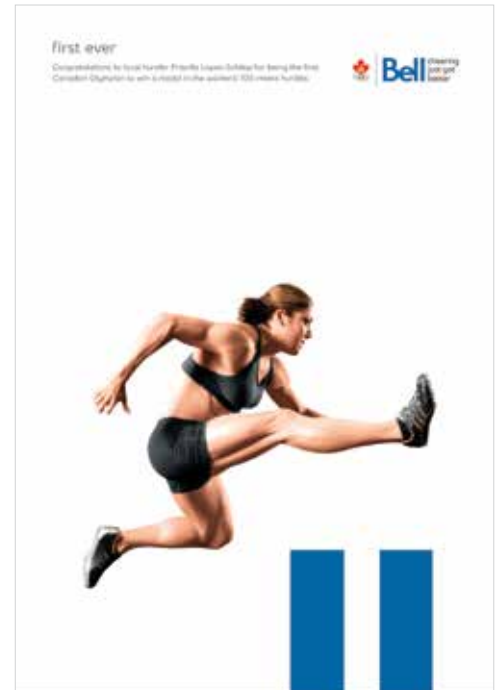
“Before we started down this path, there were 25 agencies working on the Bell account. First thing we did was cull that list down to three main agencies,” says Lithwick. “We needed three because of the volume of work. Zulu was still small, and Leo Burnett had strong

Top and bottom right: Bell debuted a sort of branding game with consumers during the Beijing Olympics in 2008, teasing the shapes and elements that make up its logo as part of a new look and platform.

design chops and the capability to support our retail and photography requirements. Lg2 was important for the Quebec market and has been phenomenal in helping to manage the brand there. Later we added Jam Direct and Media Experts. Every few quarters we swap assignments among the agency partners. We present ourselves as one. You wouldn't know which iteration came out of which shop because they appreciate the brand platform."

Such an approach could and often does spell disaster. "[But] it really has been a true collaboration," says Mroueh. "That is a very hard thing to do. For a lot of brands it doesn't work. But it comes from how the relationship was set up in the beginning: fairly, honestly, and openly." Of all the agencies that Bell approached, Zulu, Leo and Lg2 seemed aligned philosophically and were refreshingly absent of the kinds of domineering egos that seek control and seed conflict, says Lithwick. The evidence speaks for itself: the agencies are still on the account. The Bell team hasn't changed either. This is one of those few instances where all of the clients and creatives are still working together after 12 years.

A big part of the brand platform is the concept of "Just



1880



1881



1895



1902



1922



1910



1947



1965

got better," which began with the rebrand in 2008 and is still being used today.

Better is a tough place to take a brand because if you are true to it, you actually have to live up to it. It has to become a corporate mantra that guides not just its advertising and communications, but product and service development, as well as employee experience.

"We always ask ourselves, 'What just got better?'" says Lithwick. "For instance, if you look at in-home coverage, we have improved it with the introduction of wifi pods, which extends fast coverage to every room in your home. So we can say 'In-home coverage just got better.' If we are working on a sales aid, we ask 'How can we make the messaging simpler and clearer so that the sales experience just got better?' We try to imbue this sense in everything we do. It's the company's overarching guidepost to improving customer experience, products, services, advertising – the whole thing."

As George Cope said when the new brand platform was revealed, "We have a new brand. Now we have to live it."

One of the most meaningful ways the brand has done that is with its focus on mental health. Bell's "Let's Talk" annual



awareness-raising campaign has been a huge success for the last 10 years, shining a light on the concerns around mental health, which has long remained in the shadows due to stigmatization and a lack of access to care.

"We're very proud of it," says Lithwick. "It's about making a difference in the lives of Canadians and it has grown every year. Our 'Let's Talk' initiatives are driving awareness and action, including funding and support for organizations across the country."

The program got an early boost with Olympian Clara Hughes as its founding spokesperson. "Clara's role with the campaign started as a conversation with George following the Vancouver Olympics," says Lithwick. "Clara is a phenomenal spokesperson, because as much as she's accomplished in sport, she also has a compelling story about her own mental health."

The program was announced in 2010 and during the ninth Bell Let's Talk Day in 2019, Canadians and people worldwide took the mental health conversation to new heights, with more than 145 million interactions in talk, text and on social platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat. Last year, Bell Let's Talk Day topped one billion messages of support since the first campaign in 2011, bringing Bell's total funding commitment to mental health to more than \$100 million.

As a result of this effort, Cope was recently recognized as the

140 YEARS OF BELL

- 1876** Alexander Graham Bell receives a patent for the telephone.
- 1880** Boston-based National Bell chooses a Chicago businessman, Charles Fleetford Sise, to organize a Canadian phone company. Sise becomes the founder of The Bell Telephone Company of Canada.
- 1964** Bell acquires 100% of Northern Electric (later Nortel Networks).
- 1968** Use of the corporate name "Bell Canada" is authorized.
- 1975** AT&T divests itself of Bell Canada.
- 1983** Bell Canada Enterprises (BCE) becomes the parent company of Bell Canada and all shareholders of Bell Canada become shareholders of BCE.
- 1985** First mobile phone call in Canada takes place between the mayors of Montreal and Toronto.
- 1992** CRTC opens door to long-distance competition. Bell Mobility launches Canada's first dedicated mobility retail stores.
- 1995** Bell debuts internet service Sympatico.
- 2000** BCE, Thomson, and Woodbridge Co. Ltd. create Bell Globemedia. Bell launches prepaid MVNO brand Solo.
- 2008** George Cope becomes President and CEO; completely relaunches the Bell brand.
- 2009** Bell turns on new broadband fibre across Québec and Ontario; becomes exclusive telecom partner to the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver; purchases The Source and Virgin Mobile Canada; shuts down Solo Mobile.
- 2010** The brand wins CMA Marketer of the Year for its Olympics campaign; launches Fibe Internet and Fibe TV; launches Bell Mental Health Initiative.
- 2011** Bell acquires CTV and launches Bell Media. It also acquires an ownership position in MLSE.
- 2013** The company acquires Astral Media.
- 2014** Bell launches innovations like CraveTV, Mobile TV products and content partnerships with HBO and Showtime.
- 2016** Bell becomes Canada's largest TV provider.
- 2017** The company acquires Manitoba Telecom; launches live TV streaming service Alt TV; announces agreement to acquire Alarmforce; debuts prepaid MVNO Lucky Mobile.
- 2018** Bell debuts TSN Direct and RDS Direct streaming services; assumes majority interest in Pinewood Toronto Studios; and partners with Howie Mandel to acquire the Just for Laughs comedy brand.
- 2019** George Cope announces retirement; Mirko Bibic becomes CEO.



Bell



Bell

1976

1977

1994

2008


Corporate Social Responsibility CEO of the Year by *Report on Business*. He said Bell's investment and dedication to the cause has paid for itself based on all the training and education Bell has done with its own employees. There is a recent Deloitte study that proves paying attention to mental health in your organization is good for business. It has a financial impact and workplace practices make a difference. Bell is leading that charge.

UNITY, CONSISTENCY AND THE LONG GAME

The words "We present ourselves as one," uttered by Lithwick, could be considered a manifestation of the Bell brand's singular focus. It clearly enjoys the commitment and consistency that comes from teams who are invested in the long game, which is rare for a publicly held enterprise subject to the quarterly guidance call. That is especially so for marketing execs, whose average tenure these days is about 43 months.

It has been 12 years – or 144 months – since the rebrand, so Deborah Lithwick is clearly beating the odds. She believes the brand platform itself "just gets better."

"I look at what we are about to launch and 'Just got better' still works and I am still super excited by where we can take it in the future."

Bell might just be one of those rare examples of a multibillion-dollar enterprise that's run by people who understand brand – and prioritize it. 

Ideabot, how can I sell more fabric softener?



**Create a plush mascot to threaten
enemies with softness.**



AI can create, but it can't win.

strategy MARKETING C-SUITE



**Get corner office
perspective in your inbox.**

Sign up for your free weekly briefing

on how Canada's brand leaders are responding to
market challenges and acting on new opportunities.

strategyonline.ca/subscribe



Welcome to the Indie List

Despite industry consolidation trends, Canada's independent agencies continue to thrive

TWO NARRATIVES IMPACTING CANADA'S AGENCY SCENE have emerged over the last decade. They are both true, in their way, but they are at odds.

The first is a story of consolidation, wherein multinational networks acquire prestigious independent agencies, absorbing the talent and clients that had flocked to them. Some see this as the fate of Canada's creative sector: to be subsumed by global players offering resources beyond the scope of our relatively small market.

The other story is about the continual stream of entrepreneurs who strike out on their own to do something different. They take risks, start small, often in an underserved niche, and use their experience to create distinct, future-looking work that breaks the status quo. They defy

expectations of what an indie agency is capable of and are winning over significant work at an impressive pace, scaling up faster than decades past.

Who are the heroes of this story? Welcome to the Indie List.

Regardless of their size or specialty, the independent agencies profiled here have earned reputations as innovative partners in addressing business problems. Each one was founded by experienced execs who believe brands are served best by an agency operating on its own terms, not those of an anonymous executive in New York or London.

Some are capable of wielding global trends. Others are hyperfocused on local insights. Some are brand new but already working with national brands in unconventional ways. All of them are working to keep Canada's creative community fiercely independent.



KitchenAid's digital billboard detected the ever-changing colour of the CN Tower's lights in real time, converting that info to an XML feed. An algorithm then instructed the board to match the colour of the customizable stand mixer in the ad to the colour of the lights.

Zulu Alpha Kilo

From blue chip to start-up clients, growth hasn't changed what makes this shop a winner



ANY INDEPENDENT AGENCIES ARE SMALL,

and even those that aren't sometimes suffer under that perception simply because they don't report into a multinational network. The "boutique" label can be a burden if you're pitching clients with national or international needs. A bit of scale counts for a lot.

This has never been a problem for Zulu Alpha Kilo. In 2008, Bell Canada awarded its business to the scrappy independent when it was just a start-up. Devorah Lithwick, SVP of brand for Bell, says, "Zulu is much bigger than the agency we hired 12 years ago. But their care and dedication to our business has never diminished."

The agency became Subaru Canada's brand and retail agency in 2019, winning one of the most coveted pitches of the year. When Subaru met with Zulu, it saw a 134-person agency with significant in-house production capabilities (thanks to its growing Zulubot unit) and serious credentials in the category thanks to five years as Audi's Canadian AOR. The Subaru win and the resulting campaign for its new Outback launch are the latest reminders of the agency's ability to attract big brands and deliver international-calibre work.

"We were looking for an agency with scale that could also move as fast as a smaller shop," says Ted Lalka, VP marketing & product management at Subaru. "We found that in Zulu."

Today, the indie shop has one of the most admired client rosters in the country, from global brands like Whirlpool, Uber and Subaru to iconic Canadian brands like Bell, Tim Hortons and Interac. And Zulu

still does amazing work for smaller clients. This is the agency that unravelled a MAGA hat to make a "Welcome to Canada" toque for the Toronto-based apparel brand Peace Collective. It's also the agency that "Reskinned Queen Street West" for Consonant Skincare's flagship store launch.

The accolades the shop has received over the past 12 months have been nothing short of spectacular. After winning *Ad Age's* Small Agency of the year two years running in 2016 and 2017, Zulu picked up more trophies at this year's event for two of its campaigns. It won the most Golds of any agency at the CMA Awards and earned the second-most awards globally in Communication Arts. And it saw its Harley-Davidson "Common Ground" series finish in the top five most-effective automotive campaigns globally in the WARC 100 report.

On the International front, Zulu was featured as one of the world's Leading Independent Agencies in *Campaign UK*. While locally, Deloitte vetted it for a second consecutive year as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies. In November, the agency was also showcased in the *National Post* as one of Canada's most admired corporate cultures of 2019.

Agency president Mike Sutton says, "To be recognized by the business community for culture and management speaks volumes to existing and potential clients." He points to the growing client roster as further proof of Zulu's creativity and effectiveness.

New brands include the Responsible Gaming Council and projects from New York brewery SingleCut Beersmiths, for which Zulu crafted a mobile-enabled label for its Big In Japan IPA. Each label on the new product included a QR code that illustrated the lyrics of a song. The code then connected the cans to a Spotify playlist, making each one a game of Name That Tune.

Avrio Health recently entrusted Zulu with its Senokot laxative brand after it successfully launched its Betadine throat gargle in 2018. That fourth-quarter campaign for the preventative cough treatment drove sales that accounted for 90% of its category's growth that year. Betadine reached 27.2% market share by the end of Zulu's campaign.

The agency has seen measured growth despite not participating in RFPs involving spec creative. Last year they even created smarterpitch.com, a site that gives advice to both clients and agencies to improve the pitch process. Zulu founder and CCO/CEO Zak Mroueh said, "We'd rather take that creative pitch energy and apply it to our existing clients' business."

Ultimately, Zulu's success as an independent comes down to a genuine obsession on achieving success for the brands they serve. Mroueh adds, "We report into our clients and no one else."



To celebrate the Raptors’ historic playoff run, Tim Hortons locations showed support by only lighting up two key letters in their signage – T.O.



Zulu reimagined the typical tradeshow booth for Interac. Six hundred bands of flowing fabric became an architectural representation of the huge volume of financial data that Interac’s systems manage every day.



To demonstrate the off-road capability of the new Subaru Outback, the campaign pitted it against the ultimate off-road explorer: a mountain goat.




For SingleCut Beersmith’s “Big in Japan” IPA, the agency designed innovative packaging and turned it into a “Name that Tune” game using visual cues woven into QR codes.



Zulu created a location-based app for the Coalition For Gun Control that let you know how close you were from a shooting in Toronto. For HomeEquity, Zulu’s #PauseToRemember had gamers in 140 countries lay down their controllers for a moment of silence on Remembrance day.



From farting goalie pads to a doughnut pinata, Tim Hortons and Zulu brought kids’ imaginative ideas to life with the help of hockey superstars Sid and Nate. All to make the game more fun.



CONTACT:

Mike Sutton
President
INeedANewAgency@zulualphakilo.com



The Local Collective uses its social channels to prompt response and to mirror cultural trends (thus the elephant playtime post), which advances understanding and insights as to what works in the space, versus the more traditional approach of displaying office moments.

The Local Collective

Your friendly (big-thinking, flexible and effective) neighbourhood creative agency



LAUNCHING A BUSINESS IN THIS INDUSTRY CAN BE CHAOTIC.

That first year is typically a scramble of new business acquisition, hiring and headhunting, trying to produce work that will attract new business, and of course screaming "it costs HOW MUCH for rent in Toronto?" over and over.

The Local Collective is currently in the middle of that maelstrom but seems to be navigating it with style. Some may have been surprised to see it shortlisted for *strategy's* 2019 Small Agency of the Year less than a year after hanging its shingle. But given the experience of its founders, the work it's already produced and its unique business model, it's not surprising at all that Local has found its footing so quickly.

The agency launched in November 2018 when four industry vets put their more than 50 years of collective experience together: President and CCO Matt Litzinger, solutions and operations director Lauren Brown, managing director Kaitlin Doherty and creative director Pepe Bratanov.

"Our first year has been full of great moments," says Bratanov. "Even the hardships have really showed us what we are capable of and reminded us why we wanted to create this creative brand."

The "why" is what sets the business apart from its competitors. As Litzinger told *strategy* at launch, Local eschews "universal" insights for focus on local ones, which he calls the "postal code posse."

"We hold ourselves to doing work we're proud of with an approach that focuses on solving a business issue with a locally mined insight," Litzinger says. "Our creative executions make sense for each brand's challenge, regardless of medium. That means we can recommend

business solutions that do not solely fall into the traditional sphere of an advertising solution."

Pizza Pizza benefited from this thinking last Christmas when it ran its "Magical Holiday Shirt" campaign – its first big holiday push in years.

As part of the QSR's goal to connect with younger Canadians "as a progressive, innovative and experience-driven" brand (in the words of CEO Paul Goddard), Local Collective designed four t-shirts that played off the ugly holiday sweater trend. The shirts were included as a promotional item in orders of two large pizzas during the season. While there was an integrated campaign across TV, radio, OOH and social, it was in service to the quirky-but-stylish designs Local created that stood out from other promotional fare.

"You always worry with swag that it'll get lost in the pile of campaign tote bags, so seeing the demand for them and seeing them all over the place in the real world was a really great moment," Bratanov says. "For us, it's proof that the idea actually resonated with consumers, which is what we are always trying to go for."

In the year since its opening, The Local Collective has also worked with Food Banks Canada and the cannabis brand YSS, with Doherty hinting at other North American and global partnerships kicking off in 2020 ("but we can't say too much on that yet," she said at press time). All those projects are handled by a flexible team of contract-based employees. At present, there are 13 people on staff, but there have been as many as 22.

"We are not focused on growth in the traditional sense," says Brown, who staffs up for larger "waves" of output versus staffing up as an indicator of growth. Contracts vary from three to 18 months in length, and every contract comes with full medical and dental benefits along with "pretty strict rules" to encourage vacation time.

"So far, it's a model that has resonated with all of the partners we have been lucky enough to work with," Brown says. "The strength of the new gig economy is that it provides an influx of both passion and personality."

Litzinger adds that this approach means Local is always bringing the best people to the table to work on its projects. He says it's created a culture that he hopes people will find inspiring. While there are no shortages of challenges ahead for the startup, Litzinger believes his partners have built an independent agency ready to face anything the business can throw at it.



YSS, a new cannabis retailer in Calgary, needed a brand built from scratch – from strategy, to naming, to retail design. Local designed a discovery and travel motif that plays out across every customer touchpoint.



Branded apparel is a tricky bullseye to hit. Luckily, Local's t-shirts for Pizza Pizza were a hit with pizza fans last Christmas (backed as they were with the agency's TV, OOH and online ads). The QSR succeeded in becoming more culturally relevant during the holidays.



The Centre of the Universe installation originally appeared at the Toronto Light Festival intended to make people appreciate where they were in the moment. It's since been booked around the country and it's associated merchandise often sells out.

The Elm



The rebrand of this hip Toronto mediterranean restaurant saw Local design a new word mark, signage, menus and interior design cues.

CONTACT
Matt Litzinger
 Founder, President & CCO
matt@thelocalcollective.com



Ray: Distilled creative

Forget the dog and pony show.
This St. John's agency gives you
the straight goods

THE DAIRY FARMERS OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR adopted the tagline “No Bull” for its recent campaign to dispel some of the myths Newfoundlanders had about milk. It's kinda perfect, given the agency behind the work. Like the no-nonsense message to drink more milk, Ray has no time for agency bullshit.

“We're really down to earth people,” says Jenny Smith, who founded the St. John's agency in 2013 and serves as its ECD. She does whatever she can to avoid what she calls “the dog-and-pony show” of the modern agency business.

“Being from Newfoundland, we have a different perspective,” she says. “There are no egos. We're transparent. We say it how it is and cut to the chase. No bullshit.”

That kind of directness was needed when DFNL approached the agency in May to address a major problem: declining dairy milk sales. Liquid sales in the province have decreased 11% over the last five years.

Ray began researching consumer attitudes with surveys and focus groups. It discovered a lot of public misconceptions. “People thought that the milk sold on our store shelves was from the mainland, or came from mistreated cows, or was filled with antibiotics and hormones,” Smith says.

Smith says they knew it was going to be a challenge to stand out. “There is a lot of good milk work out there right now because declining milk sales are a problem across North America. But we knew that to reach Newfoundlanders, we had to be direct. That's just how people are here.”

The resulting work is a 360-degree campaign that features local farmers explaining that their milk is natural, antibiotic and artificial

Newfoundlanders prefer the straight goods. No bull. So, to dispel milk myths and combat an 11% drop in sales in recent years, dairy farmers from the province just told the simple truth about hormone-free, locally sourced milk.

growth hormone-free, and locally produced. The ads are simply produced, with the real-life spokesfarmers speaking straight to camera. No bull.

That direct approach coupled with compelling creative is also apparent in Ray's work for Quidi Vidi Brewing Co., the St. John's brewery competing in the red-hot craft beer scene. It wanted to change its packaging design and move away from bottles with typeface-heavy labels to tall cans.

Its new IPA, Dayboil (a Newfoundland slang term for day drinking), hit the market in summer 2018 with a clean white label illustrated with an astronaut mascot (to play up the “out of this world” experience of a proper dayboil).

The work resonated. The first batch of Dayboil was projected to last a month. It barely made it three days, and went on to become the top-selling single can in Newfoundland and Labrador for its first quarter.

One year later, video spots with the astronaut played off the concurrent 50th anniversary of the moon landing with short, humorous sight gags. Today, Dayboil remains one of the top-selling beers in the province.

Ray's image as a down-to-earth business partner stems largely from Smith herself. A 25-year agency veteran, she's earned a reputation as a brilliant, approachable creative with award-winning work across diverse sectors, from Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism to Irving Oil. Ray began working with True North Seafood without a review or pitch simply because Smith had worked with its executives before and they trusted her approach.

That was five years and several campaigns ago, and the relationship endures to this day. Same goes for Connors Brothers Sardines out of New Brunswick and Cahill Group based in St. John's.

Ray embodies Smith's no-nonsense approach by making all 15 staff members available to clients. “There are no layers here, no go-betweens,” Smith says. “If a client wants to talk to somebody in production, they have their number. Problems get solved faster because they hear directly from the client.”

That approach has turned heads across the country. Approximately 60% of the agency's business has come from out-of-province (including Freshco Retail Maintenance, Husky Energy, Suncor Energy, Cape Breton University, Computers for Success and the Toronto-based Massage Addict, which Ray is currently rebranding). Ray is resonating off of the island.

“I know our clients appreciate how easy we are to work with,” Smith says. “It doesn't take long to get sick of the dog-and-pony show that surrounds most agency relationships. We'd rather just get to the heart of things, fix problems and craft great creative. Our clients seem to prefer that too.”



Opera on the Avalon wanted to introduce more folks to its artform. Ray showed how accessible it can be in an especially Newfoundland way.



Cape Breton University pushes the boundaries of innovation and thought leadership. Ray helped create their new brand identity and 'a tradition of new' positioning to reflect the young university's global perspective and commitment to a sustainable future.



NLBMC is a club for facial-hair enthusiasts who challenge gender norms and fight toxic masculinity. Ray helped promote their annual MerB's calendar to raise funds for Violence Prevention NL and make communities safer for everyone.



Thanks in part to the out-of-this-world packaging design featuring an astronaut, Dayboil IPA became one of the province's most popular brews the very month it launched. It also made celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing with a quirky online campaign a no-brainer.



CONTACT
Jenny Smith
President & Executive Creative Director
jenny@rayagency.ca



This campaign shows that although life can be unpredictable, Circle K convenience stores – with over 800 locations open 24/7 – are there for their customers wherever, whenever and for whatever.

Giants & Gentlemen

Entrepreneurial spirit that knows no bounds



MAXIMIZING ITS FREEDOM AND INDEPENDENCE, THE AGENCY IS FOLLOWING OPPORTUNITIES in new businesses, new talent and new capabilities.

Toronto's Giants & Gentlemen has strived over seven years to build a reputation as a growing, collaborative shop delivering bold work with integrity. And the proof of G&G's entrepreneurial spirit can be witnessed with the opening of a production company, a partnership with a media planning and execution firm, and even the forthcoming launch of its own craft gin.

The growth into new areas of expertise has been spearheaded by the drive of its three partners: Natalie Armata and Alanna Nathanson – co-chief creative officers – and chief operating officer Gino Cantalini. G&G's core of 30 staffers are accustomed to stepping up and tackling all manner of challenges.

They exercised said boldness in a campaign for the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA), which looked to promote the value of the .ca domain name and persuade small-business owners to use it instead of the .com default option.

"It was a challenging objective, considering that in Canada we are David vs. the '.com' Goliath," says Nathanson. "However, we had a client willing to put a stake in the ground, and the result was a tongue-in-cheek creative campaign that resonated with Canadians."

The Don't Be a Traitor campaign features a 30-second spot in which the wacky ".ca Eh Team" comes after Canadians who default to .com, pouring syrup on one's laptop and chasing another down the street in a Zamboni. The commercial, coproduced by the agency's two-year-old Brave Productions unit (which handled 52 projects this year) and Partners Film, aired on TV, in cinemas and online.

It was also a case in which G&G's new in-house partnership with PUSH Media – specializing in performance media planning and execution – came into play.

"We saw the need to collaborate more deeply with media day-to-day, as it's so intertwined with creative, and found the right fit with PUSH," Cantalini says. "Just like G&G, the PUSH team brings a 'grow or die' attitude to both our business and our clients'. This isn't just a job for us."

That growth imperative resulted in client wins including ERBN GRN – a cannabis and lifestyle retailer G&G is branding from scratch – energy-solutions company Enercare, and brand and communications support for mixed-use developer SmartCentres. It also launched the first campaign for the Backyard Axe Throwing League: BATL.

Canadian Business placed the company on its Growth 500 list of fastest-growing Canadian companies, citing a revenue increase of 230% over the past five years.

The G&G focus on business growth infuses the agency's work and guides strategic choices that lead to results for their clients. For Circle K convenience stores, they took a human approach to a category typically devoid of it.

Starting with the idea of convenience, the multi-touchpoint campaign was shaped around something more emotive: the customer's hour of need. The "Whenever. Wherever. Whatever." campaign brought the client 34.9 million impressions, a 647% increase in social community likes and follows, and 212,000 incremental visits online and to stores.

G&G's effective portfolio of creative was recognized this year by making the shortlist for *strategy's* small Agency of the Year. It also won an Effie Award for its campaign for Assaulted Women's Helpline and was recognized at the ADCC for its work on Fisherman's Friend.

Of course, in addition to winning new business, growth requires a welcoming culture. G&G describes itself as "an open, ego-free environment" that's attractive to new talent. Canada's Top 100 Employers included the agency on this year's list of Top Employers for Young People, partly for its "Genternship" program for grads, which involves shadowing a senior Gent and completing agency and client projects.

The shop also recruits insights from outside its own walls. One of the agency's tactics is to call on "Outthinking" to achieve optimal results, as in a collaboration with Days Inn Canada. The agency interviewed a flight attendant who shared the insight that business travel was a break from responsibilities back home, leading to the creative platform "Enjoy Your Bizcation."

"We bring in an outsider to help broaden or shift perspectives on a given project, which uncovers ownable, relevant insights," Armata explains. "And as two of our CCOs are women, which is highly unusual, we have additional perspectives few agencies can offer."



In this cheeky campaign, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority (CIRA) and G&G want you to know you're a traitor if you're a Canuck who chooses to use the .com domain name over .ca



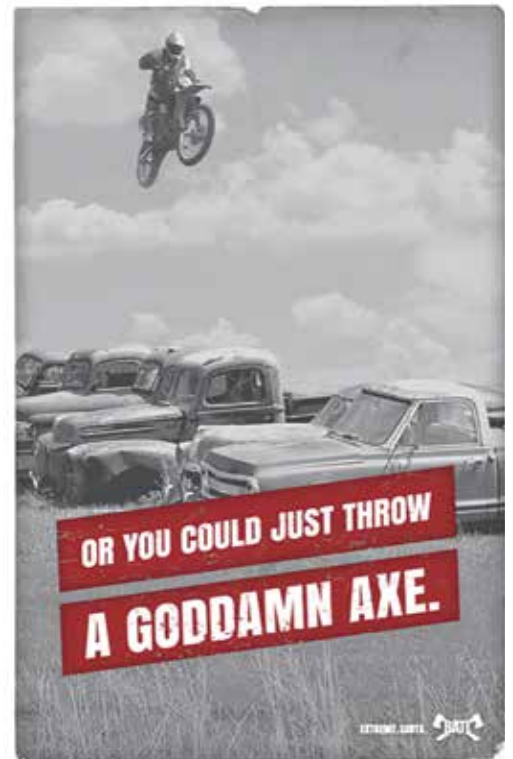
G&G wanted to show that Pâtisserie by Dr. Oetker frozen desserts are so good – and free from artificial flavours, colours and preservatives – even the plates are celebrating.



Harkening back to Fisherman's Friend's iconic heritage, G&G leveraged the trope of tall fish tales.



This twist on the iconic pizza-dough toss conveys the authenticity of Dr. Oetker Pizza Tradizionale.



The Backyard Axe Throwing League: BATL and G&G propose an adrenaline rush alternative without the threat of death.



CONTACT
Gino Cantalini
Co-Founder & COO
g.cantalini@giantsandgents.com



Elemental

Applying a loyalty lens to building brands via emotional connection

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MODERN AGENCY BUSINESS IS GETTING UPSTREAM. Everyone from consultancies to accountants want a seat at “the big table” where high-level branding decisions get made. Agencies must fight for space in that conversation.

Elemental, however, has been finding itself at that table more and more thanks to its collaborative approach and continued success connecting brands with consumers.

In addition to consumer marketing skills, the 18-person Toronto agency has deep expertise in the trade marketing and loyalty spheres. It's the trade AOR for 22 Campari spirit brands and has worked with Starbucks on its loyalty program for the last two years.

Increasingly, Elemental is showing its strategic know-how applies in the broader world of branding. Its strong work ethic and focus on solving business problems has earned real trust from marketers. That in turn has led to organic growth and expanded mandates from clients.

“We’ve found that, in loyalty especially, clients are looking for ways to make emotional connections in a category mostly known for just giving away free stuff,” says Dustin Brown, partner and head of strategy at Elemental. “We’ve had to be experts in emotional connection to serve that need.”

As an example, Brown points to Elemental's expanding relationship with cinema loyalty program Scene. Over the last five years, its worked more on acquisition and engagement drivers, helped evolve the brand platform and successfully created the “No Excuses Day” campaign. That work called on members to get their friends out to have more fun

Elemental believes the best work is done when collaborating with clients. So much so that this is painted on the wall as a focal point and reminder for everyone on the Elemental team.

in order to drive brand favourability, increase Scene card activity and attract new members.

Brent Wardrop, partner and creative director at Elemental, says growing trust with clients comes down to Elemental's key differentiator. “It's all about solving business problems,” he says. “It's about fitting our service to business needs. So if advertising isn't the *right* solution, then it's not part of *our* solution.”

Elemental adheres to this philosophy by making sure it hires people who grasp the importance of client business strategy. Whether interviewing an account lead or creative, Wardrop says Elemental hires people “who are fluent in the course of business as a whole and can focus on client needs, no matter their role.”

That approach not only helps grow business organically with clients like Scene, but attracts new business too. In the last year, Elemental started working with two new Canadian companies: the venerable Stanfield's and up-and-coming dog food-maker Crumps' Naturals.

Perhaps the best example of Elemental's full range of talents is its new branding campaign for Baffin. The apparel brand was known primarily to construction and industrial workers. Baffin launched a series of consumer footwear products that showed growth potential but lacked the brand recognition that its industrial products enjoyed.

Elemental has worked with Baffin since 2017 when it was asked to improve its e-commerce capabilities and drive sales, says Brown (which it has, increasing sales 47.5% from 2017 to 2019). “There was always the stated goal of unifying their industrial and consumer brands, which they felt were fragmented. But we had to make them a believer in our capabilities. We don't mind earning it.”

When given the nod to unify Baffin's brand, Elemental explored its family-owned heritage. The Hubner family plans an expedition each year to test their gear out. “That's their lifestyle, and it's the soul of their company,” Brown says. Elemental made it its mission to move beyond the “it keeps you warm and safe” message to show real Canadians exploring a range of environments and seasons in comfort and style.

The “Made For All Seasons” branding campaign uses quick product shots of hiking boots and winter hats between scenes of snowy hiking trails and golden fields. Film grain and the tinny recitation of the poem “Canada, My Home” adds a sense of cinematic nostalgia and history. It's a campaign that holds its own against competing brands that have been marketing in the consumer sphere for far longer.

With expertise in improving business at every step of the customer journey, expect to see Elemental continue to earn a spot at the big table with its proven collaborative approach.



In Fall 2019 Elemental worked with Baffin on their first brand spot "Made for All Seasons" to help tell their story about it's Canadian roots and love of four seasons.



Elemental and Starbucks partnered to launch a National Starbucks Rewards campaign using a simple straight forward approach to remind Canadians why Starbuck's loyalty program was the favourite amongst Canadians. It doesn't get simpler than "One Two Free."



In 2019, SCENE launched No Excuses Day, their first official National Day dedicated to inspiring people to get up, get off their devices and get out with friends across Canada. Over 1.5 million SCENE members participated.



Elemental and Campari looked to increase first time purchasers and build loyalty across their 22 brands in Canada.



CONTACT
Dustin Brown
Partner, Client Services
Dustin.Brown@elementalinc.com



The doug&partners senior team, from left: Doug Robinson, Kristin Burnham, Matt Syberg-Olsen, Moxie Garrett, Bonnie Lall, Adam White, Brad Kumar and Caroline Kilgour.

doug&partners

Results through strategic input

D OUG&PARTNERS IS REAPING THE REWARDS of recent restructuring. With a new senior leadership team now in place, the shop that has been steadily building a solid reputation for great work since 2002 is now getting even more invitations to pitch new business, says founder, partner and CEO Doug Robinson.

d&p has seen the most growth in strategic and digital planning, which it believes makes the 40-person Toronto shop a more useful collaborator to its marketing partners.

Caroline Kilgour, who joined as VP managing director in 2018, says that with the current trends of marketers developing in-house competencies and working with a proliferation of partners, “they still need to have strategic coherence with each partner’s contributions, and we’ve become quite adept at assisting on that front.”

Robinson adds, “We’re fortunate to work with clients who understand that engaging us more ‘upstream’ in their planning process leads to a much more fruitful collaboration. Ultimately, it allows us to add more value to the equation.”

d&p is employing this upstream approach with recent client pickups including telco Distributel and accounting network Grant Thornton, and the resulting work will be unveiled in 2020.

Of course, developing deeper capabilities in digital strategy is also having an impact on boosting client results. Moxie Garrett joined the agency last April, taking on the newly created role of head of digital experience. She comes with a strong digital strategy pedigree, and is putting her expertise to work. “A creative idea is great, but if we can root that in an informed decision based on research and data, we can make a good business case for what we’re putting forward,” Garrett

explains. “We’re bringing to life our motto ‘creativity for commerce.’”

Case in point, the numbers are in for an earlier campaign for GoodLife Fitness that focused on testimonials, indicating a triple-digit percentage year-over-year increase in leads generated and a substantial decrease in cost per acquisition.

Strategy and analytics expertise is also helping inform custom creative approaches. For AutoTrader.ca, the agency went to air with three spots – ranging from testimonials to “Great Deals,” which reinforces the brand’s leading position in the automotive marketplace and spells out its functionality. “They had extremely successful playback, which has translated into great recall and results,” says executive creative director Matt Syberg-Olsen.

As much as digital and social platforms are changing the way we interact with brands, it’s also important not to eschew “traditional” channels.

For heating and cooling company Reliance Home Comfort, whose recent campaign included traditional media for the category such as multiple 30- and 15-second national TV spots as well as a high volume of radio ads, Syberg-Olsen says, “As much as the power of digital and social media is abundantly clear, we also can’t ignore the utility of some of the more traditional media to speak to people in a meaningful way and generate sales for our clients. Reliance is a great example of a brand that uses television and radio very effectively, and our audio branding efforts in that regard have been very successful.”

Award-winning work for Go RVing Canada, meanwhile, saw experiential offerings driving social media. The organization provides RVers with retail and camping information, outdoor shows being an important outlet. So, following its earlier “Wildhood” integrated campaign, d&p developed the “Head into Wildhood” installation, allowing show attendees to insert their heads in a terrarium to provide a plant-filled nature experience in the middle of winter. The experience and the resulting user-generated content, helps to augment ROI on Go RVing’s investment in the shows.

The agency is also adept at triggering the viral and PR side of social. Tapping into social’s movement potential, the agency teamed with The Period Purse, which distributes free menstrual products to help reduce the stigma around menstruation. d&p developed “Say the Word,” a three-spot campaign looking to normalize use of the word “period.” The term is bandied about randomly by a father and son doing homework, a plumber, and a weatherman, with the incongruous videos being shared via social.

The shop’s range and body of work has not gone unnoticed. “There has been a steady flow of knocks at our door,” says Kilgour. “And what we’re most proud of is that those knocks have typically been referrals. It’s tremendous to have new business come in that way.”



If you can't bring the people to nature, sometimes you just have to bring nature to the people. For Go RVing Canada, d&p co-created the "Head into Wildhood" installation, allowing RV show attendees to insert their heads in a terrarium for a verdant experience in the middle of winter.



Can you trust AutoTrader.ca for great deals and an extremely accurate valuation of your vehicle? Yes. Yes, you can. The agency went to air with three commercials – including testimonials and spots spelling out the functionality of the client's site.



Online videos for The Period Purse aim to reduce stigma by saying "period". A lot. The campaign received positive feedback and was picked up by bloggers and trade press and was shared by social-media influencers.



Broken furnace? Air conditioning not working? Call on Reliance (It's OK if you just sang that to yourself). d&p's recent campaign for Reliance Home Comfort included multiple 30- and 15-second national TV spots as well as a high volume of radio ads.



Ontario Honda Dealers would like everyone to remember to not forget to put their winter tires on. The key message of this point-of-purchase campaign was to incentivize people to book their winter-tire swaps in advance. It appeared in posters, postcards, e-display and window clings.



CONTACT
 Caroline Kilgour
 VP Managing Director
 caroline@dougpartners.com



A multimedia marketing campaign for Dairy Farmers of Ontario celebrates milk as a versatile and contemporary food choice with the theme line: "What Can't Milk Do?"

No Fixed Address

Three years later,
all grown up

THREE-YEAR-OLD NO FIXED ADDRESS IS NO LONGER THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK. The agency that started from scratch with a declaration that clients deserve better from their agencies, is all grown up.

After three years of continued new business and organic growth, and with the steady acquisition of top talent across all communications disciplines, NFA has gone from cheeky start-up to an established agency player with some 110 full-time staff.

"I think it's fair to say that the model we introduced three years ago, which envisioned a new and better way of working, with senior talent, custom solutions and true integration, has become a proven concept," says Serge Rancourt, NFA CEO and co-founder.

Rancourt says that a bedrock principle of the NFA model is the desire to work in closer partnership with clients. The benefit could not be better illustrated, he says, than through the relationship with online financial services company Questrade.

The Questrade campaign has evolved over three years from building awareness of the brand with a bold message that urged consumers to "Ask Tough Questions" to arming them with legitimate concerns and now in the third year the campaign has consumers taking action with the tagline: "It's time to switch to Questrade."

Over the past year, NFA has managed to maintain and steadily build upon the momentum established in its early days, according to agency president and co-founder Dave Lafond.

Major new business wins this past year include the Little Caesars restaurant chain, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, and travel company Merit Travel Group.

"Much of this past year has been spent attracting and expanding

services in response to client demand," says Lafond. "In fact, organic growth has been a highlight of the year. As a result we've been able to add depth across the board, in strategy, creative, digital, media, account service, health care expertise, PR and content."

While the NFA model has successfully grown up, getting there has not always been an easy journey. It has had its share of challenges, Lafond admits.

"Our vision was to have all disciplines working effortlessly, hand-in-hand. It sounds great in theory, but in practice it requires a lot of patience, flexibility and plain hard work. As we've grown, we resisted the easy solution of creating departments or expanding by acquisition. It's been a real test of our resolve to make it all come together organically. But we've been persistent and courageous and it's paying off."

The NFA model was exactly what Sean Bredt, chief marketing and business development officer at the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, was looking for when he hired NFA last year as the DFO began ramping up to meet the challenge of marketing the story of Ontario dairy farmers and their dairy products.

"NFA became true partners with us," says Bredt. "They took on our challenges and got deep into the research so that they truly understood what we are facing. They have an 'all-hands-on' mantra which means that the team flexes so that the best individuals are always there to be part of the discussion. As we grew with them they brought in new competencies as needed. The time and access we had to senior people was excellent."

Adds Bredt: "We could not have done what we did had we not had NFA as our partners. They are awesome."

NFA's bespoke communications offering is reflected in the range of its work, as evidenced by just three recent standout campaigns.

NFA used a dramatic installation featuring brightly coloured lollipops to raise awareness of the prevalence of child pornography. A PR-driven campaign linking Airbnb with SickKids Hospital drew stark attention to the hospital's need for funding, while a bold mass media concept for Dairy Farmers of Ontario told the story of dairy farmers and championed the versatility of milk.



A new campaign for Little Caesars promoted the Canadian launch of Pizza Portal, a service that allows customers to custom order their pizza, select a pick-up time, and be notified when the order is ready.



J.P. Wiser's encouraged people to follow through on the promise of getting together socially with the headline "Drink Soon?" This is the third year in the continuing "Hold It High" campaign.



The Questrade campaign has evolved over three years, beginning with a message that urged consumers to "Ask Tough Questions" to this year's campaign that encourages consumers to take action with the tagline: "It's time to switch to Questrade."



"Lolli: The Exhibit Nobody Wants to Talk About," featured 10,824 lollipops to drive awareness of the prevalence of child pornography on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.



An earned media activation partnering SickKids Hospital with booking site Airbnb brought wide attention to the cramped conditions at the hospital, dramatizing the need for a new building.



CONTACT
Dave Lafond
 President & Co-Founder
dave@nofixedaddressinc.com

Wondering what's in store for Canada's shopper marketing industry?

**Sign up for your free
twice-monthly briefing**

Go in-depth with the latest research, consumer insights, retail trends and shopper programs.

strategyonline.ca/subscribe

strategy SHOPPER MARKETING REPORT



Grocers get vocal about local

How banners like Metro, Sobey's, Longo's and Loblaw are expanding shelf and marketing support for domestic producers.



Keurig pops up, touts K-Cup recycling

The coffee brewer is educating consumers about its recycling program during its holiday mall activation.



Canadians For Clean Prosperity's satirical take on "fake news" showed unscrupulous media moguls using underhanded means to hide facts about carbon taxes.

Republic

Empathy and Gen Z lead the way as a new way of running an agency

THERE ARE AGENCIES THAT SAY THEY'RE "FLEXIBLE," and then there are agencies that are willing to invest in large-scale change to serve client needs. Republic falls into the latter category, earning more than its fair share of headlines over the last year.

Seeing a need to do more than simply "take a brief" for its clients, the Toronto based shop shifted its focus to "empathy" – an approach that goes beyond raw data to find real human insights that, in turn, create stronger consumer connections for brands.

Agency Founder and CEO Beverley Hammond tells *strategy* that the aptly named Republic is purpose-built "for the people". "Many of us have left something big for something different. As brands move further away from having a true people connection, we wanted to help them find a way back. Back to the consumer and back to the human element."

The addition of ZED last spring – a division that is run by and for Gen Z to "help turn Gen Z values into bottom line value for brands" is the living breathing example of the agency's approach. The overall idea is to give the keys for Gen Z-focused work to Gen Z itself. Beyond its in-house staff, ZED leverages its ZEDNetwork, a group of young Canadians from coast-to-coast that is part focus group and part creative resource for clients. ZED's first client was the Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity (CCGSD) with whom Republic had previously worked on the award-winning campaign, *The Gay Sweater*.

In July, Kids Help Phone hired Republic over twelve other agencies competing for the job of overseeing its brand strategy and repositioning (in addition to handling its annual fundraising campaign). ZED was an integral part of that.

The agency's series of spots for Canadians For Clean Prosperity featuring Canadian actor Frank Moore, took an entirely different approach to environmental marketing through a satirical look at the

anti-carbon tax rhetoric. Written and directed by industry veteran Patrick Scissons, the campaign highlights the inner workings of a fictitious media organization F.A.K.E News that uses various means to distract people from the fact that Canada's carbon tax will benefit its citizens. The message has been landing.

Over the last year, Republic also launched a campaign for BILD, the Building Industry and Land Development Association trade group to help Torontonians understand the industry's efforts to solve the city's housing crisis.

It launched new products for the well-known food brand Summer Fresh, executed an award-winning tourism campaign for the Town of Bracebridge and helped

Neal Brothers celebrate its 30th anniversary with a fully integrated campaign that also launched its new brand.

Republic has worked with an impressive list of clients like Canadian Tire, Everest Insurance, Muskoka Brewery, Lego, NCC, Starbucks, TechNation (Canada's technology industry association) Weston Foods and Xplorinet.

As far as growth strategies grow, empathy is yielding results.



The "Hummus All Day" campaign inspires the Summer Fresh target to "hummus" in unique, creative and delicious ways.



CONTACT
Beverley Hammond
CEO
Bev@republicstory.com



As this collage of images from the agency's Instagram feed shows culture and creativity truly combine at The Mark.

For instance, when The Mark was tapped by Scotiabank to demonstrate its commitment in communities across Latin America, they partnered with National Geographic & FOX Sports to produce an emotional feature-length documentary that tells the story of 14 children who use futbol to rise above their circumstances and realize their true potential. While filming, The Mark considered as many possible messaging and visual variables and captured footage that could be used on social platforms over the course of the year-long program. If a particular piece of content wasn't performing, it was changed. If people responded to the story, messaging thoughtfully evolved to become more brand-focused.

"You wouldn't ask someone you just met to help you move a couch," says Steinberg about the strategy. "It's the same with digital media. People love a story. Give them a story and then they're more likely to be open to other messages. You gotta earn that couch-moving request."

Smith likens their approach to CRM marketing, but leveraging paid social platforms and digital media in a methodical way that moves audiences through a journey. "By creating content that resonates, you are able to nurture leads very efficiently, and at scale," she adds.

Crafting executions that have the ability to change based on how audiences react requires a degree of confidence with risk-taking. From both client and agency. For Smith, that means taking a high-touch approach to managing the work.

"There is so much variability at play, there are no guaranteed outcomes. So when we need to pivot, we don't hesitate. The quicker we move, the more effective we are."

Smith says this fluid approach delivers for marketers who are willing to trust the agency with complex business challenges and are open to an iterative process. "Our clients are courageous marketers who don't do rinse and repeat."

Similarly, The Mark looks for talent that brings a level of commitment, ownership and resourcefulness to everything they do. "Everyone here has a voice and the ability to shape who we are and how we create," says Smith. "The level of care this team brings to their work is inspiring."

The approach has had tremendous impact on the agency culture. Earlier this year, The Mark was Great Place to Work-Certified and just last month made the 2019 list of Best Workplaces for Millennials and Best Workplaces Managed by Women, a reflection of the culture that comes with challenging and rewarding work.

"This was a personal goal of mine when I joined," says Smith. "I have experienced the power of a dynamic, inclusive culture and recognize it's one of the many reasons clients choose agencies. If you're going to roll up your sleeves and get down to work, you want to do it with people you like, who care as much as you do and will go to the ends of the earth to get the job done."

The Mark

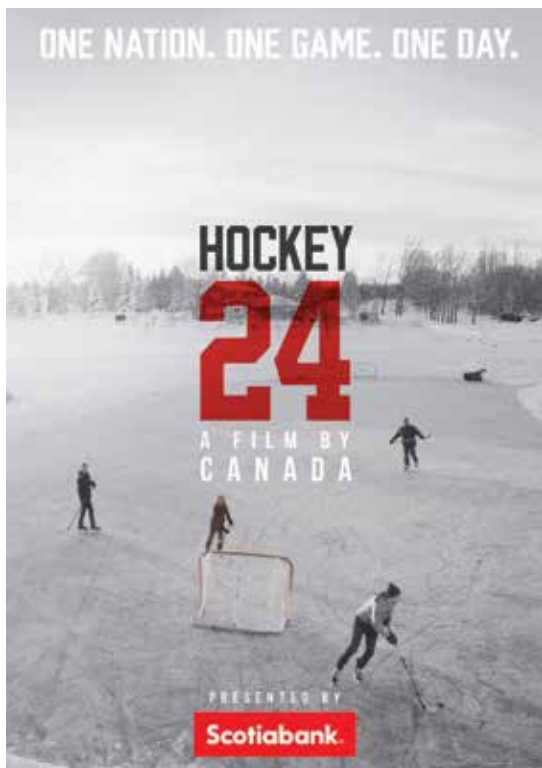
Earning brand love, and building business, one story at a time

SOMETIMES A REBRAND IS A WAY TO FRESHEN THINGS UP. Other times, a rebrand signals a fundamental shift in how things are done. The latter is true for The Mark, which in 2019 was renamed from The Mark Studios. It was the final piece in the company's two-year transition from a content-driven production studio to a creative consultancy focused on business strategy, brand building and marketing effectiveness.

The changes began when Hayes Steinberg came on board in September 2017 as chief creative officer, bringing with him over two decades of agency experience, recognized for both his business effectiveness and creative talent. They continued when Tracy Smith, who has extensive experience in brand strategy and agency operations, was brought on as president early last year. Since then the shop has tripled in size and grown their client roster. The message was clear: The Mark was now a full-service agency and getting attention.

In its new iteration, The Mark relies heavily on creative exploration and content flexibility that is informed by insights throughout.

"We don't assume that the audience will listen just because we put it out there. By harnessing insightful data to inform our thinking, we always try to create something that hasn't been created before, and the data informs the execution," says Steinberg. "There's an elasticity of how we go to market that allows us to adapt while creative is in market. The audience tells us what's real."



Presented by Scotiabank and produced by The Mark, Hockey 24 – premiering at the 2020 Hot Docs Film Festival – will be a one-of-a-kind documentary showcasing Canada’s love for the game, all shot on a single day.



With a visually-memorable, geo-targeted social media campaign, The Mark helped Wine Rack boost sales, build brand awareness, and grab meaningful market share from its monolithic competitor.



When Shoppers Drug Mart launched The Beauty Clinic by Shoppers, The Mark helped build awareness and drive to clinic with a series of humorous and educational digital videos that demystified and democratized cosmetic dermatology.



To accelerate brand awareness across Latin America, The Mark helped Scotiabank create a new media and always-on digital content strategy including partnerships with Concacaf, FOX Sports and National Geographic.



Dexcom revolutionized how people with Type 1 Diabetes live and thrive. The Mark created a hyper-targeted digital and social media campaign to help get their life-changing technology into their hands as soon as humanly possible.



CONTACT
Tracy Smith
President
tracy.smith@wearethemark.com



Co-founders Anna Halfpenny (left) and Marketa Krivy (right).

ruby & foster

A marketing agency for the 21st century

CONVERSATIONS WITH FRIENDS CAN, when you're lucky, lead to moments of inspiration. When a mutual entrepreneur-friend turned to Marketa Krivy and Anna Halfpenny looking for advice on how to evolve her business, it sparked a business of their own.

With Krivy's brand building expertise as an executive creative director and Halfpenny's experience with strategy and business development, the two of them realized they held valuable perspectives key to cracking business problems. They also knew first-hand that helping people like their friend was difficult from their positions within agencies, which are often engaged too late in the process.

"[Agencies] are coming in when key business decisions are already made," says Halfpenny. "They're brought in on the path of execution versus the path that considers broader business outcomes."

So in January 2019, they launched ruby & foster, which they call a marketing agency for the 21st century.

Krivy says with the landscape so fragmented and cluttered, you can't look at brand building and awareness creation through advertising alone. "The power has shifted away from brands to consumers, so as a result, what a brand says about itself matters a lot less than how it behaves in the world."

So what does it mean to be a 21st century agency?

First and foremost, it's about placing a laser focus on who the client is trying to reach. Then, it's about taking a holistic approach and looking at marketing in broader terms, considering all touch points that might improve the customer experience.

"What's become apparent to us is that if we can orient thinking around the customer or the person clients are trying to reach, everything falls from there," says Krivy.

"Our philosophy centres around empathy – empathy for our clients, and for their customers, empathy for the talent we work

with and for the companies we collaborate with," adds Halfpenny.

This means the work ruby & foster does is often invisible in the traditional sense. While they will certainly execute creative for clients – be it in-house, in collaboration with the client's internal team, or using freelance talent – the shop's output has included brand strategy, evaluating business models, and providing the tools a brand needs to build its business. For instance, the agency completed an executive summary for one client that helped them determine whether they should be consumer facing or B2B. For another, it created a new brand identity, along with templates for its social channels.

"Our outputs vary greatly because our client needs vary," says Halfpenny. "Our agency reel is our client testimonials; it's about how we've helped our clients' business. We appeal to companies that have thrown out the old marketing playbook."

The approach also resonated with clients. For instance, when ruby & foster was tasked with a comprehensive assignment in spring 2019 for clean beauty product brand Schaf Skincare, they were involved in all aspects of the brand's business. The scope of work included everything from business model analysis, business planning and consumer persona development, to brand, content and retail strategy, as well as brand identity and brand messaging. Founder and CEO Peter Schafrick described the process as a true partnership, and the agency continues to provide ongoing marketing support.



"Marketa and Anna have shown incredible commitment and dedication to helping me grow my brand," Peter Schafrick says. "I consider them invaluable collaborators."

While the work of ruby & foster doesn't follow industry norms, Krivy says for them, it's about placing their skills where they're best suited to help clients with today's business problems. "We're shifting with the landscape. We're not just looking at creative output; we're looking at the whole business and how we can use our creativity and industry experience in a way that's more closely tied with business goals."



CONTACT
Anna Halfpenny
Co-founder & COO
anna@rubyandfoster.com



Steph Mackie, Mark Biernacki and Steve Carli getting Mackie Biernacki settled in Bloordale Village.

Mackie Biernacki

Where every problem doesn't look like a nail

NESTLED BETWEEN A PRINT SHOP AND A BAKERY on Bloor St in Bloordale Village you'll find a different sort of storefront. Peer in and you'll see a group of people gathered around a communal table, but passersby aren't quite sure what to make of the Toronto neighbourhood's latest addition. Those in the know, however, will recognize the logo on the door as that of indie agency Mackie Biernacki.

This street-front office is the first for the five-year-old agency, and an incredibly convenient location for a quick vox pop. Prior, the shop operated out of the Soho House, staking claim to the largely underused top floor. But as the private club's membership grew, and as the agency continued to expand, it was time for a permanent home.

Known for its creative output, co-CD's and co-owners Steph Mackie and Mark Biernacki recently bolstered the agency's strategic capacity when they lured Steve Carli to join as president this summer.

Formerly of Red Urban, Carli's role is to strengthen the strategic foundation of the agency and expand on providing business counsel to clients. It also allows them to grow the agency without compromising what they do best: creative business solutions according to the needs of the client.

In the past year the team has: helped Dutch baby formula brand Kabrita break into the U.S. market; built an architectural exhibit for the redevelopment of Cloverdale Mall; executed brand strategy, identity, package design, and a campaign launch for Canadian vet pharma offering Grey Wolf; produced brand films for kids clothing

brand Hatley; and is developing a robust fundraising and multi-media brand campaign to build Canada's first smart hospital for Mackenzie Health.

The variety is reflective of the fact that the agency works to ensure output is based on the client's business problem versus a pre-determined deliverable.

"It's the old adage that when you're holding a hammer, every problem looks like a nail," says Steph Mackie. "We've all led agencies where we've been forced to churn out solutions based on existing staff. Here, we have the freedom to staff for the right solution."

"The Mackie Biernacki model is built to take advantage of the proliferation of interesting and effective media avenues," says Carli. "We have teams with architects and construction experts and other teams with health strategists and vets. What we're able to do is bring in people with expertise while maintaining the strategic vision of both the agency and our clients' business."

Currently, Mackie Biernacki has nine full-time staff across creative and client service, which Mackie says are the "essentials," and count another nine contractors who act as "full-timers for the client" within their extended family of collaborators.

"Everyone here has their lanes but they also get their hands dirty," says Biernacki. "We are fortunate enough to work with likeminded people who never say 'that's not my job.'"



To establish goat milk formula in the US, Kabrita turned to Mackie Biernacki, which created a digital video campaign and online assets that featured a voice-activated "smart goat" that provided useful information on the benefits of formula made from goat milk.



CONTACT
Steve Carli
President
steve@mackiebiernacki.com

Does keeping up with tech keep you up at night?

Sign up for your free weekly briefing

- ✓ Stay on top of martech trends that are making waves.
- ✓ Get briefed on effective ad tech solutions.
- ✓ Find out which marketers are diving into new tech-driven programs.

strategyonline.ca/subscribe

strategy MARKETING TECH



Cadillac Fairview to develop retail solutions with Scale AI

The Ravel by CF innovation division is pursuing ways to offer more personalization within physical retail.



WestJet expands its voice services

The airline is bringing its Juliet digital assistant to Google devices to help

The Church+State team



Church+State

Applying a coup d'état mentality to brand growth



WHEN CHURCH+STATE WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED, the focus wasn't on advertising, per se. The independent shop was designed to help clients win the battle for their consumers' time through content marketing.

These days, suiting up for that battle looks a bit different as the agency evolves with clients' needs. Still approaching its business through the context of the blurred lines between content and advertising, Church+State has experienced considerable growth, in areas both established and new.

In the past year, the agency continued work for clients such as Walmart, Microsoft, AB World Foods, Acklands Grainger, Manulife and Arthritis Society, though the work for those clients has grown. For instance, its digital and social mandate for Walmart has evolved to include new business lines, such as online grocery, and Church+State has expanded to AOR status for Arthritis Society.

It has also won new assignments from Centennial College, DUUO Insurance, Farm Credit Canada, Sovereign General Insurance, and US-based Property Manager Asset Living. The shop is also rolling out a comprehensive strategy for home builders association BILD's Home Show business that includes not only new branding and advertising, but also wayfinding, and on-site activations.

"The consumer trade show business, as a category, has been in steady decline so we worked with BILD for over six months to develop a transformational brand strategy," says chief strategy officer Daniel Langer-Hack. "We looked at what a home means for people in 21st-century Toronto and helped them re-evaluate their customer experience model from the ground up."

The expanding nature of these assignments has caused the agency to take a look at its own model to identify what pieces could help them better serve clients and what new opportunities were arising. It took an equity stake in production studio and frequent collaborator Airfoil Media, bringing them in house and cementing the agency's full-service production capabilities.

Langer-Hack says the strategic partnership came as the agency looked for ways to offer clients services that directly enhance their core competencies or are complementary but could act as an extension of their business. "This is now a core part of our offering," he says. "It's completely seamless and clients benefit from having it function as a direct extension of our team."

Agency CEO Robin Whalen says this acquisition is being viewed as a blueprint for future partnerships. "On the one hand our strategy comes from looking at areas we would like to expand but we also look to ensure we are prepared to offer our clients the services that they need on an ongoing basis. This helps us stay close to their needs and execute programs with the same internal C+S team that is most familiar with their business."

Identifying gaps in services fuelled other innovations, too. The agency is delving into podcasting with the launch of *The Coup*, a podcast that explores business disruption through the lens of political coups d'état. "This is a proof of concept for what the podcast division is capable of and demonstrates what brands can endeavour to do in the space," says Langer-Hack. "We know we can deliver at a level of production value on par with top-notch podcast content."

And it recently launched Unison, which offers brand strategy and design to help clients who are looking to define and develop their own personal brands. The service streamlines the process used for organizational brands so that it's accessible and affordable to individuals.

One of its first projects was with Michele Romanow, of CBC's *Dragon's Den* fame and co-founder of Clearbanc, a venture capital firm.

"We talk a lot about the agency of the future but not a lot of people talk about the client of the future. More individuals are using their skills as the foundation of their own personal enterprise and need strong branding the way organizations do," says Whalen. "We're looking to fill that niche."



Church+State worked with BILD – the home builders industry association – to help its home show business better reflect what a home means in 21st century Toronto.



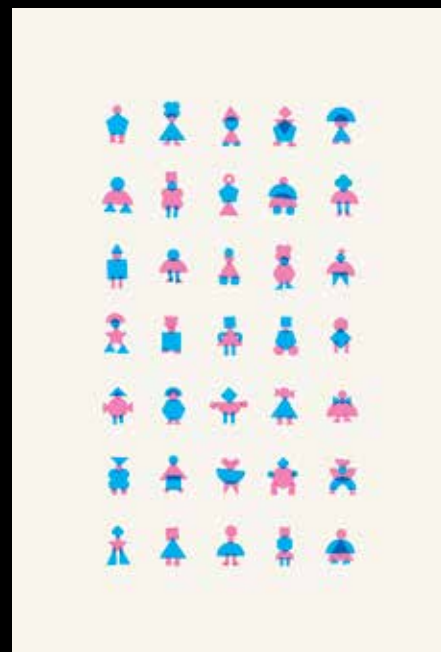
CONTACT
Robin Whalen
President & CEO
robin@churchstate.co

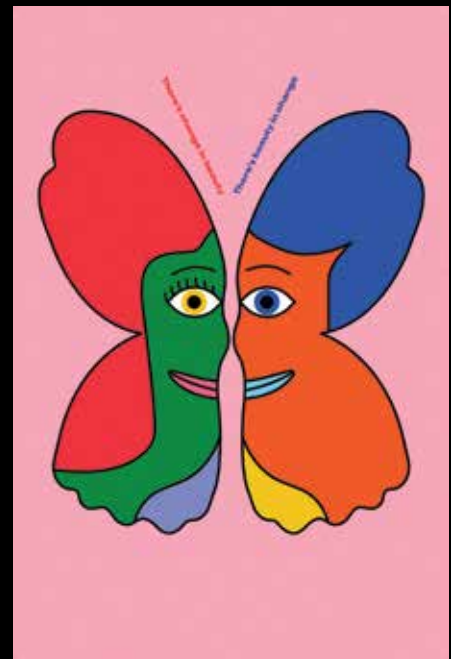
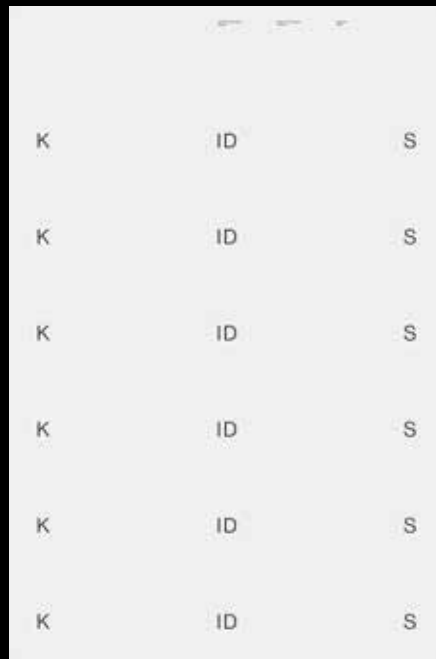
A SILENT AUCTION FOR THE SILENCED

The 2019 Design A.O.Y. shortlisted agencies created posters in support of Gender Creative Kids Canada, giving a voice to trans, non-binary and gender-fluid children.



Left: The Agency of the Year Design shortlisted shops were invited to create posters that reflect GCK's mission to be an advocate for the safety and acceptance of trans youth. The framed artwork, which went up for auction at the 2019 gala, supports the message that children shouldn't feel discriminated for expressing their authentic selves.





Top row:
Sid Lee; 123W;
Cossette; DDB.
Middle row:
John St.; Lg2; Leo
Burnett; McMillan.
Bottom row:
Ogilvy; Rethink;
Camp Jefferson;
Zulu Alpha Kilo.



AGENCY OF THE YEAR | 2019

This year's Agency of the Year came together at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts on Oct. 30, where 16 agencies were awarded an AOY paper plane trophy, alongside *strategy's* five Marketers of the Year. And the Gold AOY winners were... Rethink (Agency and Design), FCB (Digital), Initiative (Media), Narrative (PR) and Target Marketing (Small Agency).



1. The 2019 event saw AOY get its first media co-host, with Brooke Leland from Cossette Media emceeing the show alongside seasoned host Steve Mykolyn. | 2. Clinton Braganza was voted by the industry as the top Marketer of the Year, in part for his efforts to make the Scotiabank Arena a household name. | 3. The Rethink crew with their Gold plane. | 4. Gender Creative Kids' Connie Chabot and Pascale Devrillon | 5. The inaugural Small AOY Gold award went to Target Marketing, all the way from Newfoundland & Labrador. | 6. Narrative claimed the Gold PR prize after a Silver win in 2018. | 7. Rethink won Gold in two (Agency & Design) of the three categories it was eyeing (FCB swooped in to take Digital). No hard feelings here though, as FCB's Nancy Crimi-Lamanna poses with Rethink's Christina Yu. | 8. AOY shines a light on Canada's top agencies. | 9. FCB Canada's Bryan Kane, Shelley Brown and Jeff Hilts (and a photo-bombing Peter Ignazi) with the Gold Digital prize.



MIA's AWARDS | 2019

The gala for the Media Innovation Awards took place at The Carlu on November 28 in Toronto, with Initiative and FCB/Six sharing the Grand Prix for their "Go Back to Africa" data-driven media campaign for Black and Abroad.



1. Touche!'s Karine Courtemanche and GE's Bob Park open the show for the MIAs, which they co-chaired. | 2. The Media Innovation Award "M" in all its shiny golden glory. | 3. OMD and Waze score top marks for taking McDonald's to the streets with the "MyMcD's x Waze" app integration. | 4. Jungle Media picks up a couple Golds for IKEA. | 5. Initiative and FCB/Six win Best in Show. | 6. The CMDC's Shannon Lewis with Touche!'s Antoine Nguyen, *strategy's* 2019 New Establishment: Media winner and lead on Sport Chek's "Digital Window Shopping" campaign. | 7. Jamie Camden juggles Initiative's haul. | 8. FCB's Elma Karabegovic and Jeff Hiltz win a Gold, one of many for clients including BMO, Michelob Ultra and Fountain Tire. | 9. PHD's Maxime Corriveau and Alain Desormiers hoist a Gold trophy, which the agency won for work for Brunet. | 10. Initiative's Helen Galanis accepts the Media Leader of the Year title.

PHOTOS BY MATT FORSYTHE



What's old is new again

BY SIMON CREET



SIMON CREET is a partner and CCO at The Hive

Once upon a time in advertising there were these things called “captive audiences.”

And they weren't just confined to movie theatres or subway cars. You could find these consumer groups huddled around radios or crouched in front of television sets, taking in every word of every ad while they waited for their favourite program to resume. Words like, “Doubly absorbant”; “Magically delicious”; and “Maybe it's Maybeline.”

If you could afford to buy the airtime, you could get your messages across. Over and over again.

Then came the digital age, and with it, the end of consumer captivity.

Audiences now run free and advertisers are forced to find ways to find, connect, persuade and convert.

But this is not new. In fact, it's very old.

Since the earliest days, brands and their agency partners have understood that they need to find

meaningful ways to enter into the lives of their customers by being either useful or entertaining.

One way of considering these moments of meaningful connection is to think of them as “valuable encounters.” They represent the bond that occurs between a consumer and a brand when the two strike a resonant chord. These encounters, or value exchanges, can vary from tactical to highly emotional, but there's always some real benefit for the consumer.

A century ago (long before radio or TV), Canadian Pacific Railway distributed playing cards designed to entice aspiring travellers with photographic images of the great cities, natural wonders and majestic views they could find on their train journeys.

A decade later, Coca-Cola endeared itself to parents across Ontario by distributing “The Game of Safety and Danger,” a board game that taught children how

Clockwise from top left: Back in the day, marketers at Ogilvie's Breakfast Oats, Coca-Cola and the Canadian Pacific Railway traded useful items (or "valuable encounters") for consumer attention, which The Hive's Simon Creet argues is not being done enough in today's consumer-chasing digital age.

to negotiate the perils of car traffic on their walk home from school.

Both companies recognized the opportunity that a value exchange could provide. And consumers responded enthusiastically by allowing these brands to enter into their homes and their hearts.

Proctor and Gamble, unhappy with the drab programming that came out of the networks in the early days of television, decided to give something of value to its prime customer base: the stay-at-home mom.

P&G created its own TV production company and gave these moms hours of escape from their mundane home lives through soap operas like *The Guiding Light* and *As The World Turns*, which aired for more than 50 years – not a bad run for an ad campaign.

Recently, while rummaging through an antique store, I happened upon a much simpler example. It's a 12-inch wooden ruler from the 1940s. On one side printed in black are the words: "A wise rule is always be on time for school." Then the brand pay-off: "And see that your

mother uses Ogilvie's Royal Household Flour."

It's an elementary illustration of a brand receiving by giving. Call it the Golden Rule of advertising – you get permission to put your brand into the hands, head or heart of your customers by giving them something of value that has relevance and meaning in return.

Too many marketers have approached this new advertising era as just a relocation of the captive audience, from broadcast to digital. Using the precision weaponry of programmatic buying and heavy social media bombing runs, they have continued to target their audiences with digital ad assaults. But the audience has the power now.

And they're using it to select brands that are offering up valuable encounters.

From informative podcasts, to apps with real utility, to social campaigns that make you actually laugh out loud, there has to be a 'give' in order for there to be a 'receive.'

Audiences may have broken loose from captivity, but a look back to our history reminds us that brands that offer more value, will inevitably get more value in return.

**FROM INFORMATIVE
PODCASTS TO APPS
WITH UTILITY... THERE
HAS TO BE A 'GIVE' IN
ORDER FOR THERE TO
BE A 'RECEIVE.'**

New in digital: a who's who of podcasts and e-sports players

Researching Canadian media options just got easier

Subscribe at **cardonline.ca** for all your media buying and planning intel needs.

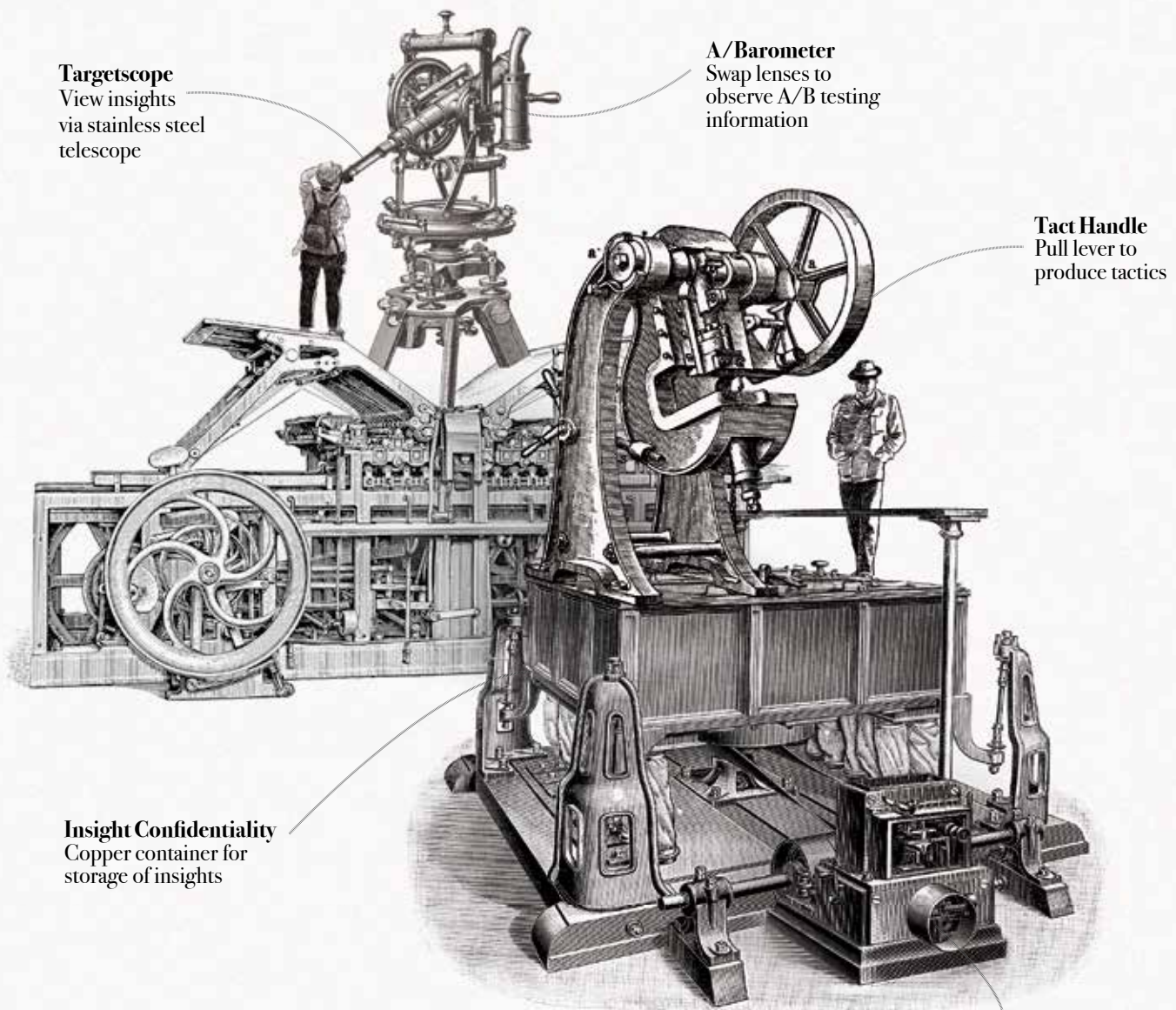


Canadian
Advertising
Rates &
Data



Introducing
FORESIGHT
The machine that sees the future

This sturdy, low-upkeep, patented tool is engineered with the finest materials imported from Ecuador. Distinct in design, it generates information and insights; providing handsome results at astonishing speeds. Give your marketing efforts a vision.



Targetscope
View insights
via stainless steel
telescope

A/Barometer
Swap lenses to
observe A/B testing
information

Tact Handle
Pull lever to
produce tactics

Insight Confidentiality
Copper container for
storage of insights

S-120 Info Engine
Generates splendid info
of your choice

Plenty in stock. Currently in use at FCB/SIX.



LET SOMEONE ELSE STROKE YOUR EGO FOR A WHILE.

The impartial creative awards.
Judged by journalists, not creatives.

It's never too early to set some budget aside for
the next event. Open for entries in August 2020.



Let it fly.

Stay crazy. Stay cool. Stay independent.
From one indie agency to another,
here's to keeping it weird.