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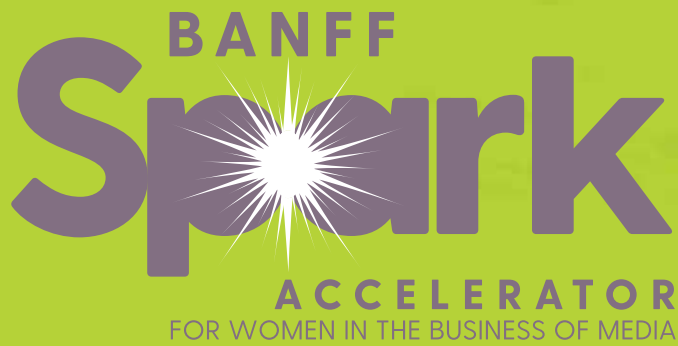


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RESIGNATION**
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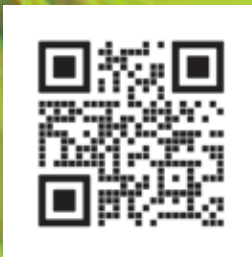




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Rethink did it again, and again, and again. One of the campaigns that led to the agency's three-peat was "Our Little World" for IKEA.

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The Big Quit

Please stay, don't go. What advertisers and marketers are doing to keep their biggest assets from joining the Great Resignation.

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Agency of the Year

What makes these 15 finishers worthy of the title? They're good at WFH, have a great POV, and an even better USP.

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ON THE COVER:

Aaron Starkman once told us, while waiting at the bar (ahh, the good ol' days) at the 2019 AOY gala, that Rethink did the whole "Secret" thing and wrote down, on a piece of paper, their goals for the year in hopes that the universe would grant them: (1) Win Gold in Agency. (2) Win Gold in Digital. (3) Win Gold in Design. That year we gave the CD a "better luck next time" pat on the back when the shop *only* won two Golds and a Silver – having lost to FCB in Digital. Perhaps they reused the 2019 notepad, because in 2020, Rethink medaled the same dang trio. It's not like they were unappreciative, it's just that, well, who wouldn't want a perfect score? Now you know why we asked **Justin Poulsen** to graft two extra digits to an enthusiastic thumbs up. This one's for you, Rethink.

Don't go, please stay

Getting a resignation letter stings a little more these days. The thought of filling a job vacancy in the midst of today's Talent Wars sends shivers down managers' spines. While the employee drought is perhaps more conspicuous in the States, and within sectors like hospitality, it's definitely trickling into Canada with the effects being felt by advertising and marketing communities, too.

Depending on who you're talking to, the Great Resignation is, well, pretty great. As more and more employees look for greener pastures, some companies appear to be going through a Great Reset. Priorities are shifting to put people before profit, and they're bending to the will of an improved benefits package.

Get this: some are considering offering frozen eggs in exchange for workplace loyalty after a employee advocacy group suggested that paying for fertility treatments could help keep people on the books.

Many of the 2021 Agency of the Year winners (p.29) spent years cooking up strategies to keep talent happy and loyal. The industry already boasts attractive salaries so they've found that retention relies on the soft sell: office spaces that employees are willing to trade their WFH desks for; zero-tolerance policies geared toward preventing burnout; and career-charting opportunities from day one.

But an even tougher sell is the industry or job itself. Some marketers, like Arterra's Andrea Hunt (p.8), have probably found little need for non-compete agreements. That's because there's been a bit of an exodus (though not mass) of people leaving for a fresh start outside of marketing. They're pursuing passions or chasing

challenges in this new *carpe diem* era. And one way that companies can compete is by giving staff a new lease on work life. Some, for instance, are experimenting with internal transfers in the Great Reshuffle, allowing employees to get their feet wet in an entirely new role, new department, or new network agency.

Right at the start of the pandemic there was talk of whether shifts in behaviour sparked by the crisis would have a long shelf life. The jury is still out on whether the Great Resignation will one day be seen as just a blip on the radar, but will the upshots (more attractive jobs) be short-lived? I doubt it. Just look at some of the agencies in this issue to see that their priorities have always been to put their people first – and that's why they get to go home with an AOY plane.

Jennifer Horn
Editor & Content Director
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RECOMMERCE EXPANDS BEYOND FASHION

By Justin Dallaire

With roots in flea markets, bazaars, and garage sales, “recommerce” in apparel predates the pandemic and even the digital age – though it has, until recently, remained tucked away at the periphery. A new class of eco-conscious and cash-strapped consumers are quickly changing that, pushing aside the stigma associated with buying second-hand to make room for resale in the mainstream.

In Canada, research by the NPD Group shows that 20% of Canadians have already purchased a second-hand clothing product, a number that grows to 26% among 18-to-34-year-olds, says Tamara Szames, a retail industry advisor with NPD. “The stigma has been removed for this market, whereas traditionally it was over indexing on certain demographics and households.”

Consignment marketplaces like the RealReal, ThredUp and Vestiaire Collective helped popularize the trend in fashion. Peer-to-peer resale platform Depop, acquired by Etsy for \$1.6 billion in July 2021, has amassed more than 26 million users (90% of whom are Gen Zers) and now reportedly ranks among the 10 most-visited sites among the cohort in the U.S.

The buzz has pushed established brands and retailers to enter the space. In 2020, Levi’s launched Secondhand, a buy-back and resale platform that enables customers to buy pre-owned jeans and denim jackets and to receive gift cards when exchanging used items in store. And in Canada in August 2021, H&M launched Rewear, a platform allowing consumers to buy and sell used garments between themselves, including products from other brands.

Retail expert Bruce Winder believes a few trends are driving growth in recommerce. The stigma of buying second-hand has diminished, particularly among younger shoppers, and inflation continues to outpace wage growth, pushing consumers towards options that stretch their

money further, while also meeting their needs for greener goods, he says. (In an October survey by NPD, 39% of Canadians said environmental policies were among the biggest factors influencing their decision to purchase from a brand or retailer, a seven point increase from the year before.)

These factors have boosted recommerce in the fashion space the most, but they’re also relevant in other categories – from home and electronics to outdoor goods and appliances – which Winder and Szames believe are poised to also be disrupted by the trend.

Already, IKEA is investing in circularity with its buy-back program, and a report by



recommerce platform Chairish found home furnishings to be the fastest-growing resale segment in 2020.

Meanwhile, Hudson’s Bay partnered with Canadian startup Rebelstork in September 2021 to offer overstock, open box and used baby gear to shoppers through its own website. According to Rebelstork, new parents

can spend up to \$14,000 on their babies every year – often on items that they quickly outgrow.

So for young consumers entering first-time parenthood and who care about their environmental footprint, Szames says the model “makes total sense.”

Clockwise from top left: Resale of goods, from IKEA furniture to homeware and baby apparel, is on the rise, as the stigma attached to second-hand goods diminishes and consumers search for a more eco path.

TRENDS TO WATCH

By Justin Crann



RETAIL: URBAN CONCEPTS MAKE A COMEBACK

As the retail sector recovers from the pandemic, it is staring down a financial dilemma not seen in almost a decade: large retail footprints are becoming too costly. That challenge, as well as a necessary shift to e-commerce during the pandemic and a desire to break into affluent – and generally younger – urban markets, has some retailers returning to the idea of smaller store formats.

IKEA has been in the vanguard, experimenting in high-density urban markets with both its urban concept store and Design Studios (image above). Arc'teryx, meanwhile, launched a micro-store in Manhattan that features its popular designs. And Ren's Pets launched its first urban concept store in Toronto's Liberty Village in September.

The new designs harness lessons learned during the last economic recovery – smaller stores are “less overwhelming and more enjoyable” for customers, and “too much choice creates stress for consumers,” says David Ian Gray, founder of Dig360 Consulting, adding that “great retail is about great curation.”

Still, Gray cautions retailers that smaller-footprint stores can have their shortcomings.

“The experiential advantage stores have over a much duller web offering only holds up if there are available and engaged staff, and enticing displays,” he says. Further, “too limited a selection continues to frustrate shoppers who do not understand how a seller of goods can't have them in stock.”

BRAND: STRANGE BEDFELLOWS?

As economic pressures and competition have both surged during the pandemic, brands have had to find creative ways to stay top-of-mind with consumers. Many of them have opted to collaborate with each other to make an impact.

An odd crossover brought Wendy's spicy chicken flavour to Pringles tubes, while Van Leeuwen ice cream crafted a cool combination with Kraft Dinner. Even Nintendo got in on the trend, coupling with luxury watchmaker Tag Heuer for some limited-edition *Mario* merch.

“One-plus-one can really be three by merging the equities of two brands to create an even better value proposition or customer experience for both,” says Matthew Kelly, managing partner at Level5 Strategy.

A partnership can also “provide access to something new and of value for each brand,” says Andrea Isbester, CSO at Publicis Canada, pointing specifically to the Wendy's and Pringles partnership, which brought the QSR brand into grocery and other new channels, while Pringles benefitted through “innovation [that] appeals to a younger demographic.”

“It's the very efficient sharing of brand equity that often makes for a great brand partnership,” Kelly adds.



AGENCY: THE RISE OF FREELANCE COLLECTIVES

The marketing world has felt the impacts of COVID-19, particularly with respect to staffing.

A perfect storm of revenue crunches and declining work during the pandemic led some agencies to reduce their overheads – and, ultimately, their headcounts. That, coupled with the widespread embrace of remote working technology, has led more people to consider going into business for themselves. As a result, collectives made up of experienced and senior-level freelancers, such as Toronto's Yes& and Hustle, have emerged.

“There is a need on both sides of the employment divide for the freelance model,” says Trent Fulton, founder and chief collaboration officer at Yes&. “Freelance, contract-based or fractional work solves a lot of pain points for both parties.”

“On one side, [some] agencies are struggling to manage overheads and pay for senior staff if not utilized and clients want access to senior strategic and creative thinking that is not necessarily tied up with execution [costs],” he explains. “On the other side, senior staff are looking to both control their work-life balance and get paid more directly for the experience and value they bring.”



A dark, grainy photograph of a subway tunnel. A green exit sign with a left-pointing arrow and the word "EXIT" is visible on the left wall. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

THE

BY JUSTIN CRANN

BIG

QUIT

HOW THE AD INDUSTRY IS COMBATTING TURNOVER BY REIMAGINING THE FUTURE OF WORK

CANADA'S AD BIZ IS NOT IMMUNE TO "The Great Resignation" – the wave of employees who are calling it quits on their jobs in an escape from burnout or simply to pursue something else – but agencies and brands are trying to navigate the labour market sea change by doing what they do best: tapping the powers of creativity to change the narrative and create more engaging experiences for their employees.

According to data from management consultancy McKinsey in September 2021, 40% of workers across the countries it surveyed – which include Canada – are at least somewhat likely to quit their jobs in the next three to six months, with 18% of respondents saying that such a move is likely or almost certain. Professional services firm Deloitte found similar record numbers, specifically at the senior level where just over half are considering leaving or scaling back their roles.

The trend is making itself felt in Canada's marketing industry, as large networks have seen "very high degrees of turnover," says Arthur Fleischmann, country manager

for WPP. "You're seeing it at WPP, at Omnicom, IPG – on the client side, too, but in particular, the agency side."

There are a lot of reasons cited for the Great Resignation, including complaints of burnout and stories of employees feeling more confident about taking a risk or betting on themselves with the worst of the pandemic behind them. Much of the focus is on younger employees, who Adobe reports are driving the trend, with 49% of Millennials and 56% of Gen Z employees planning to pursue new jobs in the coming year.

In advertising, Fleischmann is among many who hold the opinion that changes brought on by the experience of working virtually during the pandemic are the driving force for employees who choose to quit.

"What makes advertising particularly fun is the collaboration and interaction – the space between the notes of work. The connectivity between your colleagues, the after-work conviviality, the little micro-moments during the day when you get to joke around – all of that is gone," he explains.

Jay Chaney, partner and chief strategy officer at independent agency Broken Heart Love Affair, concurs.

"A lot of people got drawn into this industry because it's a great job if you're a creative person. It offers pretty good pay, but they come to a point where the only thing keeping them in the job is the social experience of being around all of these great, crazy, creative people," he says. "Now they're by themselves in their home and they no longer have that, and I think there are a lot of people looking to see what's next and how they can redefine themselves."

It is also the desire for change that Tracy Little, EVP and GM of FCB Toronto, points to as a driver behind the trend. While the agency's turnover has held steady this year over the previous one, "my anticipation is that we will probably exceed it a little bit by the end of the year," she says.

“The people who are leaving [FCB Toronto] have been with the agency for somewhere between three and five years,” Little says. “With some of the stagnation that has come into peoples’ lives during the pandemic, their career is something they have the control to change, and they’re looking for a new challenge – be that a smaller agency, an independent agency or a new client.”

Chaney says BHLA has come to think of the trend as the “Big Steal,” specifically because his agency – which launched at the onset of the pandemic – has been attracting experienced creatives seeking that challenge. BHLA started with a team of nine in March 2020 and had tripled in size by the end of September 2021.

The trend appears to be growing, albeit at a slower

Those changes “tripled the workload in agencies and caused a lot of specialist teams to be dramatically overwhelmed,” he notes. “As business performance changed globally for brands and agencies, the trickle-down to the Canadian market simply meant fewer roles were opening, putting additional strain on an already exhausted set of professionals.”

At some ad agencies, there has been much more focus on retention strategies to help mitigate a turnover tsunami. For instance, FCB Toronto has placed emphasis on flexibility and making the life of the employee easier, Little says. That has taken many different forms since the onset of the pandemic, but a throughline has been “ensuring we’re creating separation between work and home where we can,” she notes.

Some of these changes at FCB have included encouraging employees not to send emails after 6:30 p.m., and implementing a mandated “you time” policy that gives people an hour each day where they’re discouraged from scheduling meetings. Rethink has also instituted “Bueller Days” where employees are encouraged to play hooky at any moment’s notice, as well as formally put a halt on Monday presentations to relieve weekend anxiety.

Beyond nurturing a work-life balance, Little says FCB is also “embracing the idea of a career less linear” by giving employees in its various departments the option to move to a different area of the business and develop new skill sets – rather than see them leave the agency entirely to pursue that goal elsewhere.

Affording employees a greater deal of freedom and mobility within the organization is also a key part of WPP’s retention strategy, according to Fleischmann. “We’re looking at ways to cut down the barriers between our operating companies, so people can move between them without fear of repercussions,” he says.

Promotions and salary increases within individual companies in the network have also been key points of focus for WPP in Canada, as has investing in training and development – such as in the area of marketing technology.

“We rolled out something called the Martech Academy this year, and we’re the first country where WPP has done this,” explains Fleischmann. “They offered it for global client leaders last year and I went to our chief technology officer and asked if we could modify it for Canada and offer it to our leaders here, and senior strategists and account people. We’re about halfway through rolling that out now.”

At Arterra, Hunt says, leaders have gotten “more creative” in their retention strategies since the traditional methods – the work environment, industry perks, and physical company of peers – have been unavailable or limited during the pandemic months.

“We’re looking at ways to cut down the barriers between our operating companies, so people can move between them without fear of repercussions.”



pace, on the brand side. At Arterra Wines Canada, “turnover rates remain modest overall,” says CMO Andrea Hunt, but “reasons cited for departure are more wide-reaching than typical.”

Some team members at Arterra have left to run a farm, buy a bed and breakfast, move abroad, write a book or start a business, she says. “The common sentiment seems to be that they have had ambitions set aside leading into the pandemic, and now with the world in flux, are prepared to give another path a try.”

The problem has also reared its head at media agencies, where the onset of the pandemic led to cancellations, pauses, and other shifts, says Devon MacDonald, president of Cairns Oneil.

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"We are finding fresh ways to connect, shoring up our training and development offerings, optimizing key processes with tech to unlock more time for value-added work, and rebalancing assignments to ensure roles are satisfying and enriching," she says.

But also key to retention, Hunt tells strategy, is ensuring that an employee's values align with the company itself, and vice versa.

"If the company or the individual finds their value proposition challenged, then turnover might turn out to be positive for both parties, no matter the impetus. I don't think there is great long term value in enticing team members to stay if their passion for the business or the challenge has faded," she explains. "I find greater

Tech companies like Hootsuite have created a distributed workforce strategy, in which employees will get to choose to work from home, at the office, or both. Offering complete flexibility increases its talent pool and attracts people from different regions. The shift has had the biggest impact on Hootsuite's leadership: to date, 60% of the company's senior executive team is based in different markets across the U.S. and Canada.

At FCB Toronto, "we're trying to figure out what that sweet spot is between in- and out-of-the-office work. We're rethinking how we're going to use our space, how and why we want people to come together and when the end product benefits from it," says Little.

Among the agency's more creative efforts has been a total recreation of its office space on online social platform Gather Town. In its new digital office, employees can enjoy spontaneous chats with each other in the virtual hallways, interact with coworkers' pets and play videos of FCB president Bryan Kane's bell-ringing ritual when the agency wins new business and awards.

As for Hootsuite, and other tech companies like Pinterest, rethinking the office space also helps to address mental health issues that prevent people from staying in the job. To counteract burnout, they've instituted initiatives such as offering employees a full week off to completely unplug and have created physical spaces for meditation, relaxation, nursing and prayer.

"Agencies need to support staff and understand that as we live with the pandemic, roles need to be filled faster and in fact more resources are required to complete some tasks," MacDonald says. "Simply applying the same agency metrics and financial metrics from the pre-pandemic era to the new reality will only exacerbate the problem."

Helen Galanis, CEO at Initiative, echoes MacDonald's point, adding that senior leaders at her agency have focused on clear and consistent communication from the get-go. "We've worked with our people to develop and share a 'future of work' plan that very clearly conveys what peoples' day-to-day will look like once the health and safety risks are behind us."

"It's a move, we believe, that has made people feel part of the process and greatly increased their connection to the company," she adds.

Even though there remains considerable uncertainty about the future of work, Fleischmann believes the economy is "regaining buoyancy" and that there is a growing number of startups entering the market that will need to build their brands. "If you're open-minded and willing to embrace different ways of work as a client or an agency, then I believe you have every reason to be optimistic about next year." ■

With files from Justin Dallaire

"There isn't long term value in enticing team members to stay if their passion for the business or challenge has faded. I find greater value in doubling down on those who have [shared values]."

value in doubling down on helping those who have leaned into achieving greater satisfaction and realize even better outcomes."

Another concern for employers is executing the return to office in a way that is preferable to as many employees as possible. While various approaches are on the table, a hybrid model where employees split time between days at the office and days working from home is the most popular – 44% of Canadian employees prefer hybrid schedules, according to Angus Reid.

Further, of those people and the 29% who would prefer to work from home in perpetuity, nearly half would at least begin looking for another job if ordered back to the office on a full-time basis.

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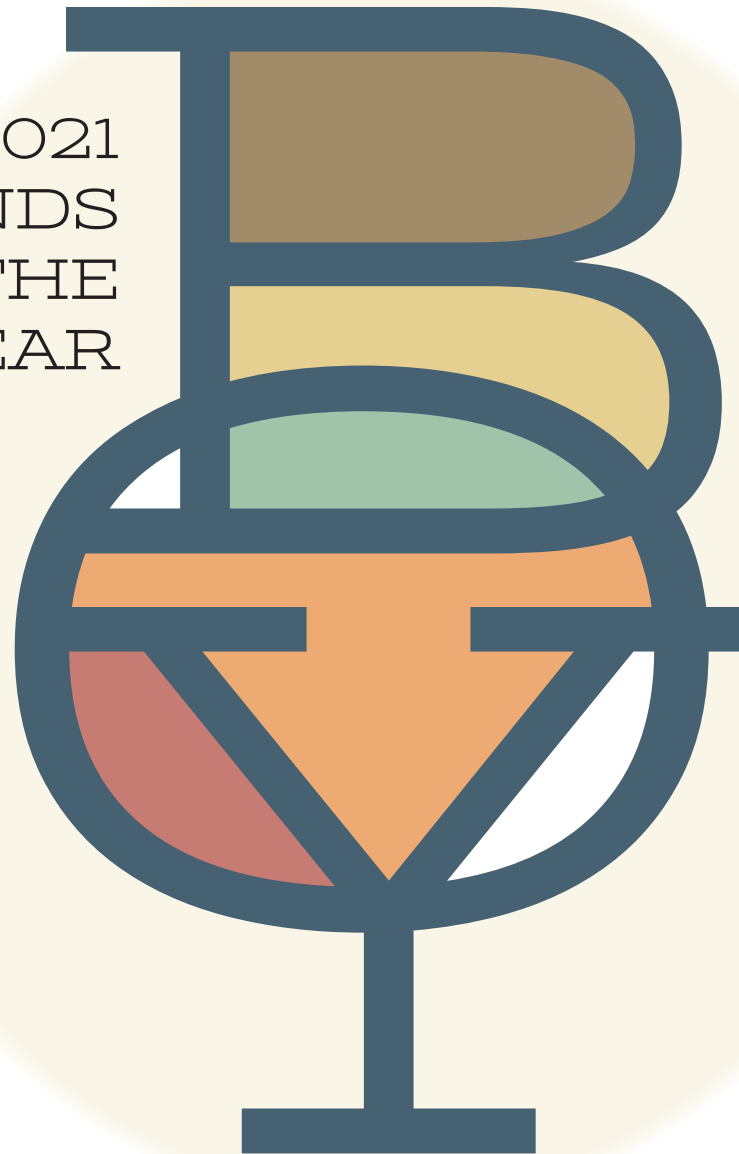
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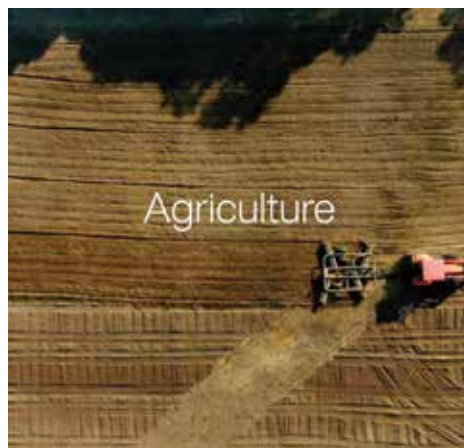
2021 BRANDS OF THE YEAR



E

very year, the search for our Brands of the Year begins anew. And this year, *strategy*'s editorial team started from a place of incredulity: a new cohort of brands couldn't possibly stand against the achievements of last year's contenders, who climbed to the top while single-handedly fending off the early days of the pandemic... right? As we spiritedly debated the brand strategies and success stories that deserve a little extra recognition 18 months into the pandemic, one thing became clear:

we were wrong. The five companies placed on the Brands of the Year pedestal in 2021 have not only survived the crisis – they've triumphed over it, often through long-term brand plays that continue to pay off handsomely. **Telus** found new ways to generate social good through innovation and tech; **Harry Rosen** re-tailored its customer service strategy for a new generation of shoppers; **Sephora** continued to give a voice to under-represented forms of beauty; **Aritzia** put its omnichannel savvy to work, further growing its audience; and the **Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation** rebelled against the cause marketing status quo. Featured on the next few pages are the stories of how they did all this and more. (Note: the BOYs do not appear in any particular order.)



Telus makes the future friendly

The telco puts its technological prowess to work solving critical human needs.

BY WILL NOVOSDLIK

Looking at some of the initiatives behind Telus' new tagline "Let's Make the Future Friendly," it's clear that CEO Darren Entwistle and his executive team have taken a very different approach to growing the business. Rather than invest in sports, media and entertainment, as its chief rivals Bell and Rogers have done, Telus has chosen to differentiate by using its technological might to address critical human needs.

In a move that now appears prescient, Telus spent \$3 billion back in 2011 to build a healthcare business. This initial venture was focused on digitizing medical records so that doctors and patients could connect over the internet. It was not only strategically aligned with the company's core strengths, but it also set Telus on a path towards using its business to create a positive social impact.

Telus has set out to prove that there does not need to be a trade-off between financial

performance and social and environmental responsibility. Indeed, the telco has discovered that addressing some of the most pressing problems in society and the economy is good for business.

"When a customer goes to our website and they see a social purpose message, we see twice the number of cart completions. This year alone we saw a 10-point increase in the perception that we are socially responsible," says Jill Schnarr, chief social innovation and communications officer.

A decade ago, Telus asked customers if what it did in the community had an influence on their decision to remain a customer. At the time, 15% to 20% said yes. Now, the percentage runs upwards of 75%.

It's also showing up in the balance sheet. In 2020, Telus led the industry in revenue and EBITDA growth. It had the highest customer growth rate in the industry, and continues to have the lowest customer churn, according to Schnarr.

"We're proving that doing good is good for business," she asserts. "You've got to give back to the communities where you live, work and operate. That's why we're developing business innovation ecosystems and new industries. It's why we're driving innovation and social change."

Take the agriculture sector, for instance. Schnarr says the company decided to look at how to improve the global food system after studies showed the need to produce 70% more food by 2050 to feed the world's population, and that roughly a third of food produced is wasted during shipping.

Schnarr says the question became, "How can we use technology to make our current resources more efficient and productive? How can we leverage innovation and digitize the production chain – everything from seed to farm to fork?"

So, in November 2020, the company unveiled Telus Agriculture, a new business unit dedicated to providing tech solutions to the agriculture industry, having acquired a cluster of companies focused on things like food traceability and supply chain management. It now has the capacity to connect everyone in the agriculture value chain, from seed manufacturers and farmers to grocery stores and restaurants.

In the same month, Telus launched the Business Pollinator Fund For Good, a \$100 million impact fund designed to build an innovation ecosystem of start-ups with both a business and a social purpose.

According to Schnarr: “As one of the world’s largest corporate impact investment funds, we want a financial return, but we also want to see a social return. It’s focused solely on investing in small businesses that are addressing health, education, agriculture, and the environment – just like we are.”

In a late-2020 bid to address the unmet needs of those who were struggling, Telus expanded its Connecting Canada initiatives. To families that were receiving internet access for \$10/month under its Internet for Good program, the company offered two free months during the pandemic and extended the program to include

look a little too manufactured, like they were suffering from too many rounds of retouching,” says Jack Shute, general manager at The Greenhouse, the brand’s purpose-built AOR. “When you see these animals now they don’t look so CGI.”

Beyond the tagline, Telus has also integrated purpose into its commercial messaging.

“The messaging mandate going forward is to never separate product from purpose,” Shute says. “Now every bit of product communication will include a message about how that product or that service is helping the world.”

For example, in a spot for Peace of Mind Mobility plans, the words “Get connected with unlimited data, and together we’ll connect Canadians in need” appear just before the signoff. For a Samsung 21 spot: “Get it on the network that gives back.”

But there’s more to it than just combining product with purpose in ads, Schnarr says. “Given the complexity and broad nature of ESG, we’ve developed a fully integrated marketing communications, public relations, events, social media and advocacy plan to communicate our leadership in ESG in sustainability, diversity and inclusion and community investment.”

Telus’ goal for the future is to integrate its social purpose at every one of its thousands of customer touchpoints. Historically, its marketing efforts had been fractured, with each business unit individually managing its own campaigns.

Leveraging the evolved brand promise, Schnarr is working to align the marketing strategy across the organization – from Mobility to Home Solutions and

Telus Health – coordinating a cohesive message that promotes and reinforces its leadership in social capitalism.

Public relations are helping drive that ESG leadership message home. For example, the brand has focused a significant amount of PR on its \$750 Million Sustainability-linked Bonds initiative this year, which links debt financing costs with its carbon emission reduction targets. In other words, if Telus does not meet those targets, the interest payable to bondholders will be higher.

Finally, Telus has enabled thousands of employees to share its ESG messaging on their own social networks. Using the Hootsuite Amplify app, it pre-populates ESG social media posts that staff can then automatically post or customize in LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

More than 94% of employees agree that Telus plays an active role in the community and is a socially responsible organization. This is important, because their support drives business results, too. When customers understand the good Telus does, they’re four times more likely to purchase, 4.5 times more likely to recommend and four times more likely to trust the brand.

“Whether you’re in the store, visiting the website, using the Telus MyHealth app, talking to a representative or browsing social media,” explains Schnarr, “our goal is to make it impossible to do business with Telus without understanding the good that we do for our communities.”

TELUS’ world-leading network
is a network of good.



Opposite: Telus’ mission to create social good has led the telco to invest in areas like health, communities and, more recently, agriculture.

Above: The company is working to incorporate purpose into all of its commercial messaging, finding that it leads to greater trust and purchase intent.

low-income Canadians with disabilities. And the Mobility for Good program – originally providing youth transitioning out of foster care with a free smartphone and data plans – was expanded to include low-income seniors on a guaranteed income supplement.

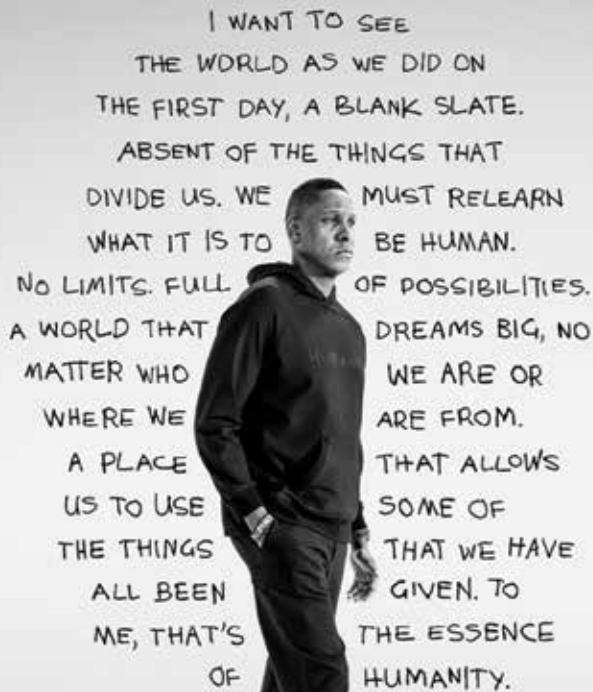
During the pandemic, Telus Health also played a critical role supporting those in need, providing virtual healthcare solutions to hospitals and long-term care homes, so that patients and residents could remain connected to their loved ones during lockdown.

These socially focused initiatives have long been part of the brand’s culture, but consumers have not necessarily been aware of them. Bringing that message to the foreground was part of the reason it unveiled a brand update earlier in 2021.

The company’s original tagline, “The Future is Friendly,” was meant to address people’s fears of technology. Twenty years later, Canadians are much more comfortable with technology, but they’re subject to other fears: climate change, social inequality and economic uncertainty.

By evolving the tagline to “Let’s Make the Future Friendly,” Telus turned it into a call to action to use technology for social and environmental good. The change was subtle, but the addition of the first two words was meant to move it from the realm of the metaphorical into that of concrete human action.

Subtle changes were also made to the visual identity, including the way Telus’ famed cast of critters are shot. “They were starting to



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A WORLD THAT DREAMS BIG, NO
MATTER WHO WE ARE OR
WHERE WE ARE FROM.
A PLACE THAT ALLOWS
US TO USE SOME OF
THE THINGS THAT WE HAVE
ALL BEEN GIVEN. TO
ME, THAT'S THE ESSENCE
OF HUMANITY.

— Masai Ujiri

High-touch meets high-tech at Harry Rosen

The iconic menswear retailer resets for a new generation of customers. BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

Ian Rosen's grandfather Harry Rosen built his business on paying close attention to the client.

The founder's famous Rolodex and Post-It Notes filled with handwritten client intel – from their spouses' names to kids' birthdays – were powerful (albeit rudimentary) CRM tools. And its brigade of fashion advisors who know their clients' needs and preferences – almost better than they do themselves – have no doubt carried Harry's legacy forward.

That personal high-touch element is important to the current generation. It's what continues to set Harry Rosen apart. But when the pandemic shuttered stores in March 2020, the brand could no longer rely on the quality of its in-

store experience. So Ian Rosen and his team, ten months away from completing a digital transformation – which CMO Trinh Tham says began when Harry realized it's core customer was aging and began courting a younger gen – pulled out all of the stops to make it happen in three.

Many innovations, inspired by its in-store USP, came out of the process.

For instance, advisors would historically lay down different outfits for customers to look at instead of rifling through racks in store. So to translate that live personalized experience in the online space, Harry Rosen created a "digital lay down," pulling items directly from its product database and emailing them to customers, who can then order online and try them at home.

Herringbone is another application that digitally reimaged its client obsession, where advisors build a personal page for their customers on the Harry Rosen website. The advisor sends a link to their client with products curated to suit their personal preferences and then it's two clicks to check-out. Herringbone performed exceedingly well during the pandemic, accounting for more than 10% of weekly online trade.

Then there's "drop ship," a technology that allows Harry to feature products on the website without having to carry the inventory or handle shipping. The client's order goes directly to the wholesaler, making logistics and payment seamless. The tech has enabled the retailer to deepen its assortment and expand into other product categories, such as men's grooming, quickly and efficiently.

In 2020, these and other digital efforts resulted in a 300% increase in e-commerce sales over 2019, a trend that has continued in 2021.

Along with its digital transformation came a brand repositioning.

"The brand had enormous trust, but not with younger clientele," says Tham, who joined Harry Rosen in late 2019.

The retailer's promise has always been to help men build confidence through how they look. But for a younger crowd, confidence might not come from wearing a suit every day. The dress code was changing, explains Tham.

"The enormous influence of technology companies with their casual, open environments and dress codes spilled over into more traditional workplaces. People were more interested in dressing casually and mixing formal with informal," she says. (Of course the pandemic

didn't help, with WFH mandates further supercharging the trend.)

Before, the brand was focused on helping men dress for business and giving them the confidence to excel in a corporate world. But that ethic is being challenged by a generation that seeks opportunities to bring a personal sense of purpose to every part of their lives.

Harry has since adjusted its merchandizing mix to respond to changing preferences, bringing in a more casual assortment of goods like sportswear, sports jackets, over-shirts and casual trousers. It also introduced a new "Set the Tone" tagline to further appeal to this purpose-driven customer. Now, the brand's new messaging is all about dressing with confidence for whatever you have in your day, whether it's casual or formal, work or play, family or community-focused, says Tham.

"Our mandate [continues to be] to help men feel confident, but the way we do that is by helping them feel good so they can do good," says Tham.

To launch the new positioning, Zulu Alpha Kilo created a video series featuring interviews with Canadian icons like actor Colm Feore and chef Matty Matheson. In the videos, Feore and Matheson are asked how they "set the tone" as leaders in their field and as virtuosos of their craft. The series opened with a dramatic cri de coeur performed by Canadian actor Emmanuel Kibungo.

In addition to updating Harry's tagline and visual language, the retailer has also worked with Zulu on campaigns that helped capture a new audience.

To launch the men's grooming line, for instance, Harry changed the sign of its flagship Toronto store to "Hairy Rosen." Prominent tastemakers posted themselves in front of the sign, producing the most engaging content ever on Harry Rosen's social channels. The effort exceeded the reach and engagement of any previous campaign by 50% and earned over 40 million impressions from local and international media.

"We had customers who have shopped us for decades email us to let us know that we made a mistake, [others] reached out on social media asking what was going on, and some customers caught on that we were trying to tell them something," Tham says. "Overall we all had some much needed fun with the brand."

The stunt put the wheels in motion for a grooming launch video, part of a "Different Strokes" content series that highlighted the different ways men groom. Featuring a diverse cast, the series exemplified the brand's desire to work with role models, not just fashion models, as a way of demonstrating its values of leadership, creativity and inclusivity.

Increasingly, those values are being brought to the fore. In December, the brand partnered with designer Patrick Assaraf and Toronto Raptors president Masai Ujiri to create and promote an athleisure capsule clothing line called the Humanity Collection. Net proceeds go to Black Youth Helpline, an organization that provides crisis counselling, strategies for staying in school and support for families, schools and communities.

The collaboration inspired the brand to sign Canadian fashion designer George Sully, founder of Sully and Son and of the Black



Opposite:
Harry partnered with Toronto Raptors president Masai Ujiri to create an athleisure clothing capsule.

Top right:
The retailer's "Set the Tone" campaign is helping it reach a new generation of shoppers.

Middle and bottom:
The brand is expanding into new categories, such as men's grooming.

Designers of Canada, as part of its growing roster of BIPOC designers, which includes Artphere, Aller Retour, Bohten, Edward Armah and Norwegian Rain. Meanwhile, Harry continues to support Ujiri, including his Humanity Art Installation at Toronto's Union Station, unveiled in September 2021.

Harry Rosen's digital transformation, reimagined assortment and more relevant messaging is having a positive business impact, according to Tham, who notes that its ecommerce investments, growing sportswear, casual wear, shoe and outerwear business, as well as its expansion into men's grooming, are helping reach a new generation of customer. "Our updated brand strategy is much more in tune with the times."

Accomplishing that in record time during a pandemic has given Ian Rosen the right to say, "It's not your dad's suit store anymore."



For Sephora, beauty is in the eye of the customer

The retailer transcends beauty standards by giving a voice to diverse communities. **BY GREGORY FURGALA**

The hero spot for Sephora's latest iteration of its "We Belong to Something Beautiful" campaign kicks off with rhythmic clapping and percussion, as a voiceover asserts, "We were always here. We had diverse cultures, and we were stripped of them."

The voice belongs to Indigenous filmmaker and activist Sarain Fox, who acted as a special advisor and creative director for the project. On camera, she's joined by Indigenous influencers Shina Novalinga and Michelle Chubb. Just as important are the people

behind it: exclusively Indigenous talent across wardrobe, styling, makeup and videography. "We're still here," continues Fox.

The campaign debuted in early June for National Indigenous History Month. The fact that it launched at all is a testament to the brand's ability to work with the communities it serves.

Days before the launch, the remains of 215 children were discovered at the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, B.C. – a number that would balloon to over 1,000 across Canada.

The story shocked Canadians and dominated the news cycle, forcing Sephora to pause "We Belong to Something Beautiful." But it didn't cancel it. SVP of marketing Deborah Neff says that decision was out of its hands. "It was a decision for the Indigenous community to help us make."

A conservative approach might have seen the campaign pulled entirely – out of fear that it could be seen as insensitive or risk blowback. But Sephora, which has engaged with diverse communities for years and has reoriented its messaging, operations and company culture around inclusiveness, was able to pull it off.

"When we started our journey many years ago, we wanted to be more inclusive, and we wanted to understand if we're changing perception," says Neff. "The work we're doing in this space is to

ensure all people see themselves represented in the beauty industry, and a byproduct of this is that more Canadians feel welcome in our stores and experience a beauty offering that is truly for everyone."

The brand's goodwill has translated to business success. The retailer performed well in the first half of 2021, despite the pandemic prompting the closure of its 500 stores worldwide. In Canada, Sephora recently announced it will open 50 more stores in the next two to three years – a figure that represents a 60% expansion of the business here. And parent company Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessey has predicted Sephora's global growth will accelerate and said DEI will remain a core part of its strategy, calling it a "major priority."

Over the years, the retailer has worked to disrupt the notion that beauty aspires to a prescribed, exclusive ideal, asserting instead that it is found in confident self-expression. Along the way, inclusivity has served as a core component of its brand messaging.

The company's support of self-expression is perhaps best demonstrated by its use of collaborators. More than just an internal relabeling of influencers, Sephora's preference for collaborators goes back to 2018 ahead of its "#WithSephora" campaign. As Neff and her team discussed how they would develop the campaign's messaging, they realized that "influencer" was an insufficient term for what they had in mind. The brand didn't want their endorsement; they wanted to tap into their expertise and talent.

As a result, when it launched, the campaign featured 16 locals from Toronto and Montreal, each of whom shared their stories and participated in developing taglines that appeared in OOH advertisements and on all digital channels.

"The reason we operate with collaborators [as opposed to influencers] is they work with us to shape a story and message that's based on their experience," says Neff.

That thinking has influenced its approach to everything from large-scale marketing efforts to smaller multicultural campaigns. The following year, the first iteration of "We Belong to Something Beautiful" featured 11 diverse Canadians in assets that were local to the communities in which they had done advocacy work, with the goal of inspiring others to do the same. Like its predecessor, the "We Belong" campaign sought to highlight beauty in its many forms, from queer-identifying to plus-sized women and drag artists.

Sephora's collaborative approach has similarly been applied to campaigns for Lunar New Year and Diwali. When it came to the Indigenous History Month campaign, the approach meant not only featuring Indigenous talent on both sides of the camera, but also giving them a say on whether it was appropriate to launch the campaign in light of the discoveries at former residential schools.

Neff says that Fox, the on-set talent and Indigenous partner organizations said a pause was appropriate – it left time to mourn, to process – but they still wanted it to run. While Canada was reminded again of its colonial past and present, the group said telling positive stories was crucial, too.

"We're choosing these moments to elevate the voices of those who are traditionally marginalized," says Salama Dhanani, senior manager of inclusion and belonging at Sephora Canada.

While the decision to place diversity and inclusion at the heart of

its communications was based in part on the brand's DNA and on intuition, Neff says the business case was also solid.

After watching spots from Sephora's first "We Belong to Something Beautiful" campaign, respondents said they had a more positive opinion of the brand, were more likely to buy its products and were more likely to recommend the retailer to a friend.

But Sephora's DEI strategy goes deeper than advertising and includes a number of initiatives and programs that are intended to put its money where its mouth is.

Earlier this year, it signed the Fifteen Percent Pledge, a call for companies to help break down systemic barriers across industries by supporting more BIPOC-owned brands. Whereas Sephora in the U.S. was the first major retailer to commit to dedicating 15% of its

shelf-space to BIPOC-owned brands, its Canadian counterpart took a year longer, but set a more ambitious target of 25% by 2026 – a target Neff says aligns with the percentage of Canadians from BIPOC communities.

Sephora has also implemented anti-racism and unconscious bias training at the store and corporate levels, worked with hiring managers to better approach recruitment with an inclusive lens and updated internal competencies to encourage inclusion and diversity, particularly at the leadership level.

Last June, Sephora issued a voluntary self-identification survey to its staff to better understand who it

hires and, crucially, who it doesn't and how it can improve. Dhanani says it's "the foundation that allows us to really not just draw insights, but also create these very tangible, actionable steps or actionable plans to create that change."

Over the years, the brand has also built relationships with several partner organizations including ACCES Employment and the Native Women's Association of Canada to further draw on for advice. Its Charity Rewards Program, which sees it partner each month with a new charity committed to fostering inclusivity, has also become a vital part of its DEI strategy.

"Now that we have these community connections, it's really the foot in the door," says Dhanani. "It allows us to continue to build and strengthen these relationships, to lean on them for their advice, to hear more stories from those communities, and to be able to incorporate those stories into a lot of the work that we do both internally and for these campaigns."

Whereas Sephora's DEI strategy was once guided by intuition, now the brand can pursue it with the confidence that it's helping it carve out a unique space in the beauty segment.

"We've just scratched the surface in terms of the stories that we want to tell and the change we can make in the beauty space," says Neff. "There's still a lot more to do."



Opposite, clockwise from top left: For a National Indigenous History Month campaign, Sephora ensured Indigenous talent, including filmmaker Sarain Fox, were featured both on camera and behind it; the brand collaborated with diverse influencers – including Lily Lange, Farrah Khan, Angela Mahoney, Imane B and Vanessa Pilon – for "We Belong to Something Beautiful." **Above:** As part of a push to diversify its shelves, Sephora has signed the Fifteen Percent Pledge.



Aritzia climbs to new heights

With a surging ecomm and U.S. business, the fashion retailer is in full expansion mode. **BY MARIO TONEGUZZI**

At a time when many fashion retailers are feeling the pain of the COVID-19 pandemic, with several closing their doors forever, Aritzia is in full expansion mode. So successful has the brand been of late that analysts see in its growth story an inkling of fellow Vancouver-based apparel co. Lululemon, now one of the largest clothing retailers in the world.

Scores of shoppers lining the streets outside Aritzia stores as pandemic restrictions loosened in early 2021 signaled the brand's cult status. Retail analysts – perplexed by the clothing company's resistance to the second coming of the Retailpocalypse – have pointed to younger consumers' willingness to pay higher prices for quality clothing. Having focused on developing the perfect product mix – with styles across 10 signature labels from athleisure-focused TNA, to modern and minimalist Babaton, to vintage-inspired Wilfred – the brand caters to a mix of demographics at different price points.

"Our business has gone from a \$500 million business to a \$1 billion business in the last few years and our ecommerce, particularly with the pandemic, has increased meaningfully," says founder and

CEO Brian Hill. "Now we can confidently launch [new] products and [our] ecommerce channels can support whatever expansion we want."

As the prolonged health and economic crisis knocked the wind out of many brands, Aritzia continued to invest heavily in its ecommerce platform – a move that helped it remain one click away from consumers hunkered down at home. Though COVID-19 ended 22 consecutive quarters of comparable sales growth for the company, growth in its ecommerce business helped offset what could have been significant losses.

With the worst of the pandemic behind it, Aritzia is now expanding into new product categories, including menswear through its acquisition of Vancouver-based Reigning Champ, and pushing aggressively into the U.S., which it has identified as a major source of future growth. And it's doing all this while continuing to expand its consumer base as well as its leadership team – including its first CMO in close to two years.

After closing its boutiques in March 2020, Aritzia's customers "immediately and seamlessly shifted from retail to online," Hill says.

While that shift was "reassuring on several fronts" – proving not only that the brand's customers were willing to shop that way, but also that its infrastructure could handle the volume – Hill says customers have now "enthusiastically returned" to its reopened stores while continuing to shop online, deepening his confidence in



Anti-clockwise, from top left: Aritzia previously expanded its assortment with men's puffer jackets; sales associates in one of the retailer's stores after COVID restrictions were loosened; the brand's product mix includes athleisure-focused styles; during lockdown, the retailer walked models through taking photos in their own homes; shoppers are made to feel welcome in a homey Aritzia store.

the company's multi-channel strategy.

Aritzia has invested in new digital capabilities, including personalization and digital selling tools. It hired Will Cashman as VP of data and analytics earlier this year as part of its plan to build out those capabilities.

Since then, Aritzia has rolled out a Clientele App across all locations, equipping stylists with product information and the ability to view customer profiles and purchase histories, which can be used to curate looks from its entire online assortment. And it has introduced Fit Analytics on its site, which leverages AI to provide highly personalized size

recommendations based on customers' past purchases.

"When the pandemic hit, we had no choice but to drive our clients online," says Hill. "Going forward, it's all about the omni-channel experience, which is why we have a rigorous focus on ensuring all of our omni-channel experiences are up and running by the end of this fiscal year."

Another major focus for Aritzia has been growing its consumer base, in part through new and expanded product lines.

The brand is gearing up to launch a swim line before the end of this year, as well as an intimates collection in 2022. That's in addition to adding more depth to its existing assortment, including more inclusive sizing for top-selling items – all of which is contributing to its on-track five-year plan to double its style count. "We will continue to use our infrastructure to build and create new categories and sell them online, which is super exciting for us," Hill says.

Then there's the Reigning Champ acquisition. Although Aritzia had considered an expansion into the men's category over the past few decades, it always maintained a disciplined focus on its women's business, Hill says. But when the opportunity to purchase a majority stake in Reigning Champ presented itself earlier this year, the revenue growth potential was too attractive to pass up.

"The partnership provides an exciting path forward to elevate Reigning Champ to the next level as a premium athletic wear brand," Hill says. "When you're running an organization, you're always looking for expansion opportunities. Men's has always been on the table for expanding but has [previously] hit the cutting room floor."

That doesn't mean the company will suddenly start selling a

greater assortment of men's clothing in Aritzia boutiques, where it has tested men's puffer jackets in recent years. Rather, the deal will help bring "incremental growth to our already surging women's ecommerce and U.S. businesses," while allowing Reigning Champ to leverage Aritzia's infrastructure and tech, according to Hill.

The expansion presents Aritzia with plenty of opportunities to continue growing its loyal fan base. That's no doubt one role the company's new CMO, Dana Gers, will help play as she leads the marketing department from her home base in the U.S.

Hired in September, Gers takes over from Hill, who has served as de facto CMO throughout the pandemic. With insight into American consumers and plenty of global fashion industry leadership experience – including time at Net-A-Porter, Jimmy Choo and Ferragamo – Gers will help take Aritzia marketing to the next level.

Part of its strategy going forward will be to invest in social media and influencers, where it has had success in the past, Hill says.

During the pandemic, as the company's photography studio closed and models were restricted from entering Canada, it quickly pivoted to instructing models on how to take the photos in their own homes – along with detailed instructions on styling, lighting, hair and makeup. The hack meant Aritzia did not miss a beat for its online product catalogue. And while not ideal under normal circumstances, the clothing was presented in an environment that resonated with customers' stay-at-home reality, Hill says.

That kind of agile thinking will come handy as Aritzia pushes further into the next frontier: the U.S. fashion market.

In addition to having embraced ecommerce early, retail expert Bruce Winder says one reason Aritzia has succeeded where others have failed is that the company was selective in its expansion strategy before the pandemic started.

"After going public in 2016, it resisted the temptation to saturate the market with stores," he says. "Unlike other fashion brands, they maintained exclusivity by carefully managing growth. This helped them keep overheads low to weather the pandemic financially."

But coming out of the pandemic, the brand is accelerating its expansion plans, believing there's "tremendous whitespace" in the U.S., according to Hill. Whereas it currently has 39 U.S. locations, it sees potential to grow up to 100 stateside shops – exceeding the 69 boutiques it anticipates having in Canada.

Aritzia's recent financial performance gives it plenty of reason to be bullish on the market. In its most recent quarter, ending in August, the company's year-over-year net revenue increased by 80% to \$350 million. Ecommerce revenue surged by 49% on top of the 82% growth experienced in the same quarter last year. Meanwhile, U.S. sales spiked at an "unprecedented" pace, growing 174% from the year before.

"The stores we've opened and continue to open in the U.S. have surpassed our expectations," Hill says. "The economics are strong. It's a prime market to advance our omnichannel growth plans."

While the company's results during fiscal 2021 – the period ending in May 2021 – were "impressive given the circumstances," Hill says what's far more important is what they signal about the future of the company post-pandemic.



recognizable campaign cabinet." A staple of the charitable sector, cabinets consist of business and community leaders that help drive fundraising efforts; MCHF's 41-person team includes the likes of Yves Fortier, former Canadian ambassador to the U.N., and Bank of Montreal CEO Darryl White.

To bring new donors in, the charity first had to transform its image. That work started a year earlier with the decision to develop a new brand identity with Cossette.

"Our previous logo looked like something that should be at the top of an accountant's form letter," says Kim Fraser, VP of marketing and communications at MCHF. "We needed something a bit more modern."

The team spoke to patients, parents, hospital staff, donors and volunteers to better understand what makes MCHF unique – time and again, Fraser says it heard it's the bond hospital staff form with their patients and families.

So the new brand identity revolved around a universal health symbol – a bandage – displayed three different ways: alone, it represents healing;

The Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation's rebel mindset

The charity overcomes barriers by embracing its bratty side.

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

Above: MCHF's "Long Live Little Brats" fought compassion fatigue by exploring what defines a healthy child.

Charitable fundraising is tough during the best of years. But when you're a predominantly English-facing children's hospital foundation operating in Quebec during a pandemic that's perceived as being a bigger threat to seniors, tough begins to verge on the impossible.

That's the situation the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation (MCHF) found itself in 2020, one year after having launched its first solo fundraiser in 28 years – the most ambitious campaign for a pediatric hospital in Quebec's history.

The 115-year-old institution's affiliation with McGill University had led many Quebecers to believe that it primarily served the province's English-speaking population. Its reputation as a leading children's hospital across Canada and abroad somehow did not resonate as strongly with French speakers in its home province.

Raising \$200 million over seven years would be nothing short of a miracle. It would require capturing the hearts of a group accustomed to supporting institutions with closer ties to the French community, including Quebec's other major pediatric hospital, Sainte-Justine University Hospital Centre. And it would demand a convention-busting cause marketing approach à la SickKids.

"We couldn't rely on our existing pool of donors," says Renée Vézina, the foundation's president. "We had to bring in new people; we had to build a

folded at an angle into a heart, it represents love; and crossed with another bandage, it resembles a person or a hug, illustrating the bond between the hospital and those it serves. The design was deliberately simple, fun, colourful and came with endless potential applications.

Conceptually, it aimed to capture the idea of giving a voice back to children, notes Cossette CD Richard Bélanger. "That's the backbone of everything in the brand."

More than that, it spoke to the hospital's ability to speak the language of children, Bélanger says, an idea that came sharply into focus via one of the charity's early awareness campaigns with Cossette.

In April 2020, the foundation launched "We Speak Children," a spot that brought attention to its ability to serve patients in 47 different



As Cheekbone Beauty grows, so does its mission

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

Clockwise from top right: Cheekbone founder Jennifer Harper often serves as the face of the brand in social content. However, the Indigenous beauty brand also uses its platform to share the stories of its followers.

When launching Cheekbone Beauty in 2016, founder Jennifer Harper set out to create a platform for Indigenous representation both in the beauty space and in business.

"I have that weight on my shoulders, not just to have a successful business, but also to be a role model for our next generations of Indigenous entrepreneurs, to show them that you can think about doing it differently," she says.

Thanks to its social-led marketing and approachable branding, the company quickly captured a small but devoted online audience who cared as much about its quality, cruelty-free cosmetics as it did its underlying mission. Harper routinely serves as the face of the company, appearing in social posts and videos showcasing the latest products. But with an Instagram community of more than 150,000 people, Cheekbone also uses its platform to share the stories of its customers, amplifying their voices.

From day one, Cheekbone has given back to the Indigenous community, donating 10% of its proceeds to First Nations non-profits. And it's growing fast. The company's revenue jumped 350% in 2020 and continues to grow between 90% and 100% every month as a result of new product innovations and retail partnerships. But as the company grows, so too does Harper's ambition.

"We still have our mission and vision, which is helping every Indigenous kid on the planet see and feel their value in the world," she says. "But now we've added: 'while

we craft sustainable colour cosmetics using Indigenous wisdom.'"

In keeping with Harper's Anishinaabe roots, Cheekbone has embedded Indigenous teachings into every business decision, including a commitment to work towards a zero-waste goal for 2023.

The brand took a step towards fulfilling that commitment in March 2020 with the launch of its Sustain collection of lipsticks, mascara, blush/bronzer and eyeliner. The earth-friendly line is made from sustainably sourced raw materials and packaged in almost fully biodegradable tubes.

Later this year, it will introduce makeup sticks that consist of 65% agricultural waste pulled from landfill, an innovation born within its Niagara-based Innovation Lab launched in February. Led by a Western-trained chemist, Harper says the lab brings together Indigenous wisdom and science and is intended to help "redefine manufacturing for small business."

In addition to its eco-conscious packaging and product innovation, Cheekbone is gaining momentum with distribution and marketing.

To coincide with the launch of its Sustain collection on Sephora.ca in September – its first foray into retail – it worked with Sid Lee on new branding and packaging that features vibrant colours and copy that emphasizes humanity's relationship with the natural world.

If successful, the deal with Sephora could propel Cheekbone onto physical shelves for the first time, helping significantly expand its reach.

Then, in early November, Cheekbone launched its first mass awareness campaign, also led by Sid Lee. "Right the Story," backed by \$1 million in donated ad inventory from Bell, attempts to reclaim the narrative of Indigenous peoples by overriding negative headlines and giving a more positive tone to their stories.

While Cheekbone is growing quickly, Harper remains focused on its original mission. "I don't want to scale at this rapid pace where we're making rash decisions," she says. "We're here to make a difference in the lives of Indigenous kids and to leave less of an impact on the planet."

And while the world might not need another beauty brand, it does need more Indigenous businesses that are finding ways to "protect the planet, empower people, do good," she says. "There is no business like ours that exists, and that's why I feel we need to be here."

Kits brings convenience to eyecare

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

Right: Kits' first big awareness push featured a guru character inviting customers to "open their eyes" to the benefits of buying optical products online.

Kits Eyecare entered the market in 2018 with the goal of disrupting the multi-billion dollar eyecare category. With former Coastal Contacts founder Roger Hardy at the helm, the Vancouver-based, direct-to-consumer brand knew its success hinged on offering a better customer experience.

Through a commitment to convenience, and a first-pair-free offer designed to drive trial, Kits delivered more than 100,000 pairs of prescription eyeglasses by June 2021 – a milestone it claims to have achieved faster than any other optical retailer in history.

Though revenue reached \$42 million in the first half of 2021, up 21% from the year before, the company believes it still has far to go. And since going public in January, it has begun putting a lot more emphasis on brand.

Kits spent its first few years focused on becoming a one-stop-shop for customers, offering one of the largest selections of eyeglasses, sunglasses and contact lenses – from designer brands like Oakley and Gucci to Kits' own branded products – in a category that tends to offer one or the other. Today, its selection includes over 600 styles of glasses.

In fact, the founders' decision to name the company Kits, after Kitsilano B.C., was meant to evoke the Vancouver district's ability to offer everything you need in one place, according to co-founder and COO Joseph Thompson.

Kits has also kept prices low, with many pairs of glasses in the \$99 range, matching those of the independent boutiques that have grown popular in recent years.

But a crucial point of difference for the brand was making the online buying process as seamless and convenient as possible, through buying tools like virtual try-ons and online vision tests, as well as faster delivery.

Earlier this year, it opened its own optical lab in B.C. through which it can manufacture and distribute up to 4,000 pairs of glasses per day. The facility will enable Kits to offer next-day

delivery across North America, and it's already testing same-day delivery in Vancouver.

On the contact lens side of the business, Kits introduced Autoship in February 2020, enabling customers to have repeat orders automatically delivered to them at regular intervals, another area it has identified as having high potential for growth.

In the short-term, Kits is prioritizing the Canadian market. But opportunity beckons in the U.S., where it already takes in approximately 80% of its revenue and where it has yet to run any of its above-the-line marketing. "We're just growing at such a rapid pace that we don't want to be too distracted by [the U.S.]," says CMO Stefan Harvalias.

Until recently, Kits' marketing consisted primarily of social and digital ads. But on the heels of launching its first awareness push in February – with a TV campaign by agency OstrichCo that made buying eye care products online look zen – Kits hired Harvalias, a marketer with experience from brands like Plenty of Fish, McCormick and



Visa, as CMO and moved eyecare industry vet Rob Long into the CTO role.

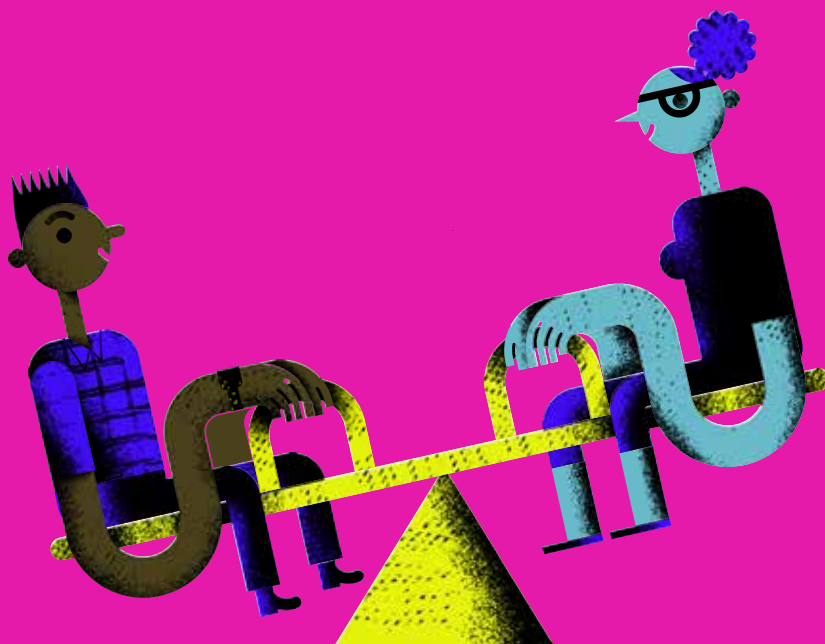
Since his arrival, Harvalias has worked with the team to refine Kits' positioning and voice in an industry he says has traditionally lacked differentiation, where pastel colours and stock photography abound.



Moving forward, Kits will take cues from lifestyle and fashion brands in which broad awareness efforts are supported with collection-specific campaigns, Harvalias says. And its website is being redesigned to align with lifestyle or consumer shopping occasions – as opposed to product category. Kits has even designed its first kids collection, promoting them as "cool, stylish, and properly fitted frames for the little monsters in our lives."

After launching a second effort with OstrichCo on *The Bachelorette* in June – with new creative that featured four gossipy women discussing their amazement with the Kits' shopping experience – the company briefly hit pause when Harvalias took over the marketing department. The CMO says new work is in development that will take a more targeted approach to reaching the brand's core 18-to-30-year-old female target.

Another major focus will be to build an internal creative agency team capable of managing day-to-day marketing. Harvalias has already brought on CD Mari Chijiwa, whose background includes roles at Vega, Lululemon and Indochino, as part of a larger hiring spree of more than 90 employees across marketing, tech and operations over the last two years.



THE NEW COLLABORATORS

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THEY (REMOTE WORKING CYNICS) SAID IT couldn't be done. Almost two years without ever bumping into each other in the corridor? But where will the sparks of genius come from? The ad industry sure showed them.

While the WFH experiment isn't over, the results have so far been promising – much of which you can see unfold across these pages as we highlight the 2021 Agency of the Year winning work.

There's a secret (actually, there are many) to keeping employee creativity and productivity alive during a mentally-crushing pandemic. The Gold medalist in Agency, Digital and Design, Rethink, shared many of its own.

Talent was definitely a theme this year. We saw the

desire to invest in perspectives in the Gold PR winner, No Fixed Address, which practices the “talent meets opportunity” mantra. The top Small Agency, 123w, has long invested in its people as it grows, and that strategy isn't ending any time soon.

As for Initiative, our Gold Media winner, there are now new content opportunities for its teams to explore, which could draw talent as the incubator scales.

All of the agencies were judged on their work (see the criteria on p.64) by jury members from brands and agencies (see p.66-67), but our stories on the 15 winners go beyond the campaigns, focusing on how each are investing in being the type of partner brands want to work with.



Rethink's winning streak hits a milestone

BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

IT IS CONVENTIONAL FOR AGENCIES TO GROW by entering other markets, and for those same agencies to claim bragging rights based on the number of offices they have around the world. Rethink opened its Vancouver office in 1999, Toronto in 2010 and Montreal in 2015. But rather than be seen as a company with offices in three cities, each one focused on local clients, Rethink sought to be viewed as a unified entity.

The pandemic accelerated that ambition. Realizing that Zoom had virtually eliminated geographical barriers, Rethink began to look at resource allocation in a very different way.

"When Chris Staples, Tom Shepansky and Ian Graiss founded the company, they wanted Rethink to be an

alternative to the typical wheel-spinning, stressful agency culture," explains national CCO and managing partner Aaron Starkman. "The pandemic has really allowed Rethink to realize that original vision."

Now that geography has evaporated, teams are no longer built around location but around the ideal mix of skills for a particular challenge. It's common for there to be a meeting with a creative director and a strategy team from one city and a creative team from another, allowing them to look at their entire roster of Rethinkers to determine who's perfect for a particular project.

And it's working. For the third time in just as many years, Rethink nabbed three 2021 Agency of the Year medals. While the shop typically takes home two Golds

and a Silver across Agency, Design and Digital, this is the first time it stacked all three bases and hit a home run with a Gold in each of the categories.

Some of the work that led to its triple win included the Fondation Emergence's "Colours of Pride," which was named one of the Campaigns of the Year, getting top marks for taking actual bruises from victims of homophobic hate and using them to create a Pride Flag. Another top-scoring case was Molson's "Drink from the Cup," in which the Stanley Cup – Canada's hockey version

of the Holy Grail – was placed over a vat of beer during the brewing process so that the brew could be funneled through it. As a result, when drinking a can of Molson Canadian, fans could literally "Drink from the Cup."

But it was Digital that Rethink really took a run at, doubling down on work that demonstrated a creative and strategic integration of online media to take home its first Gold in the category. For Heinz, for example, Rethink teamed up with Waze, a traffic app that colours any stretch of road where there is vehicle congestion in red.

CASES AGENCY

1. Revealing true colours.

Acceptance of LGBTQ+ communities isn't commonplace around the world. Homophobia continues to exist, even in Canada. To remind people of the cost of LGBTQ+ pride, Rethink and the Fondation Emergence created a new Pride Flag that incorporated actual bruises from victims of homophobic hate. A hero video introduced the new flag under the "Colours of Pride" campaign and featured prominent members of the LGBTQ+ community who had suffered from hate crimes.

1



AOY Campaign of The Year

2



2. The agency conducted a social experiment across 18 countries asking one simple question: "Draw Ketchup." Almost everyone drew Heinz. So of course Rethink juxtaposed the simple drawings against massive billboards.

3. Molson Canadian attempted to reclaim its spot in the fridges of rookie and diehard hockey fans by pouring its beer through the Stanley Cup, and then bottled it up to create a limited-edition batch.



4. For IKEA, Rethink showed Canadians how the retailer can help make their homes a more sustainable place. The campaign included a whimsical spot, instruction manuals for repurposing old IKEA furniture, and pivoting its Black Friday sale from being about saving money to saving the planet.

5. The agency took KD's original recipe and relaunched it with a Pumpkin Spice flavour and campaign that poked fun at people's cult-level obsession with the popular Starbucks latte.

4



5



► For full cases, go to aoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

1



1. Put a period on it.

Period poverty is a problem in North America. To show that menstrual periods are as commonplace as those at the end of sentences, Rethink created a unifying visual symbol in protest of the lack of government support. "Periods for Periods" is a font made entirely of 230 periods, with designs ranging from the literal to metaphorical (think uteruses and flowers).

2



2. The agency designed a "Scrapsbook" recipe guide for IKEA to show consumers how to practice sustainability in their homes by turning unwanted bits of food into hearty cuisine.

3. For Truss, Rethink created five unique cannabis brands from scratch, each of which reflected a different need state: enjoyment; health and wellness; taking it easy; taste experience; and high intensity.

3



► For full cases, go to designwinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

Using the speed of a Heinz ketchup pour (0.045km/h), the brand dished out a free bottle of ketchup and a Burger King Impossible Whopper to any driver clocking in at 0.045 km/h when using the GPS navigation app.

Rethink's challenge now is keeping a good thing going.

According to Starkman, when the company originally set out its values, the priorities were people, product and profit, in that order. The last thing the founders wanted was to grow as an independent, be purchased by a network and fall prey to the high turnover the industry is famous for, he says. The agency's November 2020 shift from a corporation to a limited partnership means that

shares are held in trust and cannot be sold to a network or holding company. It ensures that Rethink will remain independent, preserving the people-first cultural values upon which its success has been built.

But it also comes down to maintaining a healthy culture. To do this, Rethink instituted semi-annual culture checks to take the temperature, identify strengths and weaknesses and solve for any pain points. During COVID, for instance, it discovered that in one particular department, the lockdown was really messing with employees' work-life balance. The agency responded immediately by hiring more staff to relieve the pressure.

NEW KEY BUSINESS

Scotiabank, McCain, Metrolinx, Vizzy, Miller Lite, Pilsner, Belgian Moon, Blue Moon, Fine Company, Coors Original, Coors Organic, Ottawa Tourism, Special Olympics Canada, Decathlon Canada, Montréal centre-ville, Le Devoir, Mega Brands, Chambre des notaires du Québec, Ordre des infirmières et infirmier du Québec, Athleta, Cara, Jack.org, Pozio, Waterplay, Happy Planet, Perch, Purdy's, Vancouver Downtown Business Association, Rubicon Organics, Naramata Tourism, Chek Media Group, Empowering Villages International, End of the Roll, GardenWorks

OFFICES

Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver

STAFF

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It also banned creative presentations on Mondays. As Starkman says, "Monday creative meetings are a guaranteed way to make people work all weekend. So we have told all of our clients and we've also said it in new business pitches, and it has been met with universal applause by both existing and potential clients. Not to mention our own people." This was not only a gamechanger at Rethink, but given the agency's high profile, it was also a challenge for the rest of the industry.

The list of people-pleasing initiatives induced by the pandemic goes on to include a \$500 benefit for each Rethinker that can be applied towards a Health Spending Account (to increase medical benefits) or a Lifestyle Spending Account (to cover meditation apps, yoga or even running shoes).

It also instituted "Advocacy Days" where everyone gets two paid days to attend a protest, or do volunteer work, or mentor students; "Bueller Days" where all staff are encouraged to take an extra day off, even at the last minute, to play hooky; as well as "Rethink Talks" with community and business leaders speaking on topics related to coping in a pandemic.

Putting its people first has had a very positive effect on business. The company enjoyed 30% growth in 2020/21. It also made 26 key hires in the account management, strategy and creative departments across offices and promoted five existing staff to ACD roles, including Skye Deluz, Naeem Ghafari, Jacquelyn Parent, Hayley Hinkley and Zach Bautista.

These new hires and promotions are in response to 30 new business wins in the last year, including Scotiabank, McCain, Metrolinx, Cara, Miller Lite, Belgian Moon, Coors Original and Organic, Ottawa Tourism and Special Olympics Canada.

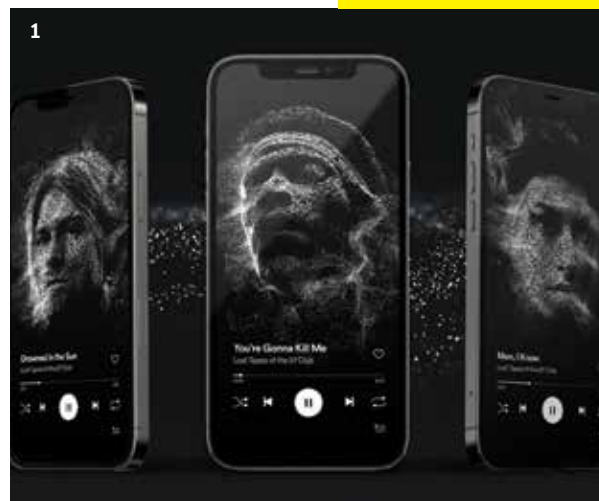
Its growth has been accompanied by a boatload of recognition for work done on brands like IKEA, Heinz, Truss and Molson. The 228 awards won this year include AdAge Creative Agency of the Year, D&AD's #2 Independent Agency of the Year, Cannes #3 Independent Agency of the Year and the One Show's #1 Ranking Canadian Agency. The firm also won multiple Grand Prix awards at national shows, as well as the most Effie awards in Canada, the ADCC's Agency of the Year, and Grand Prix trophies at AToMiC, Marketing Awards and SIA.

Says Starkman, "If our people feel they're putting great work out the door and enjoy the ride getting there, then the revenue and the recognition follow naturally."

CASES

DIGITAL

Digital Campaign of The Year



1. When the music's over.

The "Lost Tapes of the 27 Club" were created using artificial intelligence to show the world what four music gods who died at age 27 (Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain and Amy Winehouse) would have made – if they had gotten the mental health support they needed from organizations like Over the Bridge. The tracks saw more people reaching out for help, with an 830% bump in traffic.

2. Rethink partnered with Waze for Heinz Ketchup and used its speed tracking system to target Canadians stuck in traffic. It tracked the speed at which drivers were moving, and if it matched the speed of ketchup (0.045/km), Heinz rewarded them with a free bottle of its red sauce.



3. During a press conference for the Euro 2020, Portuguese legend Cristiano Ronaldo made headlines when he pushed away Coca-Cola bottles and chose to drink water instead. Naturally, Rethink hijacked the conversation to promote IKEA's sustainability message, posting an image with its famous reusable Korken bottle and re-naming it Cristiano with the message to drink water, sustainably.

► For full cases, go to digitalaoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Zulu Alpha Kilo takes control of its future

BY JOSH KOLM

BUSINESSES ACROSS SECTORS ARE GRAPPLING with the fact that employees are taking a hard look at their careers and where they want to work.

Zulu Alpha Kilo hasn't had to massively rethink its approach to recruitment or retention – largely because making employees feel valued has long been its focus.

"We've been a values-driven company from the beginning, so if people are examining their values, that's a benefit for us," says president and CEO Mike Sutton.

For a while now, Zulu has offered an "Employeeeship," which gives recent advertising and design grads full-time jobs instead of internships. Staff can take sabbaticals every five years, with an established process for checking in about career development and the company's own goals. Even Zulu's policy of never participating in spec work has "saved people their lives and their weekends," says founder, CCO Zak Mroueh.

"Every agency loses people, they leave eventually," he adds. "What's interesting is that there have been people who got offers but decided to stay. [They] realize that, yes, they can work for a great network shop, but they like working for Zulu because they know where they

stand with their career plan and how their values align."

The new 20Doors Scholarship Fund – which offers 20 students tuition to complete a year-long undergraduate course in copywriting or art direction over the next five years – is a newer example of where the agency's values lie. While the scholarship was started to remove hurdles for BIPOC entering the industry, Mroueh says it also shows people who are on the path to other creative fields that advertising is an option, and it has further strengthened the talent pipeline to Zulu.

"We've been very fortunate," he adds, "but we know people are leaving the industry, so to stay competitive, we've got to show people there is a place for them."

Far from resting on what it has already done, the agency is "taking control" of its future culture, Sutton says. It took ownership of a new office building in early September, and being its own landlord gives it the

KEY NEW

BUSINESS

ENMAX, D2L, Ottawa Senators, Waterloo Brewing, Campbell's - Kettle Chips, Burnbrae Farms

NEW HIRES

Maura Kelly, Alexa MacDonald, Hayley Blackmore, Risa Kastelic, Kara Oddi, Emily Anzarouth, Chris Rosario, Stephanie Yung, Brian Murray, Jeff Watkins, Dejan Djuric, Juan Torres, Dane Boaz, Laura Biggar, Ola Stodulska, James Graham, Ece Inan

STAFF

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freedom to build what Sutton calls a best-in-class hybrid work environment. And that will be huge for the agency – it plans to continue giving its 130 employees the flexibility to work from home, though the hope is that the 27,000 sq. ft. space is the kind of office people are excited to return to when they need.

Zulu will continue to invest in its people. For example, Sutton says roughly three-quarters of the agency's work is in some way digital, thanks to investments in the development of its staff – which it continued by ensuring all of its employees are Facebook and Google certified.

"Leaning into this ongoing learning culture at Zulu immediately paid off, and we're having even better, different conversations, strategically and creatively, about the work we're doing with clients," he says.

The last piece needed to move forward on that future fell into place in April when Sutton was promoted to

CEO. His appointment concluded a "reengineering" plan Zulu began exploring in late 2019, sharpening the vision for the work it wanted to do and how it would grow.

"I was involved in way too many things, always all over the place and in every single decision, and that wasn't the way I wanted to work anymore," Mroueh says. All told, the reengineering included several promotions and nearly 20 hires, including head of design Stephanie Yung and ECD Brian Murray.

Much like everything else Zulu has done, one thing will shape how the plan continues from here: its people.

"The pandemic forced us to realize that we aren't going to grow just by growing revenue, it's about talent acquisition," Mroueh says. "Talent has always been the secret sauce to success. The next part of the plan is to move to other markets, and even that is really about getting the best talent from around the world."

CASES



1. Got better rates?

Most modern money-savvy adults think that insurance is expensive, yet few will put in the effort to find a better rate. So for the launch of insurance aggregator Rates.ca, Zulu developed the "Don't Get Milked" campaign, which embraced the common metaphor for overpaying. In a series of TV and online videos set in an auto repair shop, a woman's car is hoisted in the air with cow udders below. A seen-it-all mechanic quickly diagnoses her problem: she's getting milked on her car insurance.



2. For Goldfish, the agency created a purpose-fuelled "Feed Imagination" platform, which featured real children's stories in book, billboard and video game formats.

3. The "Made to Be a Suburu" campaign showcased its vehicles across various integrated executions, one of which featured the Outback being released into the wild like an animal, reflecting its made-to-be-outdoors spirit.



4. The "Catch The Scam" platform for HomeEquity Bank was created as a masterclass to teach retirees how to identify scams they're being targeted with.



5. Ontario law requires riders to wear a helmet, even if it means Sikh riders remove their turban. So Harley-Davidson and Zulu created a "Tough Turban" made of impact-resistant material so they didn't have to choose between safety and their beliefs.

► For full cases, go to aoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



AGENCY | BRONZE



Ogilvy reaches beyond its borders

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

JOHN KILLAM GREW UP IN NETWORKS. But Ogilvy's Canadian CEO, who helped lead shops like Red Magnet and OMD Canada before being hired at the agency in 2019, says he's never been in one that is "so completely dialed in at the global level as Ogilvy."

The organization has embraced what it's calling "borderless creativity," says Killam, the ability to "bring brainpower from any place, be it one city or the next – like [our Toronto office] working with one of our other two offices in Canada – or working across the border with the U.S. or with our colleagues in Europe."

While the agency has long had access to the network's cross-market talent, Killam says the pandemic has "poured gas on it, because we're bringing global people to meetings all the time."

The model has strengthened Ogilvy's offering in Canada and has opened new opportunities for the shop to shine globally, adds CCO Megan Farquhar, who was hired from Leo Burnett Chicago in January 2021.

"It's giving us a chance to show the rest of the world what Canadian talent is capable of," she says. "As other offices also deal with 'The Great Resignation' and there are times when they need some extra firepower, we're seen as a gem in the network."

To play that larger leadership role within the network, Ogilvy has been adding depth to different disciplines.

Under chief strategy officer Tom Kenny, who joined in late 2019, it has built a more robust strategy team, which has been "crucial to changing the kinds of conversations we're having with our clients," Killam says.

Then there's PR, an area Killam admits Ogilvy has struggled with in the past. Upping its earned media game will help clients demonstrate their brand purpose authentically by opening a window into what the company does behind the scenes, he says.

At the global level, the agency is investing in PR under Julianna Richter, global CEO of the division, with the recent appointments of its first global CCO and global

KEY NEW BUSINESS

Aldo, Koho, Invest in Canada, Air Miles, Dove Men+Care, Absolut Vodka, Scarborough Health Network, Tata Consulting Services, Amazon, Polar Asset Management, Baycrest Health and Sciences

NEW HIRES

Meg Farquhar, Anchie Contractor, Kyle Fiore, Ines De Ninnes, Tanvi Swar, Katie Skinner, Jerry Jarosinski, Maddy Berry

OFFICES

Montreal, Toronto

STAFF

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CSO in June. In Canada, the recent hiring of Erin Jacobson as head of digital and advocacy for North America and of Katie Skinner as PR account director round out the offering.

With the right talent in place, Ogilvy is now fine-tuning its approach. One of Killam's priorities as CEO has been to grow Ogilvy's roster of Canadian clients, and committing to "borderless creativity" has been key to realizing that goal.

For example, work for Aldo is shared between the Toronto and Montreal offices, but Ogilvy also represents the brand globally. It takes a similar approach to Invest in Canada, a government organization that promotes and attracts foreign direct investment into the country. The work is shared between Montreal and Toronto, but also informed by boots on the ground in Europe and Asia, Killam says, so that it can put "local cultural connections to work" promoting Canada overseas.

Farquhar adds that collaboration was central to Ogilvy winning Canada creative AOR duties with TD. It worked with fellow WPP shop David in Miami – which will serve as U.S. AOR – on the pitch. "To know that they had our back and we had theirs – we went in like an unstoppable force, and the work showed it."

WPP's Canadian agencies will soon move into a campus on Toronto's waterfront, providing more opps for Ogilvy to work with teams across the network. While great care will be put into ensuring the agencies respect client boundaries and remain differentiated, leaders will be able to come together in person and solve "department head-level programs," notes Farquhar.

"You always worry about agencies who are rebuilding," she says. "[But] we're on a path. We have our plans; we have our opportunities.... We're already on that road and making work that's getting attention."

CASES

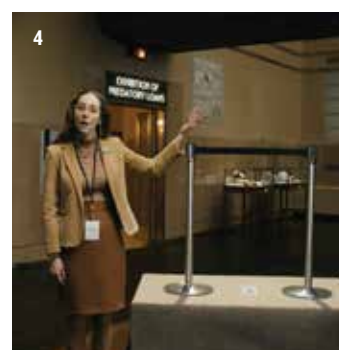
1. Shining a different light on beauty.

America has not been beautiful for some time, but Dove wanted to show that there's hope for a brighter future. So, working with a team of six African American photographers, Ogilvy created a film that showed both the anger, the pain and the beauty of the fight for social justice currently happening in the streets of America.



2. To grow its brand with a younger audience, Pizza Hut worked with Ogilvy to create a limited edition 1 byte digital pizza and then sell them on an NFT auction site for the cost of a single bite of an actual pizza (0.0001 Etherium, or 22 cents).

3. To help Hellmann's in its fight against food waste, the agency targeted the biggest culprits: millennials. The team designed the first-ever branded island on *Animal Crossing* and highlighted the virtual food waste that was happening on the platform. It asked players to bring their spoiled food to Hellmann's island, with the brand then donating real meals to an actual food bank.



4. Ogilvy showed Koho as a financial solution for a new world by taking viewers on a tour of "The Museum of BS" – an old bank with staid furniture and outdated websites.

5. To keep the secret to how Caramilk gets the caramel into the bar, Ogilvy replaced websites claiming to have the answer with its own playfully misleading pages.



► For full cases, go to aoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



123w is a talent magnet

BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

KNOWN FOR ITS SENIOR-HEAVY BUSINESS MODEL, 123w not only hires for great talent but for strong character, says co-founder Scot Keith.

“My partners and I have seen and worked in so many agencies that make the mistake of throwing their money at over-the-top office space, lavish client entertainment or fat returns to the shareholders when they should really be investing in better processes or working conditions or staff. We just put the money into talent.”

Out of a staff of 48, 15 are hands-on senior creative directors. Its model goes back to when Keith and his partners – creative director Rob Sweetman, writer Brian Collins and designer Jeff Harrison – asked themselves what would make them happy and what would make them miserable. In the latter column, they put departments, hierarchy, disciplinary silos, and high overhead. In the former column they put doing what they do best: actually creating work, not just managing it, and hiring people for the same reason.

Moreen “Mo” Bofill, who in late 2020 left John St. to

join 123w’s leadership team and lead its expansion to Toronto, is one of those people, says Keith. “She is an expert on the business of design and how it integrates with advertising and digital,” he says. Mo’s strengths will come in handy as 123w becomes increasingly focused on two areas: brand transformation and brand acceleration. “The pandemic has made not only [a client’s] marketing team, but the CEO, executives and board members, prioritize their brand communications. So we see 123w as being in the brand transformation business. It’s where strategy, design, advertising and digital intersect, and it’s targeted at brands that are top three in their industry but are threatened by new market entries.”

An example can be seen in work for new client Real Canadian Superstore (RCS). Its first task was to help move RCS from its previous “Shop like a mother” platform to “Shop how you want.” The campaign (see sidebar) is more diverse and inclusive, and works to make everyone and anyone feel represented and celebrated when it comes to discovering whatever food

NEW BUSINESS

Canadian Tire, Deel, Essilor, Gymnastics Canada, Industry Trade Authority, Later Living Forest Institute, Natural Resources Canada, NexGen Energy, No Boats on Sunday, Real Canadian Superstore, Road 13 / Mark Anthony Group, Sapporo, Sleeman Clear 2.0, Stratus Winery, Teknion, Thinkific, Vancouver Fraser Port Authority

NEW HIRES

Mo Boffill, Sandra Gardon, Hannah Russell, Taeya Page, Alhyssa Boffill, Lenny Kai Yang, Dave Felizarta, Jesse Shaw, Katie Muir, Ryan Semeniuk, Jeremy Grice, Natalie Wu, Rich Parkes, Jaime Nilsson, Josh Kodis

OFFICES

Toronto, Vancouver

STAFF

48

combinations they want. Real Canadian Superstore is now working with 123w on its design systems, brand campaigns and day-to-day marketing programs.

For new market entrants, 123w is focusing more on building out its “acceleration” services, which include creating a brand from scratch, positioning it, naming it, designing it and integrating all of that with storytelling at different touchpoints. For instance, MOGO – a digital platform that’s focused on improving clients’ financial health and environmental impact – worked with the agency to create a brand anthem that provoked people to take responsibility for their debt and carbon footprint.

The shop has also helped accelerate SAAS brands such as Later, Thinkific, Deel and SWAY, as well as supported the transformation of companies like the Canada Media Fund, Athletics Canada, White Spot, Okanagan Spring Brewery, Kal Tire and Diane’s Lingerie. And since August 2020, 123w has won 22 new accounts across a variety of industries, including ATCO, Calgary Airport Authority, Essilor, Mark Anthony Group, NexGen Energy, Sleeman, Sapporo and World Vision Canada.

Keeping the agency small and senior in response to its recent growth will require disciplined management and more autonomy across the teams.

“The trick,” says Scot, “is to avoid the situation where one or two CDs at the top need to approve all the work. It slows things down and pretty soon you have a sweat shop environment, where the creatives end up showing their work to the CDs on evenings and weekends because they were too busy during business hours.”

Some of the ways its investing in developing talent and maintaining its founding values is through initiatives like “CDX,” where all of its 15 working CDs must be creative directed by a colleague, including younger creative staff. Then there’s “123w Pitch School,” an initiative to train talent on pitching business. Lastly, the agency is changing annual reviews to concentrate more on development, which means focusing their training around what they’re good at and what they want to do. The firm’s talent selection and development team has also been very mindful of the importance of diversity, with almost half of its creative directors being women, along with growing LGBTQ+ and BIPOC representation among staff. It has also been diversifying its skillset to include specializations like motion graphics, digital media planning and buying, strategy and production.

As Scot says, “We’re not trying to build an army here. We’re building a team of Navy Seals.”

CASES

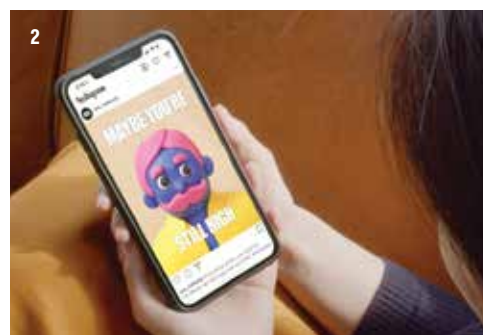


1. Shop what you want.

Real Canadian Superstore has everything for everyone. 123w relayed that message to its diverse customer base with a spot that speaks to the pride Canadians have in the food they eat, from maple syrup to perogies, dim sum and halo halo.

2. Instead of hammering cannabis users with facts, 123w and the CAA created a campaign that applauded younger drivers for planning ahead. “Do Anything But Drive” spoke to youth on social media and kept the message positive while still communicating the dangers of driving on edibles.

3. For the Vancouver Mural Festival, the shop designed wayfinding billboards, posters and IG Stories that focused on the weird, distinct and too-hard-to-explain art, claiming that “You’ll get it when you see it.”



► For full cases, go to smallaoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



For the love of BHLA

BY JENNIFER HORN

IF JASON CHANEY, TODD MACKIE, CARLOS MORENO AND DENISE ROSSETTO were to compete in a relay race, there's a good chance they'd miss the starting pistol while under a Tai Chi trance.

"In our previous lives [at network ad agencies]," says Todd, a partner and one of the three CCOs at Broken Heart Love Affair, "strategists would work with clients for months until they figure out the strategy. Then they hand it over to the creative department. [At BHLA], we're all together, all the time and we're moving in the same way."

While CSO Chaney and CCOs Mackie, Moreno and Rossetto ideate in unison, CBO Beverly Hammond is their conductor. The five ad execs – with a collective 116 years at 14 network agencies, where they led some of the most celebrated campaigns on the awards circuit from Cannes to CASSIES – founded the boutique agency to be a powerhouse stacked with senior talent.

The question is, how do five highly decorated agency heads, who are used to running the show, not get in each other's way? "Well, Carlos says it best: 'No matter how we come at it, we all have the same intentions,'" explains Rossetto, describing BHLA's mission, which is to "bring

the love of advertising back" to clients, consumers and the creative community. "And that leads to a chemistry that you just can't manufacture."

The idea to open an agency with an inverted model, where experienced talent create advertising instead of just managing it, was initiated by Chaney when he became fed up with hearing about straining client/agency relationships and the disdain consumers have toward ads. The antidote, says Moreno, was to create a shop that focuses on building masterbrand platforms that "stand the test of time" and "are able to deliver the emotional messages that human beings need."

Platforms like Kruger's "Unapologetically Human" and Internova's "Go Human, Book Human" were crafted not only to help the companies navigate the calamity that was 2020, but to also introduce new behaviour codes, says Chaney. Both celebrated humanity, whether through moments that are universal yet deemed taboo (clearing a snotty nose, sitting on the loo) or the interactions people have with each other (like booking a flight with a real person). And both implored consumers to see the brands, and the categories they sit in, from a new POV.



KEY NEW BUSINESS

Kruger Products, MadeGood, Internova Travel Group, Air Miles, Arterra, Four Seasons, Georgian College, Hershey Canada, Kids Help Phone, MoveSnap, Ozery Bakery, ROM, Stewart Family Estates, Canadian Celiac Association, Everest, Fever-Tree, Lawrence Plaza, Omy Cosmetics, Promise Gluten Free, Totum Life Science

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Mackie says launching BHLA two weeks after the first lockdown was a “terrifying hurdle that actually turned out to be a catalyst” for the agency’s success. “So many brands at the time were clamouring to say, ‘We’re with you and we understand you’ but they didn’t really have a brand voice,” he explains. “The pandemic accelerated brands to look inward and realize that, ‘Wow – we actually don’t know who we are. We’ve been doing so much performance marketing over the years to get short-term sales and we haven’t been building our brand or love story.’”

Many agencies have also divested their ability to build brands, says Chaney, developing processes that favour short-term, tactical creative – which is one of the reasons BHLA eschewed an hourly billing model. “We product price,” says Hammond. “It’s changed everything. We put value on the output. It’s a fundamental switch and clients are really digging it.”

Offering a project-based cost system also puts the risk on the agency as they’re under the pressure to deliver. “What’s been interesting to me is that first round strategy has generally been bought [by the client]. And same with creative. We’re nailing the creative first round,” says Chaney. Mackie concurs: “It feels like when you’re at a traditional big agency, you get a couple home runs out of 300 projects each year. But here it feels like our hit rates are 80-90%.”

Rosetto says the agency – which has grown to 25 people – doesn’t like to overcomplicate things. That’s why it chose to open LifeLong Crush (LLC) as a separate entity with its own talent pool. As the team likes to say, “BHLA brings back the love, while LLC keeps the love alive.” In other words, the former focuses on brand and creative, which is then handed off to the latter to manage production, content and activation.

Two years in, the agency is starting to deliver on its mission to bring back the love of advertising – consumers and retired employees, for example, have sent unsolicited emails to Kruger saying how proud they are to be associated with the brand after seeing its campaign. The creative community also seems to have deep affection: “I get a lot of love letters in my LinkedIn,” says Rossetto, while Hammond says the shop is becoming a bit of a “talent hoarder.” As for clients? Well, says Hammond, “in our first fiscal, we were profitable. So I think that tells the story.”

CASES

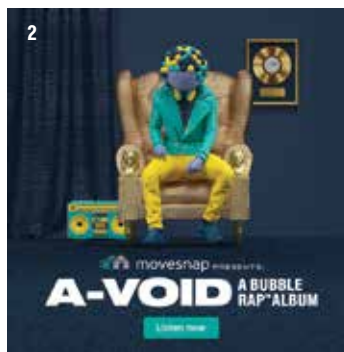
Small Agency Campaign of The Year



1

1. Tapping into a universal, human truth.

For Kruger Products, BHLA created a platform that eschewed the typical cuddly animal and fluffy euphemisms seen in tissue brand campaigns, instead opting to show the messier moments in life. The spot was cast with a Canadian blend of ethnicities, gender and sexual identifications and even different family configurations. The strategy was centred around the notion that there is strength in softness, and that, as humans, vulnerability is our strongest attribute.



2

2. MoveSnap is a start-up digital concierge that removes the stress of moving by taking care of the headache-inducing admin and logistics. BHLA created an unignorable design system with bubble people in bubble worlds. It also created “bubble rap” featuring the musical talents of Canadian performers like Shawn Mendes.



3

3. To promote the value of booking through Internova’s real-life travel agents, a video showed a creepy, cold android giving viewers a tour of a desolate destination, with the tag: “Don’t let a machine choose your vacation. Go Human. Book Human.”

► For full cases, go to smallaoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Fuse Create turns heads

BY JUSTIN DALLAIRE

STEPHEN BROWN TREATS MAT LEAVES AS a measuring stick. The CEO of Fuse Create says they help validate just how far the agency has come within a short period of time. “People come back from mat leave and go, ‘Woah.’ Because they have a year gap, they come back and a few of them have said, ‘This is a very different company.’”

In the spring of 2020, the agency then-known as Fuse Marketing Group was gearing up to re-introduce itself as a creative-first shop. It was a big change for the 18-year-old, discipline-led agency, which had typically kept its creative services separate from its experiential expertise, offered under the Fuse Live banner.

With the help of Steve Miller – then a year into his role as partner, VP and ECD – Fuse had undertaken a lot of planning and behind-the-scenes work, including a new name, vision and branding by Jacknife that would help turn the heads of new and existing clients.

“We made the decision to radically change the product of Fuse, and the reputation of Fuse, and the culture of

Fuse,” Brown says. “We were in the planning stages. And we pulled the trigger early in the pandemic, because we were like, ‘We’re not going to let this stop us.’”

It wasn’t easy, Brown adds, but Fuse stuck to its guns and followed through with the relaunch, a decision he says is “paying off in strides right now.”

One of the biggest changes was Fuse’s decision to encourage everyone, from account and project managers through to IT and the CFO, to adopt a creative – as opposed to a profit-driven – mindset, says Miller. “The creative department might come up with the creative, but it’s the agency that has to champion [the approach].”

Previously, ideas flowed through the agency like a waterfall, moving from one department to the next like an assembly line “without people really being engaged or collaborative throughout,” Miller says. That, too, has changed. Team members now travel down the assembly line together, remaining involved in every step of the process until the work is brought to market, he says.

NEW KEY BUSINESS

Air Miles, Paired, Maple Leaf Food, Old Dutch

KEY HIRES

Robert Sarte, Nicole Raines, Jacquie Kostuk, Rita Steinberg, Shannon Wilson, Chatura Gnanaswaran

OFFICE Toronto

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While the presence of a creative-first mindset can be difficult to measure in real terms, Miller and Brown say its presence is reflected in the agency's ability to "turn heads." That expression has become a rallying cry of sorts, Miller says, and is measured not only against the work it does for clients, but also in the design of its office and the way in which it conducts client pitches.

Brown says the new approach has already resonated with clients, which is proof enough for Brown that things are moving in the right direction. Last fall, for example, Fuse won the shopper, XM and activation business for Air Miles after approaching the pitch as a partner rather than a vendor, with more collaboration and agility.

The approach also led to new opportunities with Ricola, for which it is the social and digital AOR. After pitching an "Everyday Voice" campaign that highlighted the lozenge product's year-round efficacy, the brand tested the concept in Canada in the spring and has since brought it to the U.S.

Just as important to Fuse, the new M.O. has been embraced by one of its longest-standing clients, CIBC, which could have decided to change tacks after welcoming Tammy Sadinsky as its new CMO earlier this

year. To woo a new brand is one thing, Brown says. But to be able to "dig back in, reenergize, repurpose and get that motivated for an established brand" is evidence that "this brand mantra, this path that we're on, is working."

Before the year is out, Fuse's new mantra will find further expression in the design of its office.

In November, the agency will be forced to vacate its current digs on Toronto's Adelaide Street West, thanks to a reno project at its current location. The new office – in a building which Fuse has purchased outright, becoming both tenant and landlord – will be roughly one-third the size of its current home base.

Inside, Brown says the team is designing a "cafe-slash-Soho-house-slash-collaborative space" that reflects the creative needs of its staff and the hybrid reality of the future workforce. And on the street-facing ground floor is a blank retail canvas that Fuse intends to lend to clients for brand launches, activations and pop-ups.

In short, the space will serve as an extension of the agency's new identity, fostering creativity from the bottom-up. Miller says: "If we create a space that can be inspiring and comfortable and supportive in that way, who knows what we'll dream up?"

CASES

1. Bored little monsters. ➤

When lockdowns hit, the problem for Maple Leaf Food's Lunchmate – a prepackaged lunch kit – was clear: no more school meant no more school lunches. Realizing that kids were trapped inside, bored beyond belief and acting like little monsters, Fuse Create produced a quirky animated world using real found footage of kids monkeying around at home as a way to connect with apathetic kids on TikTok.



2. To show that Ricola is about "voice care" and not just a "cough drop," the shop created ads that demonstrated where people might need a Ricola to soothe their voices, such as a rollercoaster ride.

3. Films for Reel Start began with students talking about their dreams to be in the entertainment biz, but were then abruptly silenced to show the barriers that exist for them.



➤ For full cases, go to smallaoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

Initiative weaves its own Storyline

BY MIKE CONNELL

KEY NEW BUSINESS
BPTN, Canopy Growth, Government of Ontario, Destination Ontario, Ministry of Colleges & Universities, Ontario Cannabis Store, St. Lawrence Parks Commission, Trillium Gift of Life Network

KEY HIRES
Magnus Nisbeth, Mike Cortiula, Jad Chababi, Justin Cumby, Riaz Backer, Eugenia Kung, Alberto Mangones, Lara Senbanjo, Nick Smith

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Toronto

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“PR AGENCIES DO CONTENT. Creative agencies do content. What we didn’t want to be was a media agency doing content as a cheaper offering to a creative agency.” That’s Helen Galanis, CEO of Initiative Canada, discussing why her agency decided to double down on content as a discipline by launching Storyline.

Initiative’s philosophy is built on the idea that “people don’t like advertising. It’s really easy to avoid it now, and technology makes it easier every day,” she says. So, while Initiative’s job is to identify exposure opportunities, Storyline’s job is to create relevance.

The new division hit its first home run last year while working with Tourism Alberta. During the winter, destinations like Alberta are a bigger challenge to sell, with frigid temperatures making the province less inviting for travelers, especially during COVID.

So the Storyline team helped the tourism agency bring the magic of winter in Alberta to life through “The Art of Winter,” where it enlisted 11 local artists to create a series of original art. A virtual exhibition featured their work – which also ran in the *Globe and Mail* as part of a branded content piece – and an original song by an Indigenous musician was commissioned to play in the background while users explored the installation.

The new content hub is currently made up of a team of six, consisting of content strategists, producers, and project managers. Chris Gairdner, the agency’s head of content, who Galanis says is “an equal part strategy and media guy” helped develop Storyline.

The team develops original ideas and works with content partners and media owners, like the *Globe* and Bell Media, production studios and independent creators, to bring them to life, Gairdner explains.

“Storyline can take on projects beyond what a typical agency team would probably consider content,” he says, giving examples such as TV series, 360-degree video, podcasts, exhibits or even cookbooks.

While Travel Alberta’s campaign is an example of Storyline’s content-knows-no-format approach, the



agency also develops traditional video content.

For instance, when RBC was looking to build a connection to Canadians nearing retirement age, the shop created “Second Act,” a content platform that reframes the idea of retirement by showing how Canadians have used it as a chance to redefine themselves and pursue passions. It came to life as a three-part video series with Bell Media profiling Canadians and their “Second Acts,” including Olympic Athlete Donovan Bailey who has used his retirement to give back to the community and mentor young athletes.

Gairdner explains that Storyline incorporates “a mix of retained resources and scoped fees... In some cases, we’re bringing content ideas forward and taking a share of the media budget, while in others we’re briefed on specific content budgets and therefore have grown the total scope for the agency.”

Nish Shah, CSO, adds that the team will only bring in Storyline when it feels right for the client. “We never want to force content as the solution or as the starting point. It always starts with a media-agnostic approach.”

Measuring the impact of the content it creates is a priority going forward, Galanis adds, noting that it isn’t



as linear as measuring traditional media KPIs, which is something Shah will focus on. “That’s why we are treating this year as an incubator,” she says. Now it’s about “scaling what we already have and giving them the room to grow and take on new projects.”

With this in mind, the agency did some research through Magna, IPG Mediabrands’ intelligence, investment and innovation resource, says Shah, which outlined content’s role in preventing people from getting “stuck” in the middle of the customer journey.

Specifically, it showed that when content was used in the consideration stage, the audience was 12% more likely to reach the end of the purchase journey.

“It’s year one, and we’re just starting to appreciate what Storyline’s potential is,” Galanis says. “The focus is ‘great work’ but I think one of the discussions we will have for 2022 is ‘how big is this, and where does it go?’”

All signs point to both Storyline and Initiative going in the right direction, with Shah noting that since 2019, “our products’ revenue, which includes Storyline and other initiatives, has increased by 115%,” adding that it’s had seven new business wins this year alone. “And we’re not done yet!”

CASES

Media Campaign of The Year



1. Masks as media.

For Amazon's *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm*, Initiative built a disruptive media plan that channeled the spirit of the ludicrous character. It began with a 40-foot inflatable Borat atop a massive barge while wearing a medical mask as a “man-kini.” His message: “Wear mask. Save live.” Then, the agency installed outdoor mask dispensers on a cardboard cut-out of the protagonist, which Canadians could pull from. And, finally, a touring video truck featured a dancing Borat on the streets.



2. The shop helped Wendy's livestream its lettuce as it was being grown hydroponically in a greenhouse, with Twitter Polls and tweets from viewers online.

3. For Travel Alberta, the media agency worked with local artists to produce artwork that was revealed during the Winter Solstice and incorporated into a light installation, “Solar Flare.”



► For full cases, go to mediawinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Wavemaker's chips fall into place

BY MIKE CONNELL

RIGHT BEFORE THE FIRST LOCKDOWN IN CANADA, Wavemaker had launched a significant repositioning, which included a new model that pulled away from traditional linear planning and toward a more modular approach. The timing couldn't have been better.

According to the agency, its new "provocative planning" approach – comprised of three modules: Maximize, Unlock and Transform – was pivotal in supporting its growth over the past year-and-a-half (with account wins from Bumble to De'Longhi and DHL to MGA), ultimately leading to a Silver medal in the Media AOY competition.

"We call them 'modules,' but they are really approaches," explains Kristie Painting, CEO, Wavemaker. "Approaches for three different stages or parts of the client's business, each with an eye toward stimulating growth." More specifically, she says, Maximize is an AI-powered planning tool; Unlock is an audit process; and Transform is a collaborative, creative-led approach.

The disruption of the last year no doubt called out the importance of scenario planning, as clients looked to media agencies for short-term pivots. Contingencies were increasingly top-of-mind, Painting says, which its Maximize tool was

designed to manage. It was originally developed prior to the pandemic to help the agency "scenario plan in a superfast manner," Painting explains, "providing flexibility so a whole new [media strategy] wasn't required if this or that happened, when small adjustments would suffice."

Maximize and its AI-planning capabilities are designed to identify opportunities for growth against key target audiences, specifically nontraditional segments. "Instead of planning against women, 25 to 44, we can look at millennial parents who buy milk alternatives exclusively, and millennial parents who buy both milk alternatives and dairy milk, and plan against both audiences."

As some brands scrambled to make the shift to ecommerce and figure out different ways to sell their products during the crisis, Wavemaker's Unlock audit process helped them understand how clients were actually faring, says Andy Braunston, VP, managing

KEY NEW BUSINESS
Bumble, DeLonghi
DHL, Dialogue,
Government of
Ontario, Internova,
Invest in Canada,
MGA, Narcan, SCI,
The Wonderful
Company

NEW HIRES
Cindy Goulart, Chimi
Nwagbara, Jamie
Smith, Kelly Young

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partner, Wavemaker.

The process itself audits each component of a client's digital ecosystem. Painting explains that the audit process results in a roadmap for growth opportunities.

Unlock audits also led to the creation of a new Wavemaker product, called Origami, "which was specifically designed to help drive D2C ecommerce conversions," she says.

As for Transform, Painting says that the new process helps "codify creativity" by facilitating interagency collaboration and maintaining both creative and strategic consistency across disciplines and partners.

For instance, when Molson needed to be agile in the wake of restaurant and bar closures, Braunston says Wavemaker was able to help the brand get a new ecommerce platform up-and-running in short order. "That was a great example of a really tight interagency collaboration when it comes to tools and processes."

Additionally, when Molson wanted to outpace the country's number selling beer, Budweiser, leading up to Canada Day, Painting says deeper conversations and collaboration with Molson's agencies helped land on the idea to combine brews from various beer

brands in a single pack. In this instance, Painting says the "Transform framework was used to develop communications goals and tasks, facilitating the conversations with the interagency team, out of which 'Make it Canadian' was born."

Collectively, all three processes fit into a larger, evolving strategy, Painting says.

"Try to think of it as an Apple iOS platform," Braunston says. "It's not fixed. You use iterations, so, as situations arise, there are things we're adding to it all the time." Ultimately, it isn't just about media buying. "It's about business growth. Being able to accelerate ecommerce activity is a business problem."

Wavemaker's goal – whether through media or other capabilities – is to find growth opportunities across the board. The system it's implemented give its the the agility to not only navigate uncertainty, but to invest in product, people, and lines of business when and where those opportunities present themselves.

Painting says, "At Wavemaker's core, we believe there's always a better way to grow and we're obsessed with finding growth opportunities for our clients," a philosophy that has helped them stand out over the past year.

CASES



1. The chicken war heats up.

Competition was heating up for KFC when its competitor Popeyes decided to bring its chicken sandwich to Canada from the U.S. The plan was to steal the spotlight and remind Canadian QSR fans who the real fried chicken G.O.A.T is. The brand threw the first punch with a full-page ad that announced something big was coming from KFC (two weeks before Popeyes' launch). It stayed in the conversation with TV ads during NBA games that interrupted its competition's sponsorship. The agency also bought out OOH billboards near Popeyes' restos and intercepted people in line with an AirDrop coupon for KFC's sandwich.

2. Wavemaker helped Molson place a newspaper ad inviting Canadian breweries to join the brand in creating a special pack with local brews. The message also launched across video, display and social, and was picked up by the media.

3. To show that cutting out dairy is easier than people think, the shop paired chefs with Silk ambassadors to "veganize" popular dishes using its products. Recipes in the content series were then posted to the brand's website.



► For full cases, go to mediawinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

Touché blends the art of media with the science of data



BY **PATTI SUMMERFIELD**

WINNING AGENCY OF THE YEAR IS GETTING to be a habit for Touché – this is the media agency’s fifth consecutive medal. When trying to unravel whether the shop’s secret is its people, processes or data science, our conclusion is that it’s all of the above.

To maintain its momentum, CEO Karine Courtemanche says the agency has established an audience planning process that is “obsessed” with finding and reading consumer signals gathered from sources like social. But Courtemanche says social listening isn’t always enough; sometimes you need to trigger the conversation.

Take Can-Am’s “Women of On-Road” campaign, for example. The goal was to get more women – who make up a very small portion of the client’s audience – to try the company’s three-wheel vehicles. One of the

problems, Courtemanche explains, is that companies set up social media pages to target people who have shown they’re likely to purchase from the brand. In Can-Am’s case, it was men, which created a bias against women. To change that, the agency got creative with data collection.

Touché created a private Facebook group specifically for women to talk about some of the perceived stigmas when it comes to riding. Members of the group revealed that they felt they were being cautioned against the dangers of motorcycling more than their male peers. Another topic was the misconception that women did not have the physical strength to ride a motorcycle.

The insights led Can-Am to partner with *Rolling Stone*’s “Women Shaping the Future” event, which showcased the problems women face entering the

**NEW KEY
BUSINESS**
Éco-Entreprise
Québec, Société
de Transport de
Montréal (STM),
Premier Tech

HIRES
Daniel Keogh, Brent
Jones, Sara Daher,
Courtney Rosebush,
Christopher Easby,
Neha Singh, Audrey
Ansah, Ricky Gupta,
Ariane Bissonnette

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category, as well as creating a mentorship program for women in partnership with riding schools. The campaign reached three million future women riders, sales to women increased 15%, and women now represent 36% of Can-Am owners versus 19% among other manufacturers.

“Through that group we were able to identify new audiences and topics that weren’t part of the conversation at first and then extend that message to a much broader audience. It wasn’t done through a social listening tool; it was done by creating a safe space where women could express themselves.”

Courtemanche says that consumer signals are where science meets art. The art is finding the right insight via online reviews, products left in digital shopping carts, or search keywords. These signals are not always obvious and may require building strong data partnerships.

An example is when Touché worked with AutoTrader for Volkswagen’s “Dealership Done Digital” campaign. With dealerships closed, auto sales plummeted by 75%. To reverse the trend, a VW virtual dealership was created in partnership with the car buying and selling platform, with a virtual salesperson and experts providing guidance and answering questions for customers in real time.

Touché used social sentiment analysis to identify the reasons behind vehicle searches and three new COVID-born trends emerged: divorce, job uncertainty and fear of public transit. New segments were created, and targeted mobile ads were sent to those shoppers, who were then directed to the showroom. By August, VW exceeded its sales objectives by 8% and AutoTrader experienced its best consumer engagement.

The agency’s quest for consumer data has meant it has had to expand its expertise, such as hiring online data analysts. Touché also brought on “clean room” specialists who analyze the data in clean rooms, a location with servers where companies securely keep and update their data. By doing this, clients can see how the different types of data match up and use inconsistencies to determine whether they’re over-serving ads to similar audiences.

“You can no longer buy your way into the consumers’ minds and hearts,” says Courtemanche. “To create campaigns that creatively solve complex business challenges, you need a mix of talent, process, and data science to understand consumers, find insights, and quantify the advertising contribution to business outcomes.”

CASES

1. Democratizing the open road.

The motorcycle industry is filled with masculine stereotypes, confining women to the passenger seat. Can-Am worked with Touche to bring more women into the category by giving them a safe space on Facebook to air their grievances when it comes to gender bias. The team also educated and empowered women by speaking with attendees at a *Rolling Stone* event and mobilized members of the Facebook group to participate in a challenge to ride a collective 20,000 miles on International Female Ride Day.

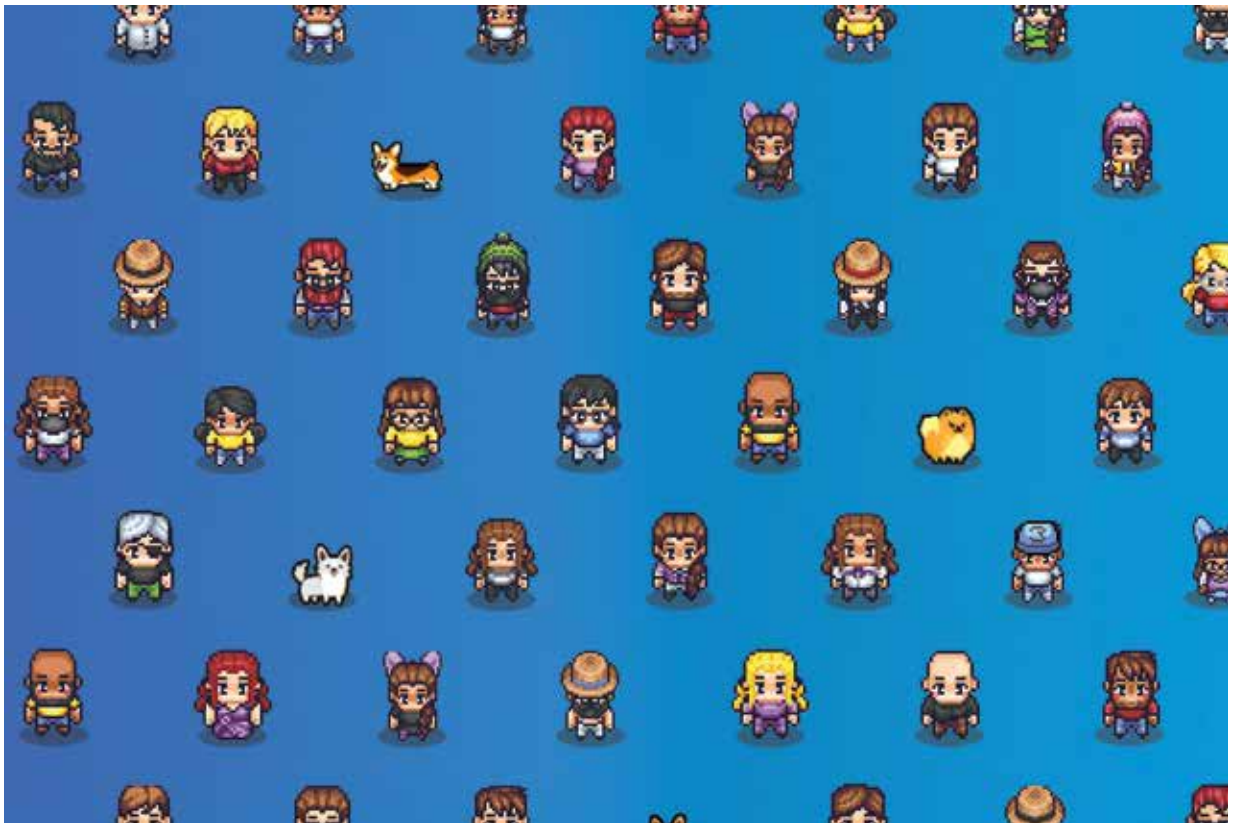


2. For Volkswagen, the shop created a virtual showroom as a one-stop shopping experience based on the “choose-your-own-adventure” concept. With the help of AutoTrader, consumers looking for a used car were sent new comparable VW models.

3. “Operation: Puck Drop” for Canadian Tire, in partnership with Hockey Canada and TSN/RDS, supplied Canadians with the tools to build their own backyard rinks.



► For cases, go to maoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



The digital engine that is FCB

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

IT'S BEEN A BUSY YEAR FOR FCB CANADA – and we're not talking about the work required to keep its awards shelf structurally sound after winning 194 trophies this year.

No, the agency has been busy adding a ton of creative and strategic talent, as well as a new leadership team for FCB/Six after parent co. IPG decided the shop's data-driven model was so effective it needed to be shared with the world under the Performance Art shingle.

In July 2021, SVP, GM Priyanka Goswami, SVP operations and agency development Grace McCann and ECD Rob Sturch took over from former FCB/Sixers Andrea Cook, Ian Mackenzie and Elizabeth Sellors, who moved over to Performance Art.

And although FCB/Six remains a separate division within FCB, it's actually become quite difficult to separate the efforts of the sister shop from those of the agency at large, says Tyler Turnbull, CEO of FCB North

America. He says FCB has, over the years, increasingly focused on developing more digital-led and data-driven work for its clients.

The results can certainly be seen in work for the Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) – from the search-based “Down Syndrome Answers” campaign in 2016 that relied on intercepting queries with educational videos, to training Google's speech recognition model using the voices of people with Down syndrome in “Project Understood” in 2020, to FCB's most recent effort this year, when it used the “Mindsets” app to gather fitness data and prove that exercise improves cognitive function (see sidebar).

This approach of building tools and platforms that evolve and continue to feed CDSS's creative strategy is by design. Priyanka Goswami, FCB/SIX SVP and GM, says the agency in general has been steering away from

KEY NEW BUSINESS

Foodland Ontario, Plinko

NEW HIRES

Josh Hauptert, Ben Playford, Jordan Darnbrough, Nick Noh, Gui Bermejo, Nicholas Doerr, Ariel Riske, Adam Tuck, JP DeLeon, Michael Pal, Patrick Moore, Tyler Strahl, Karan Rana, Daisy Qin, Stephanie Gyles, Ally Dwyer-Joyce, Michaela Hollingsworth, Brittany Kelly, Hailey Scott

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creating “one-off campaigns and executions” for clients and moving more toward sustainable platforms, which “have the opportunity to build on, adapt and pivot in a way that [has] the flexibility to change with the times.”

Another example of this can be seen in “Imagine What Home Could Be” for Ecobee, where FCB created a unifying campaign that was tied together with a unique palette and mnemonics that the brand could return to again and again for different creative.

“If you’re looking at creativity as an economic multiplier, then you shouldn’t have to constantly be creating brand-new things – that are really expensive for the client – in order to create success and scale. It’s about being able to build on success and learn,” Goswami adds. “Everything has been about innovation for us. So, now it’s what’s that next step? How do we take that data and tech creativity to the next level?”

FCB Canada president Bryan Kane says the agency has also focused on systemizing its operations in a way that the team can create content “at the pace of culture,” not just according to a media plan.

Consider the recent BMO “Financial Fairness” campaign that tackled gender-based economic

disparity. Launched with the evocative film, “Jane’s Story,” it spotlights how small moments erode women’s confidence with money. It was built out over several weeks with short-form videos, GIFs, influencers and other social assets. The effort far surpassed its goals, generating more than 90 million impressions, as well as 50 million views of the “Jane” videos. It also saw nearly 85,000 customers visit BMOForWomen.com, a 350% growth in traffic.

“BMO really understood that the purpose wasn’t an advertising message,” says Kane. “This was a reflection of who they are as an organization and their values. I really think it’s an approach that will grow in importance across different clients.

“There’s so much change happening in our business,” he sums. “I think it’s really challenged everybody to get back to the core of what agencies do for their clients and how we create value. For us, that was really focusing on the products we create, ultimately rooted in the beliefs that creativity is an economic multiplier – not just from a creative department perspective, but also strategy that informs it and the data that drives it.”

CASES



1. A movement, not a moment.

The viral nature of #metoo instantly put sexual violence, along with the MeToo organization, in the public spotlight. But to help prevent the movement from being a moment, FCB created a device that would get people to actively be a part of the solution. It created “Act Too,” the first-ever recommendation engine for activism to end sexual violence. It offered visitors ways to take action, using inspiration from people across the world and web.



2. Fitness holds the power to improve cognition, but it’s never been backed by research. So CDSS and FCB enlisted 200 people with Down syndrome to collect their fitness data using the Mindsets app and prove its efficacy.

3. Gen Z are the most ad resistant gen yet. So FCB and McCain’s approach was to earn their attention through disruption. The team created the “McCain Golden Oven” as the first campaign where a viewer can win the prize revealed at the end of an ad – if they made it to the end of the 10 minute wait.

► For full cases, go to digitalwinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Lg2's brand experience touch BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

WHEN YOU ASK CLAUDE AUCHU, partner and CEO of Lg2, what business he is in, he pauses to consider the question. It's not as straightforward as it sounds, because what began in 1991 as an ad agency is now a creative enterprise that defies traditional classification.

So in an effort to capture the nature of his business in a few words, he offers three answers: "We're in the business of progress. We're in the business of sustainable growth, powered by creativity." And then, "We are in the brand experience business."

While this may seem like an indecisive response, there is logic to it. It used to be that, to an agency, everything looked like an ad. "[But] nowadays, a brand experience is multidimensional. It is built in layers, and we must be prepared to respond to any and all of them." In such a multilayered universe, sustainable growth means being multidisciplinary. So, yes, Lg2 does advertising. But it also does architecture, product and service innovation,

UX/UI, graphic design, and business consulting.

Today, Lg2 has a Digital Experience group that consists of more than 40 UX and UI specialists who, as the "engine," work across all departments from architecture to production. According to the shop, its digital experts work in tandem with the strategy team and design talent to "turn great ideas into irresistibly engaging experiences," from installations to mobile apps. Some of Lg2's most awarded campaigns from the last year are products of this collaborative design-meets-digital process, and include the "Living Radars" and "The Crossing Fence" stunts for SAAQ and the "Hydro Express" interactive gondola for Hydro Quebec.

Another way in which Lg2 is demonstrating its commitment to its sustainable growth is with its recent move to Technopôle Angus, the first diversified green neighbourhood in Quebec. All the buildings in this east Montréal neighbourhood, including Lg2's new

headquarters, will be LEEDS ND platinum certified, complete with accessible public transit, bike paths, a BIXI station and EV charging hubs.

"Going to Angus, we saw a fit with the values of a neighbourhood," explains Auchu, "and an opportunity to design and build from scratch a building, which would contribute to a healthier, more eco-friendly workplace for employees and clients and have a positive impact on the urban environment." In light of the three answers Auchu gave when asked what business the agency is in, this is one of the things that Lg2 means by "progress."

For the two years leading up to 2020, Lg2 experienced 20% year-over-year growth. But since August 2020, that number has jumped to 34%. Growth in terms of new clients has come from essential products and services, especially in CPG, as well as categories that became critical during the pandemic such as telecom.

There has also been no shortage of industry recognition, with Lg2 winning 198 awards since Sept. 2020 – 101 national, 73 local and 24 international. Along with all that, Lg2 was named one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for its strategic planning capability, governance, transition and succession plans, entrepreneurial culture and innovation.

"We've always been on a perpetual quest for the better," says Auchu. "For the last 30 years we've demonstrated that in the areas of advertising, promotion and graphic design. But in the last five years, we've shifted to a more future-proof plan of growing in different markets and areas [like] product and service innovation [and] e-commerce. With this more robust, diversified model... we're excited about the next 30 years."

CASES

1. Pasta la vista, baby!

After Stefano Faita, a celebrated Italian chef from Montreal's Little Italy, successfully entered the retail space with his signature tomato sauce, his next step was to launch a pasta line. Lg2 helped the chef's new SKU stand out in a sea of traditional blue and green packaging by choosing a bold red hue. The agency also created distinct typographies, carefully chosen to represent the different pasta cuts, from skinny spaghetti to flat linguine.



2. Gentle, warm colours, outlined faces and bodies, and soft curves provided the background for different plays and activities taking place at the Periscope Theatre. The design idea was to break away from the photographic style used by other theatres and instead use a more sensitive visual language.

3. To bring Hudson's Bay's new "Live a Colourful Life" platform to life in stores and beyond, Lg2 created a flexible design system that used the brand's iconic stripes as a visual endorsement on every single piece of creative.

KEY NEW BUSINESS

Lassonde, Danone, Mondou, Exceldor, Beneva, Norda, La Cuvee, Simplex, Englobe

OFFICES

Montreal, Toronto, Quebec City

STAFF

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► For full cases, go to aoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



The bravest shop on the Blok

BY JENNIFER HORN

*"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."*

VANESSA ECKSTEIN INHERITED THESE WORDS as her design philosophy from her father, who, of course, borrowed them from T.S. Elliot. "It's about always experimenting," says the Blok Design founder of her interpretation of the poet's quote that is both intrinsic to her family and the studio she opened in 1998, a time when "design studios weren't really owned by women."

A native to Argentina, Eckstein has lived a nomadic life. The designer relocated from South America, moving between Los Angeles, New York, Mexico and Toronto before making the Canadian city her home base for the last decade. "For me, working in spaces where you are

uncomfortable – and not the ones you know, where you fall into patterns and things become systemic – that is what is enriching."

And in true fearless fashion, in late 2019, the designer decided to rent an apartment as a temporary studio in Berlin for two months. Eckstein convinced her team of five, some of whom had never left Canada or even Ontario for that matter, to wipe the slate clean and work remotely from the European city. Offshoring the team in the before-times did several things: it pushed them to go digital and become geo-agnostic right before COVID hit; it planted new seeds of thought as their perspectives changed; and it made the team comfortable with uncertainty (they didn't have a workspace arranged until after they arrived).

"Leaping into the unknown is definitely who we are as a studio," she says.

The founder's pluck has paid off. For instance, when cannabis brand 48North tasked Blok with designing and publishing a new magazine, *LAT*, mid-pandemic when the team wasn't sure printing vendors would be open, the uncertainty pushed them to look for alternative solutions. The team did its own press checks, laying out pages on the gravel ground of an empty parking lot where stones perforated the proofs and pages flew away in the wind. Against all odds, the magazine went to print in record time.

"That project took us a long time. It was very, very new for us," she says. "But the possibilities were there. The magazine was all about shifting the conversation. It had politics. It had social rights. So it represented a lot of the things that we actually look for in projects."

Having grown up during the Argentine Revolution, "politics are ingrained in my soul and design," says Eckstein. She's spent her career with the belief that design is best when it serves society, which is why her studio is named after a magazine from the Russian Revolution. "*Blok's* intention was to shift society. And I've always been attracted to the edge that sits between talking about change, and actually creating change."

A firm that believes in the power of design to drive change is certainly fitting for the times.

Eckstein says environmental issues and social justice movements informing the design discipline, and vice versa, is not new, "but I do think it's being searched for more now. It's not that the conversations within design are becoming more thoughtful, it's that I'm seeing them more. We have never received so many new business pitches with sustainability at the core, and from places like England or Latin America or LA."

In her realization that the pandemic set in motion a collective eco conscience, Eckstein partnered with designer Muriel Solomon to create Fors in late 2020. The brand makes durable "poetic objects for essential living" (tableware and homeware) with the philosophy that "enough is plenty." It's the same approach that Blok is applying to the design of a client's new hotel space in Picton, ON, where it's helping to source materials from local artists and sustainable businesses.

"The word sustainability now includes inclusivity. We're thinking about products much more holistically," she says. "For example, the second life of a product – it's not just about recycling, it's about lasting. When we were designing Fors, it wasn't about getting people to buy more products, but rather ones that will last for many generations. This is not new. It's common sense. We just forgot."

CASES



1. The beauty of digital design.

For Living Beauty – a community of beauty entrepreneurs – Blok designed an identity that was both contemporary and soulful. It also created an interactive website that served as a platform to showcase its partner brands.

2. To help expand cannabis brand 48North's audience, the studio designed the visual treatment for a new print publication, *LAT*. It not only designed the look of the magazine, but was also an active collaborator in shaping and driving the editorial direction.

3. Blok helped launch Fors in the midst of the pandemic as an antidote to wasteful consumption. The agency developed an e-commerce platform for the sustainable products company, with a visual digital grid that beautifully curated products and used photography for storytelling.



► For full cases, go to smallaoywinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Talent meets opportunity at NFA

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

IT'S CUSTOMARY TO ASK A NEW PRESIDENT about their first hundred days. However, when *strategy* caught up with new No Fixed Address president Mark Carpenter it had only been about half that. Yet that was still enough time for him to oversee some big growth at the agency.

"My previous role [as CMO of NFA] was focused on a few verticals but, as I take on this broader role, it's reminded me of the power of the grid we've built and what we're able to achieve. There is nothing but

opportunity now, and that maybe hasn't been the case for a while."

Based in Toronto, with offices in Montreal and New York, NFA's "integrated grid" model – which is based on talent and not offices – has allowed the multi-functional agency to not only survive but thrive in the last 18 months. In that

time, it's grown from 100 creative souls to 185, revenue has roughly doubled, and its welcomed accounts such as Hello Fresh, Chef's Plate and CPA Ontario.

Over the last few years NFA has expanded its list of services, adding a media arm, then a public relations practice, and finally a health division between 2018 and 2019. The agency has quickly grown to become a one-stop shop that's not only capable of winning Bronze in the Digital category of AOY, but also the Gold in PR.

NEW KEY BUSINESS

Beyond Meat, Betway, Chef's Plate, Kraft, Freed Developments, Canada Learning Code, CPA Ontario, Royal Ontario Museum, CMHC, Hivestack, Eli Lilly, VRAYLAR, Abbvie Allergan, Insurance Store

KEY HIRES

Anand Iyer, Dominique Raso, Chris Perron, Jay Fleming, Hayley Malcho, Holly Lepp, Caitlyn Kirkos, Andrew Rizzi, Daniela Angelucci, Jared Kwart, Aryana Hassan, Alina Stanca, Victoria Di Valerio, Jennifer Mo, Alex Berube, Brittany Dow, Vanessa Côté, Michelle Hayos

OFFICES

Montreal, Toronto, New York

STAFF

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"Ideas need to travel to be successful," says Carpenter. "For us, PR is completely plugged into our creative and strategic process. It's not a bolt-on where we say, 'Here's our ad campaign, now go PR this.' We're all collaborating on this stuff to make sure that the end result is really strong and works for the client."

An idea that was built to travel is the "Unsilence the Conversation" campaign for Sunnybrook and its Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network (PAIL). The goal was to create opportunities to talk about pregnancy loss, giving families the words to talk about their grief. To do that, NFA created the "Unbirth Announcement" that was widely shared on social media, encouraging the normalization of the conversation through shared experience.

The end result was a campaign that earned 78 million

impressions across Canada. More importantly, says Carpenter, NFA heard from countless parents who had experienced a loss saying that this was the first time they heard their story being told.

NFA and New York sister agency Mischief's campaign for the Canadian Centre for Child Protection also spread across the social-verse this year. Timed for the platform's 15th anniversary, "Happy Birthday, Twitter" was a powerful and heartbreaking look at child exploitation online. The short film, which was tied to the hashtag #TwitterBirthdayPlea, offered testimonials of child exploitation victims, and called on the social media platform to do more to prevent it. The campaign earned 330 million impressions across the globe – including 30 million impressions on Twitter itself.

The agency's geo-agnostic and ultra-collaborative

CASES PR



1. Quarantine garb.

There have been reports that more babies were born as a result of months of isolation during the pandemic. That, Heinz By Nature thought, is something to celebrate. So to help new parents show off their lockdown babies, No Fixed Address worked with the CPG brand to create a limited edition clothing line: The Lockdown Lovechild Collection. The clothing featured witty and adorable bibs and onesies including slogans like "I was my parent's quarantine craft project."



2. For the ROM, the shop created a crowd-sourced exhibition, calling on kids and teens to submit their own #MyPandemicStory for the chance to be featured, as well as raising awareness through press, TikTok and Instagram ads.

3. Social platforms, like Twitter, are hotspots for child sexual assault material. So NFA helped the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to encourage the platform to take action by releasing a video that captured the voices and emotions of real survivors on Twitter's birthday.



► For full cases, go to prwinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

business model seemed to be the perfect antidote for the uncertainty of the last two years. In order to survive, flexibility was key and, luckily, that has been NFA's calling card ever since it launched in 2016.

"Lines are constantly being blurred and you can either worry about butting up against that or you can completely embrace it," sums Carpenter. "There are just too many factors, with clients and budget expectations, the target, the cultural nuance... You just have to remove some of those preconceived barriers, add a bunch of smart people onto a problem with different perspectives and then you get magic on the back end."

Consider the recent integration of Ethnicity Matters. While NFA and the multicultural shop will remain as

separate entities for the foreseeable future and working relationships are still being hammered out, the addition opens the door to new "insights and perspectives from all types of people who are now represented in our work," says Carpenter. "It's just a really powerful [way] to make sure that the ideas and campaigns we're developing are going to resonate across the board."

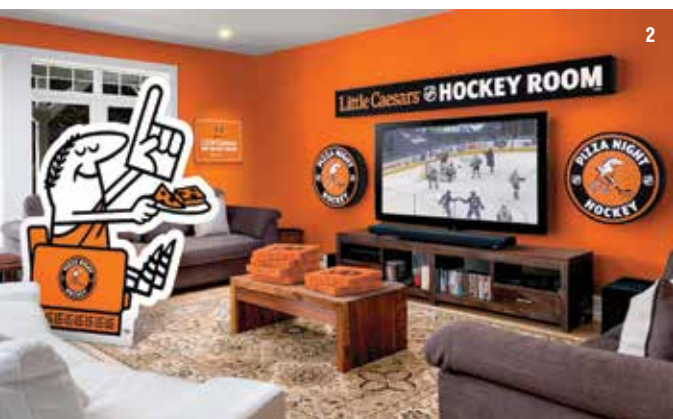
Should we expect NFA's growth to continue into 2021 and beyond? The best Carpenter will offer is a definite maybe.

"We haven't really sought out growth," he admits. "We follow talent, first and foremost, and then we follow opportunity. The focus is always on making sure that our people and our clients are taken care of."

CASES DIGITAL

1. Dairy meets digital.

For 40 years, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) have been a part of Toronto's Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, where it educates children on the merits of milk and dairy farming. When the Fair was closed to the public in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, NFA helped shift its partnership to a virtual experience by creating a branded Minecraft World and transporting students to a virtual dairy farm. "DairyCraft" included immersive lessons that were also designed around the core concepts of the Ontario elementary school curriculum.



2. When Little Caesars became the Official Pizza of the NHL during COVID, it invited fans to sell the "Naming Rights" to their living room or basement, allowing them to "renegotiate" their contracts in a digital auction, where fans could name their price to add Little Caesars branding in their home.

3. NFA worked with Sunnybrook to create a digital algorithm opt-out browser plugin that avoided baby-related content and ads that reminded parents of their pregnancy loss at unexpected moments.





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Middle Child refuses to be ignored

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

CULTURE HACKING IS HOW Middle Child (nee The Colony Project) managing director Amanda Shuchat likes to describe her agency's philosophy. It's about understanding cultural conversations and being able to insert clients into them in a meaningful way.

Shuchat says Middle Child works to ID trends as they're emerging – collecting insights that come from a cocktail of research, daily news and social listening, trend updates, collaborative brainstorming and dialogue directly with key audiences.

And while that might sound like table stakes for a PR agency today, pulling it off has taken a remarkable amount of skill and insight over the last 18 months

– considering the global pandemic and a culture cognizant of social injustice now more than ever.

"There are different sensitivities than there were before," says Shuchat, "and

we need to be especially thoughtful in our counsel and what we're doing to really make clients relevant."

In fact, the agency now often consults with clients on what not to do as much as what to do.

"A client will come to us and say, 'This is a big, sensitive issue – we want to put out a statement about this. We want to do a campaign or social post.' And, a lot of times our counsel will be: 'Don't do it unless you're willing to make a long-term meaningful investment.'"

Take Sephora. For years, the retailer has invested in speaking to multicultural audiences. Last year, its "We Belong to Something Beautiful" campaign took it a step further by challenging racial bias in the beauty industry.

**KEY NEW
BUSINESS**
Diageo, Coca-Cola
Bottling, Ilia, Youth
to the People,
DHL, Evereden

NEW HIRES
Kendall Pereira,
Natalie Legault,
Shannon
Harrington

OFFICE
Toronto

STAFF
25

Working with the PR firm, Sephora created authentic conversations around Diwali, Lunar New Year and the first-ever Indigenous Awareness Month campaign by working with people from those different communities. For the latter, for example, the team exclusively employed Indigenous talent to tackle production, wardrobe, styling, music and photography.

“People want to engage with brands that share the same values they do,” says Shuchat. “So you have to understand the bigger message and issues people care about – and that’s what’s going to help them relate to brands.”

In a time of so much change, she says, it comes down to humility and honesty – and owning your miss-steps. That’s a big part of why The Colony Project rebranded to become Middle Child.

An extension of sister agency Citizen, the Colony moniker spoke to an ideal of one working towards the good of many, which worked when it launched in 2016 but not now. Images of colonialism no longer create the positive associations the agency is looking for.

“So, we needed to move on from that brand. It doesn’t serve us anymore. It’s not who we are and it’s not giving out the right message. So let’s introduce something new,” says Shuchat. “The middle child is known as being curious, imaginative and full of wonder. Often, this child is misbehaved and ignored. But we are the middle child who refuses to be ignored.”

Over the last year alone, Middle Child has won a host of new clients, including Diageo, Coca-Cola Bottling, DHL, Ilia, Youth to the People and Evereden. And as it continues to grow and evolve, Shuchat says her 25-person team (split between Toronto and Montreal offices) aims to live up to the curious nature its new moniker suggests.

“We’re looking to identify trends as they’re emerging,” she says, “to find those gems of cultural conversations that we can insert our brands into in meaningful and authentic ways. It’s not just about where the data is coming from, but rather the lens we apply it to.”

“We want ideas that have voltage or stopping power – ideas that are executable in time to take advantage of a trend. Often, we need to act within 72 hours to remain relevant, so agility is key.”

CASES



1. The cheesiest PR push.

To introduce KD Flavour Boosts, Middle Child launched a national media campaign that played on the absurdity of the new Candy and Pumpkin Spice KD flavours on Valentine’s Day and in the Fall.

To get consumers excited for the Pumpkin Spice launch, the shop announced a waitlist, encouraging Canadians to be one of the first to get their hands on the limited-edition drop. And for the Candy flavour launch, the agency shared heart-shaped boxes with media and influencers. Within 24 hours of each campaign launch, KD Boost was trending across news outlets in Canada and the U.S.



2. For Sephora, the firm helped the retailer ensure authentic representation in its communications, partnering with collaborators within South Asian, East Asian, and Indigenous communities in celebration of Diwali, Lunar New Year and National Indigenous History Month.

3. The Montreal Children’s Hospital wanted to remind parents (in a non-patronizing way) how lucky they are to have bratty kids – because a healthy child is a mischievous one. So the hospital celebrated kids’ brattiness in a spot, which Middle Child supported with PR outreach that targeted Francophones in *La Presse*, as well as other news, health and lifestyle media, with a mailer distributed to influencers.



► For full cases, go to prwinners.strategyonline.ca/2021



Citizen Relations has purpose

BY JENNIFER HORN

CITIZEN RELATIONS' NICK COWLING WOULD LIKE the industry to think beyond one-time corporate charitable donations and ad hoc cause campaigns.

"If I was a retailer," he says, "I would want to put food banks out of business." The agency president acknowledges the crassness of his statement, "but, in my opinion, there's still too much 'marketing' and not enough 'purpose' being done in purpose marketing."

Recent times has shown that humanity can do anything when the stakes are high enough. "If the world can come up with a vaccine faster than ever before, why can't it do the same for climate change? For world hunger?" The question posed by Cowling may be too big for Citizen Relations to address on its own – but

perhaps someone with a handful of degrees in environmental science and social anthropology can help?

Enter Dr. Shilpa Tiwari.

In June 2021, Citizen appointed Tiwari as its first global EVP responsible for counseling clients when it comes to social impact, sustainability and DEI. A tall order, but one that she's thoroughly equipped for: Tiwari arrived at Citizen with education and experience from places like the U.K., Asia and Africa, having held senior ESG positions at companies like Manulife and SNC-Lavalin. She's also the founder of Her Climb whose mission is to fill company ranks with women who look more like her.

"I needed someone who actually understands ESG, because it's quite complex," says Cowling. "I can dumb it down to a bunch of spreadsheets but it takes someone like Shilpa to understand the [totality of ESG] and how to build it up."

Say a client wants to promote the fact that it's planning to become carbon-free by 2030. That's great, says Cowling, but if they are also contributing to the world's methane emissions (which environmental scientists are now saying is a much worse contributor to climate change in the short-term), then someone is going to call the brand out on it.

"With the level of transparency today, we have to look at the entire proposition... You can look for one thing you're doing right and you can create a marketing campaign around it, but just promoting that one piece is not what the client needs. They need us to say, 'OK, here are the areas that we have identified as weaknesses. Let's talk more about plans to improve that.'"

KEY NEW BUSINESS
VinFast, Ville de Laval, UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal), Vitacore, Article

NEW HIRES
Josh Budd, Dr. Shilpa Tiwari, Laura Muirhead

OFFICES
Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Quebec City

STAFF
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Food producer Nissin started working with the agency for that very reason. Cowling says the U.S. arm of the company first approached Vision7 sister shop Cossette to assist with its ESG strategy. But Citizen had just launched its social impact and sustainability practice (which is currently a team of four, with eyes on a fifth to support its rapid growth). Several conversations later and it's now helping the Japanese company collect and measure its emissions throughout the supply chain, a task rarely spearheaded by a PR firm.

A higher level of scrutiny is also being applied to the creative product, says Cowling. More clients are approaching Citizen to review campaigns and advise whether they're appropriate for the current environment. ("We've actually stopped some," admits Cowling.) And there's a growing client desire for more integrated teams, he says, with some RFPs now calling for a senior communications client to be on the core marketing team for the creative.

Similar to media, decisions around how to make an idea live through PR is traditionally kept separate from the creative. But Citizen wants to be a bigger part of those discussions, and even lead some of its own.

That's why, in May, Cowling hired Josh Budd to lead its creative hub – which consists of two ACDs, two ADs, a copywriter and a senior designer – working across North America. Budd came from creative shop No Fixed Address, where he helped produce work that has PR legs, and so he understands the intersection between the two disciplines, says Cowling.

"We brought in strategy years and years ago, and it helped us make smart work from the beginning. But one of the things I wanted to do is create a larger [creative] contingent," he says, adding that making Budd's remit cover the whole of North America means he's able to support Citizen's offices across Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Quebec City, New York, Irvine and Los Angeles.

While the agency's mission – "to make every conversation count" – has informed the transformation of its operations over the years, it's now able to execute on that vision with an experienced creative (Wunderman Thompson, Leo Burnett and Cossette are just some of ad agencies on Budd's resume) at the helm. As Cowling has said before: "We're focused on developing a creative organization, not an organization with a creative department."

CASES

PR Campaign of The Year



1. Bravery on display.

SickKids patients earn "Bravery Beads" with every procedure they endure, and over the years more than one million patients have earned over one million beads. Yet few outside the hospital have ever seen one. So Citizen put them at the heart of five installations in places like the Eaton Centre. It also shared patient stories through media interviews with the volunteers who run the Bravery Bead program at SickKids, and enlisted influencers to continue the conversation online.

2. For "Unsanitary Products," the shop sent red boxes across the country to media and influencers that included items like socks, a t-shirt, and paper napkins – things that some women are forced to use as an alternative period product. Each item was wrapped with period poverty stats and what Shoppers and U by Kotex are doing about it.



3. Citizen helped beverage brand Vizzy and Ru Paul's Drag Race star Priyanka promote "The Vizzybility Project" – a grant program for LGBTQ+ artists – with a widespread media tour that saw the influencer become a co-host for *ET Canada*, land on the cover of *ELLE Canada*, and get the attention of global press, including a feature spread in *Forbes*.

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2021 AGENCY OF THE YEAR | JUDGES

AGENCY OF THE YEAR



Manasvi Abrol
Edelman



Chris Dacyshyn
Bleublancrouge



Simone Lumsden
Rogers



David Allard
Campari Canada



Anne Donohoe
BC Cancer Foundation



Frederick Nduna
Rethink (formerly at Gut)



Hope Bagozzi
Tim Hortons



Vik Kambli
Clearly



Carolyn Shaw
Humanity



Brent Choi
Angry Butterfly



Jack Latulippe
No Fixed Address



Jacquie Ryan
Canadian Olympic Committee

DESIGN AGENCY OF THE YEAR



Kammy Ahuja
The&Partnership



Eliot Cohen Pirenne
Lululemon



Caio Oyafuso
Ecobee



Jan Avendano
Art & Mechanical



Nathalie Cusson
Le Parc Design,
Juniper Park\TBWA



Luc Perreault
Freelance



Genevieve Beharry
48North



Shawn Lambino
Anomaly



Barry Quinn
Quake Creative & Design



Anne-Marie Brouillette
Republik



Pia Nummi
Canada Goose

DIGITAL AGENCY OF THE YEAR



Alister Adams
Publicis Canada



Stefan Harvalias
Kits



Denise Rossetto
Broken Heart Love Affair



Ekaterina Dobrokhotova
MEDISCA



Matt Houghton
Interac



Cynthia Steele
Reprise Digital



Matyas Gabor
BRP



Andrea Hunt
Arterra Wines



Cameron Wykes
Media.Monks



Dave Hale
Craft&Crew



Jordan Markowski
Diamond Marketing Group

**MEDIA
AGENCY OF
THE YEAR**


Adam Jardine
Kijiji



Sabrina LaRosa
Loblaw Companies Limited



Fred LeCoq
Golf Town



Robin LeGassicke
Cairns O'Neil



Alison Leung
Shopify



Alain Léveillé
Fuel Digital



Devon MacDonald
Cairns O'Neil



Lauren Richards
Pollin8



Nish Shah
Initiative



Wes Wolch
Holt Renfrew

**PR
AGENCY OF
THE YEAR**


Barry Alexander
Knix



Rick Byun
RB Communicates



Felisia Canedo
Aldo Group



Lori Davison
Royal Ontario Museum



Lauren Dineen-Duarte
American Express



Shani Gwin
Gwin Communications



Darian Kovacs
Jelly Digital Marketing
& PR Agency



Sonia Prashar
spPR



Dan Strasser
Venture Play,
District Ventures Plus



Jessica Vieira Teixeira
Molson Coors



Aaron Wade
Giant Tiger



Andrew Wagar
Swerve PR

**SMALL
AGENCY OF
THE YEAR**


Sarah Au
Muskoka Brewery



David Bigioni
Brave Strategy



Rob Daintree
Telus (formerly at WestJet)



Ari Elkouby
Wunderman Thompson



Peter Gardiner
Diamond Marketing Group



Niall Kelly
Conflict Advertising



Geneviève Langlois
Lg2



Fiona O'Brien
Danone



Cory Pelletier
Core Communications
& Marketing



Kristin Vekteris
Earls Restaurants



Leah Zukowski
Flipp Advertising

2021 AGENCY OF THE YEAR | PROCESS & SHORTLISTS



THE 2021 AWARDS PROGRAM BEGAN with an open call for Canadian agencies to submit their best campaigns from the past 12 months.

All eligible creative, media, digital, PR and design agencies entered the program with comprehensive campaign, program or project case studies – five for AOY and three for Media, Digital, PR, Design and Small.

Separate cross-industry and cross-country jury panels then marked the work online and in isolation. Each campaign for the agency, media and digital competitions was given two marks from one to 10 based on strategy and creativity, while judges scored the PR campaigns using the same criteria, as well as a score for impact. Design was judged on creativity, technical challenge and impact. Judges with conflicts were omitted from scoring on the applicable cases.

The top-scoring agencies made up the shortlists, based on a natural drop-off point in the scoring. Scores were averaged with equal weighting, and the agency with the highest marks was the winner. One case from each category with the highest points was named a Campaign of the Year. The finalists, in winning order, are listed below.

AGENCY	SMALL AGENCY	DESIGN
Rethink	123w	Rethink
Zulu Alpha Kilo	Broken Heart Love Affair	Lg2
Ogilvy	Fuse Create	Blok Design
Cossette	Arrivals + Departures	Leo Burnett
Lg2	The Local Collective	Zulu Alpha Kilo
Taxi	Juliet Creative	Cossette
Forsman & Bodenfors	Open	Sid Lee
Camp Jefferson	Here Be Monsters	123w
Leo Burnett	Giants & Gentlemen	John St.
Dentsu	Zero trillion	
John St.	Doug&Partners	
Anomaly	Church+State	
DDB		

DIGITAL	MEDIA	PR
Rethink	Initiative	No Fixed Address
FCB	Wavemaker	The Colony Project
No Fixed Address	Touché	Citizen Relations
Zulu Alpha Kilo	UM	Edelman
Lg2	Jungle Media	Craft Public Relations
Sid Lee	PHD Media	Veritas Communications
The Humanise Collective	OMD	Narrative
	Dentsu Media	Agnostic
	Cossette Media	MSLGroup
	Media Experts	Pomp and Circumstance
		Weber Shandwick
		North Strategic



This is the third year in a row that Rethink has snagged the Agency of the Year and Design AOY Gold – but the first year to take home the Digital Gold, too. To see all of the winners, visit agencyoftheyear.strategyonline.ca

1990

Gold: McKim Advertising
Silver: Cossette
Communication-Marketing
Bronze: Baker Lovick
Advertising

1991

Gold: Chiat/Day/Mojo
Silver: Baker Lovick:BBDO
Bronze: MacLaren:Lintas

1992

Gold: Chiat/Day
Silver: Ogilvy & Mather
Bronze: MacLaren:Lintas

1993

Gold: Geoffrey B. Roche
& Partners Advertising
Silver (tie): McKim Baker
Lovick/BBDO, Taxi
Bronze: BCP

1994

Gold: MacLaren:Lintas
Silver: BBDO Canada
Bronze: Geoffrey B. Roche
& Partners Advertising

1995

Gold: MacLaren McCann
Silver: BBDO Canada
Bronze: Leo Burnett

1996

Gold: Leo Burnett
Silver: Palmer Jarvis
Communications
Bronze: BBDO Canada

1997

Gold: Roche Macaulay
& Partners Advertising
Silver: Palmer Jarvis
Communications
Bronze: Leo Burnett

1998

Gold: Roche Macaulay
& Partners Advertising
Silver: BBDO Canada
Bronze: Palmer Jarvis DDB

1999

Gold: Palmer Jarvis DDB
Silver: Ammirati Puris Lintas
Bronze: Young & Rubicam

2000

Gold: Palmer Jarvis DDB
Silver: Taxi
Bronze: MacLaren McCann

2001

Gold: Palmer Jarvis DDB
Silver: Ammirati Puris
Bronze: Taxi

2002

Gold: Taxi
Silver: Bensimon-Byrne
Bronze: Zig

2003

Gold: Taxi
Silver: Palmer Jarvis DDB
Bronze: Downtown Partners
DDB

2004

Gold: Taxi
Silver: Zig
Bronze: DDB

2005

Gold: Taxi
Silver: Rethink
Bronze: BBDO Canada

2006

Gold: Rethink
Silver: DDB
Bronze: Lowe Roche

2007

Gold: DDB
Silver: Ogilvy & Mather
Bronze: Taxi

2008

Gold: Taxi
Silver: BBDO Canada
Bronze: DDB

2009

Gold: DDB
Silver: Rethink
Bronze: Zig

2010

Gold: DDB
Silver: Taxi
Bronze: Sid Lee

2011

Gold: BBDO
Silver: DDB
Bronze: Taxi

2012

Gold: DDB
Silver: John St.
Bronze: Tax

2013

Gold: John St.
Silver: Taxi
Bronze: BBDO

2014

Gold: Leo Burnett
Silver: Rethink
Bronze: DDB

2015

Gold: Leo Burnett
Silver: J. Walter Thompson
Bronze: Taxi

2016

Gold: Cossette
Silver: Leo Burnett
Bronze: John St.

2017

Gold: Cossette
Silver: J. Walter Thompson
Bronze: Lg2

2018

Gold: Cossette
Silver: John St.
Bronze: Zulu Alpha Kilo

2019

Gold: Rethink
Silver: BBDO Toronto
Bronze: John St.

2020

Gold: Rethink
Silver: No Fixed Address
Bronze: BBDO

2021

Gold: Rethink
Silver: Zulu Alpha Kilo
Bronze: Ogilvy



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The Pharma Report

How pharma brands are
rewriting the script to create
healthier relationships

Looking
through the
lens of four agencies
that have evolved their
approach, a new, more engaging
marcom formula emerges.



McCann Health Canada did its first ad on streaming platform Twitch this year – a video for Alcon Systane that turned dry eye drops into a performance product.

Small agency, big name

McCann Health Canada combines a boutique approach with a wealth of specialized capabilities

McCANN HEALTH CANADA may sound like a large-scale operation, but president Neill Brown says it's really "a small agency with a big name."

While global advertising network McCann is one of the most recognized names in the business, McCann Health Canada is a standalone focusing entirely on healthcare. And that's a key selling feature. Despite recent growth, thinking small is a mindset it embraces by setting up dedicated teams for clients, sharing the challenger spirit of their brands, and fostering a culture of conscious inclusion.

"McCann Health is built for Canada – the knowledge of our strategic regulatory environment, the understanding of all the stakeholders you can reach and connect with across the healthcare spectrum, and Canadian-sized budgets," says Brown, who has also held positions in the UK, U.S. and Asia.

With offices in Toronto and Montreal, the 50-strong agency retains the mindset of a small shop, Brown says, with two clearly defined teams – one focusing on marketing to healthcare professionals (HCPs), the other on consumers and patients – that have the expertise to navigate their respective areas of the business while learning from each other.

The recent creation of IPG Health, bringing together McCann Health and FCB Health into "one integrated powerhouse," says Brown, means clients get simplified access to more specialized capabilities such as data analytics, media production and more.

At the core of the company's success is its insights-based approach to problem solving.

"It's very different from rushing straight into tactics," he says. "We work upfront to correctly define the problem and apply data analytics and journey-mapping to identify areas of opportunity and tell truths around brands and categories. We ask a lot of questions and do a lot of listening to both clients and the target audience."

The priority when engaging HCPs is respecting their time, Brown adds. The conversation is shifting from a sales-driven, promotional conversation to more of a medical exchange.

"It's about listening to what's important to them, how they want to connect with their patients, how they want to connect with their peers and pharma and then modeling your approach accordingly," he says.

McCann Health Canada partnered with CRC Research on a study investigating the impact of COVID-19 on healthcare marketing. The survey found that while the pandemic has accelerated the digital transformation of health, HCPs are concerned that the lack of human connection may limit their ability to provide the best clinical care. They also felt the huge amount of online information (and misinformation) may affect patients' ability to properly assess medical decisions.

With these challenges in mind, McCann Health Canada endeavours to find "a meaningful role for brands in people's lives," Brown says.

He points to a recent Alcon DAILIES TOTAL1 contact lenses campaign spearheaded by executive creative director Sean Riley.

The "Fight the Fog" campaign was sparked by mandatory mask-wearing due to the pandemic that posed a challenge for glasses wearers who had to deal with fogging or even frosting glasses. "Fogging glasses present a serious barrier for essential workers who need to be able to see clearly to perform their services," Riley notes.

Alcon encouraged essential workers to enter a contest in which they shared how one year's supply of DAILIES TOTAL1 lenses would help them, and that prize was awarded to 100 winners. The contest was promoted through social media and clinic materials for six weeks and further amplified through experts on TV and in editorial across the country. Riley says the number of applications was overwhelming and the testimonials powerful.

In terms of channel innovation, McCann Health was proud of its first ad on videogame streaming platform Twitch this year. "Knowing that people were spending a lot of time gaming, we developed a spot for Systane that turned dry-eye drops into a performance product," he says.

He credits Richelle Colbear, director of client services, for helping to create an environment where staff can flex their creative muscles. Colbear recently helped create the Variety Society, the company's DE&I committee consisting of a group of staff who volunteer to arrange weekly programming on topics including Indigenous rights, 2SLGBTQ+ equality and neurodiversity. "We invest in our people and the culture that binds us together," Colbear says.

According to Brown, the company has grown significantly in the last five years, recently expanding brand assignments with existing clients such as Novartis and GSK and working with new clients Dentalcorp, Lilly and AbbVie.

He adds, "Now more than ever, being in health is incredibly meaningful and rewarding in terms of helping Canadians live healthier lives."



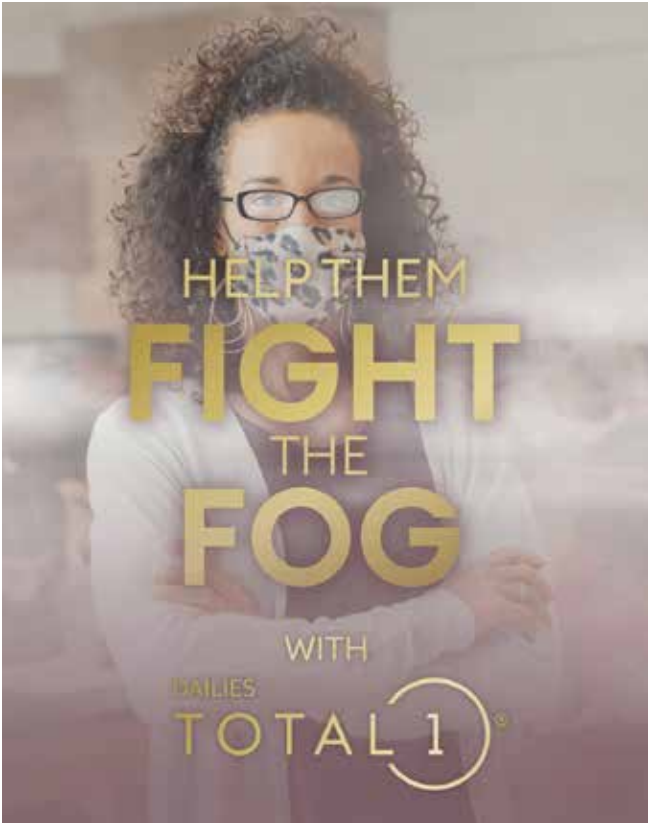
McCann Health Canada’s work with Alcon included this “Comfort of Nothing” digital video.



In a recent campaign for a Canadian pharmaceutical company, McCann Health Canada referenced the challenges many patients with COPD must contend with, not casting blame and focusing on the future.




The Variety Society is a group of McCann Health Canada staff members who volunteer to help engage staff on diversity, equity and inclusion topics.

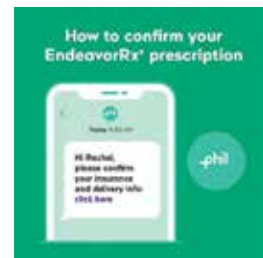
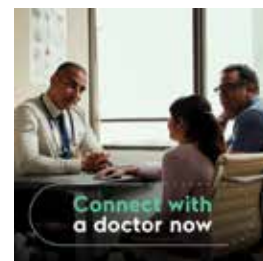
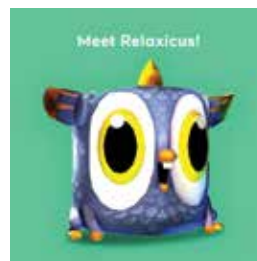


The “Fight the Fog” campaign encouraged essential workers to enter a contest to win a one-year supply of Alcon DAILIES TOTAL1 contact lenses.



A series about HIV for a Canadian pharmaceutical company speaks to the diverse range of PLHIV (people living with HIV), rather than the narrow representation often depicted in advertising.

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BAM Strategy's work with Akili Interactive for EndeavorRx, a video-game treatment for children with ADHD (above left), runs the gamut from paid media to creative to web development and custom attribution analysis. Akili has also embraced telehealth, inviting potential customers to speak with a physician via a call-to-action button on the EndeavorRx website (top right).

Sparking "Careiosity"

BAM looks to drive results with meaningful digital experiences



HEN PETE MEYERS, BAM Strategy's President, U.S., first joined the agency and learned about its motto "Careiosity" (meaning care + curiosity), he was skeptical.

"I thought, 'Is this really meaningful?' But seeing it from the inside, I realized it is the truth about what we do," says Meyers, formerly of GroupM and Ogilvy. "It's about approaching a [project] with care and thoughtfulness, but also underpinned by an insatiable curiosity that allows us to think about things in innovative and interesting ways with the ultimate goal of creating impact."

He's excited by the recent launch of a New York office after 25 years as one of Canada's premier full-service digital marketing agencies, new clients including Omega-3 supplements producer Naturesage, telehealth ecommerce startup AgelessRx, and Reckitt, for which BAM is providing customer relationship management for the company's hygiene and home business. "We have seen very quick growth in the U.S. – beyond what we anticipated," he says.

With a staff of 82 in Canada and the U.S., BAM sees its integrated service model as the core of its approach.

Meyers points to work with client Akili Interactive on EndeavorRx, an FDA-approved video-game treatment for kids who have ADHD. He says BAM works with the company on every service it can provide, from paid media to creative to UX and UI for web development and custom attribution analytics.

Akili has embraced telehealth – the EndeavorRx website's home page initiates a direct relationship upon arrival by inviting visitors to "Talk to a doctor now." Meyers sees telehealth as one of the biggest marketing strategy stories of the pandemic.

"A number of our clients have it in market and others are looking to launch it soon," he says. "It's a big benefit for consumers and physicians, and from a marketing strategy standpoint, it creates different opportunities for messaging, KPIs and attribution – things that didn't exist to the same degree 18 months ago."

BAM also is working with dynamic creative optimization (DCO), which allows the team to load many variations into social environments, including image options, calls to action, colour formats, ad formats and more.

"Previously it had been, 'We have four pieces of creative, so let's have a six-month roadmap to be able to test which one drives value,'" Meyers says. "Now, instead of testing four, you can test 100 and you can get feedback within a 30-to-45-day period with social platforms to rapidly isolate what is the ideal variation that drives the best performance."

In the context of pharma, he adds, "you can capture that capability, but still do it within the regulatory requirements that our pharma-brand partners need to live within."

The technology is changing the game, Meyers says. "Instead of A/B testing, I call it full alphabet testing."



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NFA designed a gamified, web-based experience for physicians that allowed them to “test” treatment choices across various profiles of people living with diabetes, such as patient Xavier, left.

“Humans learn better through play, and doctors are humans, too,” she says.

With Sanofi Genzyme Canada, NFA created a web-based medical education program called Multiple Myeloma Assessment Pathway, inspired by the way travel websites help narrow down vacation choices. The program helps hematologist-oncologists navigate complex treatment pathways based on real patients.

NFA emphasizes insight-based strategy. “We spend a lot of time conducting primary research, listening to physicians, talking to patients and nurses and understanding their lived experiences,” Brown says. “We bring that perspective to our clients and creative teams so that collectively we can create deliverables that truly meet physician and patient needs.”

Having analyzed the struggles that teens and parents experience when transitioning to adult care for cystic fibrosis, NFA crafted an adherence tool with Vertex Pharma that resembled an interactive board book with innovative design and multimedia components. A virtual voice assistant is also being developed that allows patients to refill their medication using Alexa.

NFA also works on direct-to-consumer (DTC) campaigns for pharma, in one case developing an online interactive quiz for patients with rheumatoid arthritis to assess the type of treatment they would prefer based on their lifestyle.

“The possibilities are endless in the digital space and constantly changing,” notes Czylyski, which keeps things exciting at NFA.

“We have this intersection between clearly identifying the problem we are trying to solve, then getting at it with insight-based strategy, creativity, and scientific acumen,” adds Brown. “That’s where we live and thrive.”



For the “MyTreatmentMyWay” DTC campaign, NFA used an online quiz to draw a link between features of rheumatoid arthritis patients’ lifestyle preferences, empowering them to consult their physicians.



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No fixed approach

No Fixed Address Health is carving out a niche as a digital-first agency that can do it all in-house

PEOPLE SOMETIMES GET THE IMPRESSION that the name No Fixed Address (NFA) means the company doesn’t have an address, office or staff.

In fact, the five-year-old company has offices in Toronto, Montreal and New York and a staff of 200. The name was chosen by founders and agency veterans Serge Rancourt and Dave Lafond to reflect their method toward servicing clients.

“No fixed solutions, no fixed approach, no fixed costing structure,” explains Dorothy Czylyski, President of NFA Health. It’s a philosophy that can mean reinventing the wheel with every client.

“We have frameworks and models, but we’re not bound to them,” adds David Brown, VP, healthcare insight and strategy. “We instead defer to the insights of the people we’re trying to serve.”

Czylyski says another key differentiator for NFA is that it doesn’t have the typical “triangle” agency structure with a few key people at the top and then a bunch of juniors. “We don’t have a lot of junior people,” she says. “It’s our senior people doing the work, meaning that our clients always get the A-team.”

NFA’s integrated model is key, she adds, pointing out that while a company typically will use multiple agencies to execute, NFA has the capabilities to provide medical writing, copywriting, creative, website and email development, media, PR, video production, as well as campaign measurement and analytics in-house, which translates to greater ease and less of a burden for the client.

Being a digital-first agency means NFA is inspired by what’s happening on the consumer side, bringing its capabilities and creativity to the healthcare space. Czylyski cites a recent project with Novo Nordisk for which NFA built a “choose-your-own-adventure” digital experience for HCPs that mimicked real-life clinical practice, allowing them to “test” treatment choices across various profiles of people living with diabetes in a safe, gamified, web-based experience.



Tank Worldwide created a video for GSK that amplified the messages of awareness campaigns about shingles and whooping cough.

Hyper-collaboration and a passion for adding value

Tank Worldwide's rule-breaking creative approach looks to beat back 'infobesity'



WITH OFFICES IN MONTREAL, TORONTO, NEW YORK AND LONDON – and more on the way – Tank

Worldwide is rapidly expanding, especially in the U.S., where the agency is doing considerable direct-to-consumer work.

"But we're still focused and loyal to our Canadian business," says Thomas Lecordier, SVP, managing director, Health. "Our business model is Canada plus the rest of the world."

Founded in 2007, Tank Worldwide was bought in 2016 by Grey Group, a subsidiary of WPP. Tank shares clients and best practices within the Grey Group network but operates as a separate entity. Tank's staff of 300 works with clients including AbbVie, BMS, GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen, Otsuka, Pfizer and Viatris. In October, Tank landed molecular diagnostics company Cepheid, for which it will develop new corporate positioning and a global brand campaign.

According to Lecordier, three elements give Tank the competitive advantage that's driving growth.

First, there's the talent they recruit and retain.

"We have a balance of senior resources – many with experience at pharmaceutical companies – and more junior resources throughout the life cycle of a project," Lecordier says. "With the pressure on costs, many agencies just put junior people on tasks. Our senior people don't disappear after the pitch."

Secondly, there's the agency's focus on what he calls "hyper-collaboration." Tank employs a proprietary online tool called ThinkTank that allows everyone at both client and agency to have a voice throughout the creative process. Every ThinkTank is bespoke, starting with a deep dive into the client's business to identify challenges and culminating in an explosion of ideas that yield sometimes unexpected results.

"It helps clients create that strategic alignment they so desperately need," he says.

The third element is the team's commitment to go beyond simply pushing a message. It is committed to creating value for customers, whether they be healthcare providers (HCPs), patients or consumers.

"We say to clients, 'The times of just pushing the efficacy or safety message are over. You need interactive tools, you need engagement – that is what's going to make a difference,'" Lecordier says.

Approximately 75% of Tank's Health business involves marketing to HCPs, and the rest to patients and consumers. Marketing to the latter groups has become more demanding as the pandemic has exacerbated the trend of people heading to "Dr. Google" with their health questions.

"It's a huge challenge for healthcare professionals because patients feel they're more knowledgeable, but sometimes they get information from sources that are not trustworthy," Lecordier says.

It's a phenomenon he calls "infobesity": too much unqualified health information competing for consumers' attention. The challenge for pharma companies is to break through that clutter by creating superior engagement and value for patients.

"If you're developing an online tool, it has to be more interactive," he says. "Campaigns need to be more friendly from the look and feel and perspective."

He gives the example of a recent disease-awareness campaign about whooping cough for GSK. Using vibrant animation and a candy-coloured palette, the campaign takes on the misconception that it's a disease that afflicts only children, pointing out that pool floaties, ice cream and roller coasters aren't just for kids, either.

"It breaks all the codes of pharma," he says. "It's bright and colourful, and there's lots of pictograms. When you grab attention, and the science behind it is amazing, then you get that optimal sort of engagement."

Due to COVID-19 there has been a move towards more marketing automation, especially relevant when marketing to HCPs. He gives the example of an HCP looking up the efficacy data for a product. With automation, that act can trigger additional emails with related information without human intervention.

"For most of our clients it's been a drastic transformation," Lecordier says. "A lot of pharma companies are asking, 'How do we put this in place in a cost-effective way?'"

Lecordier references a recent report from Sermo – a private social media network for HCPs – that anticipates a combination of human and digital interaction post-COVID-19 and suggests marketers "build a personalized digital approach that aligns with physicians' needs and evolving preferences."

Wherever Tank's growth may lead, the overarching "red thread" of its philosophy will remain its human approach. "This gives us an amazing opportunity to bring value to clients," Lecordier says, "because our goal is to help them navigate this increasingly digital world."



The comedic tone of this campaign for GSK is rarely seen in the pharma landscape, showing the shingles rash in a way that is shocking and yet not repulsive.



Pre-market testing for this unique campaign for GSK showed great breakthrough and action intent, according to Tank Worldwide, which hopes for the same response in market.



Designed to look like a travel spot, this campaign for GSK looks to help travellers understand the benefits of seeking advice about health risks and prevention measures.



This DTC campaign contributed to the sale of 1.5 million doses of Shingrix in 2020, with the DTC ROI at 364%. This COVID-19 optimization helped the campaign adapt to the pandemic context.



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strategyawards

London Drugs and **Rethink** addressed gaps in the card aisle with V-Day designs for diverse people and different types of relationships. Initiative's Ishma Alexander-Huet said its genius was in shifting from a very specific multicultural focus to one that's more inclusive as a whole. The brand also didn't just create a more inclusive product mix, it also engaged the communities (through the card designers) to help tell their story.

This year's Strategy Awards gala took place virtually – during the Marketing Evolution Summit – with several jury members gathering to dissect and discuss the Gold winning work. Only 11 campaigns were given a top nod, after being judged by a panel of strategists and planners (both from agency and brand sides) who evaluated the work based on their ability to lead a shift. Here, we highlight the insights and strategic nuggets that made each campaign worthy of a Gold.



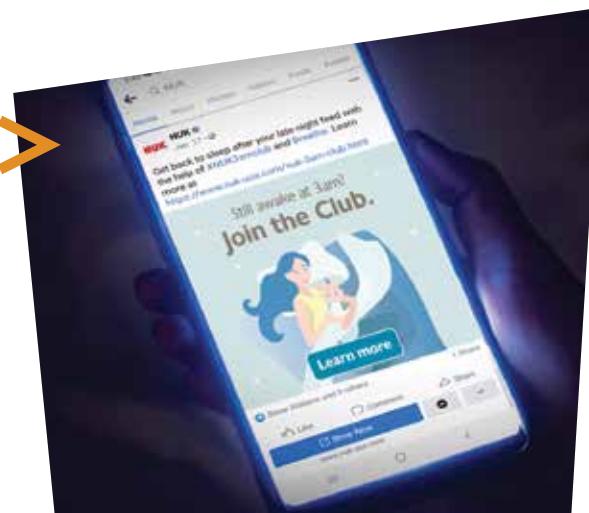
GRAND PRIX



The **Regent Park School of Music** and **BBDO** created the "Parksapes" album, where licensing fees for tracks were directed to the school. Cause brands are usually tied to a local geographic catchment, notes TD's Michael Letsche. But by using the universality of music, the school was able to become global. "They are now just as likely to receive revenue from Auckland, Australia as they are from Aurora, Ontario." It was also a business model shift, added Initiative's Ishma Alexander-Huet, with RPSM going from relying on donations to being more self-sufficient.



Nuk and **Milestone Integrated Marketing** targeted parents with "The 3am Club" – an online tool that answered questions about sleep so that they could get, well, back to sleep. MSL's Jessica Savage said Nuk didn't waver from its commitment to its audience, with marketing happening in the early hours of the night, making parents feel supported in their darkest time of need.



Dove and **Ogilvy** showed the beauty in the acts of courage by creating a montage of frontline workers with the simple, but powerful statement "Courage is Beautiful." Cossette's Peter Ignazi applauded the team's creative ingenuity and for bringing a fresh approach to work being created during the early days of the pandemic. The jury also gave it top marks for reinvisioning Dove's long-standing "real beauty" platform to go beyond physical attributes and placing value on one's character.



CDSS and **FCB** worked with Google to train its AI platform to understand speech disfluencies, asking people with Down syndrome to donate their voice. They turned what would have been a donation drive into a recruitment tool, said Rethink's Michelle Lee. It also continued to build on CDSS' goals to empower people with Down syndrome to become more self-sufficient.



Local Collective papered 50 businesses in **Roncesvalles Village** with messages claiming they were "For Lease" during lockdown to drive local shopping. The campaign's relatability struck a chord, said Loblaw's Wes Brown. Shuttered stores weren't just commonplace in this neighbourhood, it was happening everywhere. "It tore your heart out and drove you to action."



BMO and **FCB** exposed the stereotypes that hurt women's financial confidence. Aegis' Mangala D'Sa said tackling the issue around "financial fairness" by looking at where it starts – at a very young age – is what made this strategy smart. The work has staying power as it can be extended into other creative executions, and "it really tackled some of the behaviors that adults put upon their own children."



The **Canadian Women's Foundation** and **Taxi** reignited conversations around the gender pay gap. It created the "This Smells Like My Penis" candle – a replica of Goop's "Smells Like My Vagina," but with a higher price tag. MSL's Jessica Savage said what made this impressive is the brand's willingness to truly be a part of the conversation instead of "dancing around" the issue, which wouldn't have made as much of an impact.



BMW and **FCB** staged driveways in real estate listings with the brand's vehicles, taking a utilitarian part of the house-buying process and turning it into a media channel. The team saw that when people are looking for a new home, they aren't just looking at the house, but how their life could fit in it – and brought it to life in a genius media execution, said Grey's Valya Kruk.



The Egg Farmers of Canada and **Cossette** told consumers that "It's Not Weird" to eat eggs at meal times outside of breakfast. Being able to loosen the deep ties that eggs have to the morning day part is what made this campaign sticky. "It also wasn't trying to be purpose-driven. It wasn't trying to save the world. It was quite happy to courageously embrace who it was and what it was about," said Rethink's Michelle Lee.



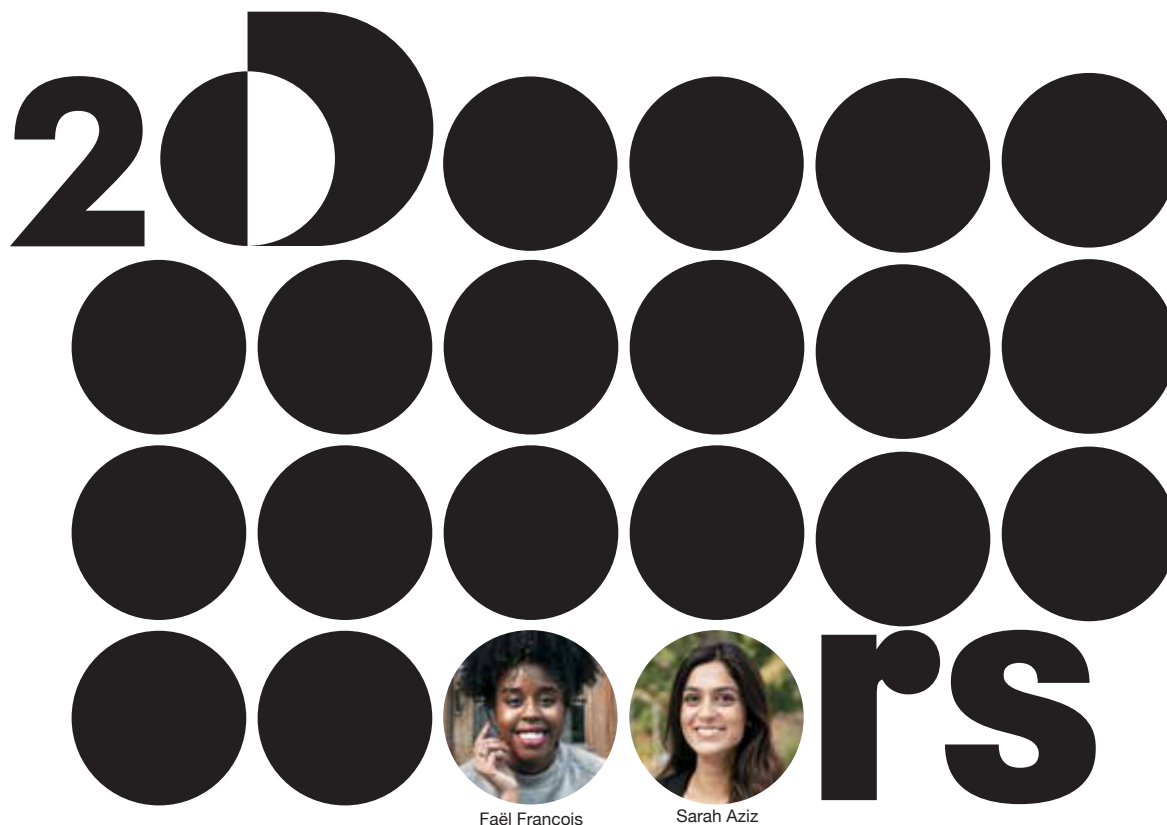
Bud Light and **Anomaly** created *Underplayed* to shine a light on gender inequality among DJs. Aegis' Mangala D'Sa notes that the strategy wasn't just smart because it addressed an issue that doesn't get enough airplay, but because the brand decided to do so with a documentary, which made its way across the film festival circuit and onto Amazon, Apple and Crave.

For full information, go to strategyawardwinners.strategyonline.ca/2021

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READING
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AT THE
OFFICE



And how is it? The hum of the coffee maker. The gurgle of the water cooler. And not just any water. Sparkling water. Any time. The ability to print a document. Any document! The smell of paper. The smell of ink on an A5. The ink on your hands after scribbling in your notebook. The notebooks in the stock room. All the notebooks you could ever need. And pens. So many pens. And people. And having lunch with people. And laughing with people over lunch. And dogs. Big dogs and little dogs. Ping pong. Beer pong. Beer fridges. Fridges with milk. So many types of milk. Milk that isn't even milk. Fridges with food. Food that isn't even yours. Free food. Old food. Emails about old food needing to be thrown out. Like chia bowls. And quinoa salads. And crackers. Hearing your coworkers eating crackers again. Cracking your coworkers up. Cracking open the Agency of the Year issue. Reading about agencies at your desk. Your desk that is not at your home. And look at that, you're even wearing pants. Oh, it's good to be back-ish.



Faël François

Sarah Aziz

How do you get your foot in the door if there isn't one?

BIPOC Canadians are underrepresented in creative departments across the country. The 20Doors Creative Scholarship Fund was established by Zulu Alpha Kilo founder & CCO Zak Mroueh to help open doors for more diverse creative minds. We will be covering tuition for BIPOC candidates over the next five years, so they can complete a year-long post-secondary program in copywriting or art direction. Congratulations to our first two scholarship recipients, Faël François and Sarah Aziz. If you know anyone who wants to become a creative and would benefit from this opportunity, encourage them to apply at 20Doors.ca. Because having more diverse creatives in our industry will open more doors to diverse creative thinking.

20Doors

Zulu Alpha Kilo scholarship fund



Have you
sparked
innovative
experiential,
activation or
retail ideas
that ignited
action in the
shopperverse?
Take credit
for your work.

[Entry Deadline: Nov. 29]

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