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## THE METAVERSE DEBATE

Advocates and skeptics  
discuss the direction  
virtual worlds could take  
brands (and humanity)



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#### ON THE COVER:

The metaverse is either *massively* overhyped, or the start of a world-altering paradigm shift. Its existence hits the nerves of skeptics, while evangelists believe in its future as a virtual utopia. Our very own **Tim Davin** took cues from Meta's Horizon leg-less avatars to create a cover that presents that tension and question the direction in which the metaverse is going. In the cover feature, we explore some of the various implications – both good and bad – that Web3 poses. We look at the likelihood of the metaverse taking off, the opportunities of doing business in the virtual world, brand safety issues and the regulatory minefield it presents, and, of course, the ethical considerations of opening up a Pandora's box of opportunity.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Fools rush in, where many fear to tread

I know. You're thinking, 'Not another article on the metaverse!' A mere five months ago, the majority of you were probably oblivious to the term. Then Facebook undergoes an identity crisis, Mark Zuckerberg plows \$10 billion into building a virtual play-pen, and we're all suddenly talking about (sometimes scoffing at) the "future" of the internet. It's mind-boggling how quickly 3D worlds have caught fire. "Metaverse" as a search term currently returns 1.58 billion results. That's 140 million more than Bieber, the prince of pop.

So do you blame us for wanting to dig into this snowballing topic?

The good news is our cover feature isn't an "explainer" piece. We're not going to bog your downtime reading with a primer on Web3 and all its moving crypto, NFT, blockchain pieces. Plenty consultants at tech-y agencies offer that service, and like I said, there's 1.58 billion web hits to feed your puzzled mind.

Instead, our staple story for the Spring issue considers the good, the bad, and the ugly of the metaverse. The idea was to spark a philosophical and pragmatic debate that some of us quietly have internally, and which has others a little more vocally charged. Our hypothesis was that there would be dissonance. That a line would be drawn between the believers and the cynics. That some would blast the metaverse as the coming of a dystopian nightmare, while others see the light of a virtual utopia. We were (mostly) right.

Being the complex subject that it is, some of the experts *strategy's* digital editor Josh Kolm consulted for the piece straddled the line. Even the most pessimistic saw the possibilities. So our question evolved from focusing on the metaverse's appeal and feasibility (with the consensus being that anything is possible), to the hurdles that stand in the way of this being a real, positive, world-altering deal. There are social issues, user safety concerns, and privacy roadblocks that still need to be worked through before mass adoption can ignite.

Pinpointing the potential – but, in some cases, seemingly overcome-able – stumbling blocks of the metaverse led us to insights that inaction *may* be worse than action. Marketers should learn from the wild west days of the social media boom, when some lacked the gumption to assimilate, the experts say. In other words: don't wait for the worlds to be built for you to rush a crash-course on how to show up in them. But, also, don't rush in.

There's still lots to talk about (scoff at) and explore when it comes to the future of the future – so tread lightly, but don't just jump in because Zuckerberg said so.

Jennifer Horn  
Content Director & Editor, *strategy*



PINPOINTING THE POTENTIAL STUMBLING BLOCKS OF THE METAVERSE LED US TO INSIGHTS THAT INACTION MAY BE WORSE THAN ACTION... DON'T WAIT FOR THE WORLDS TO BE BUILT FOR YOU TO RUSH A CRASH-COURSE ON HOW TO SHOW UP IN THEM.

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# WE'VE BEEN AWARDING CREATIVITY SINCE

360-degree marketing was having  
billboards facing multiple directions.

'consumer recall' meant your  
jingle was stuck in their head.

'working from home' was when  
you got an idea in the shower.

search engines had names  
like Encyclopedia Britannica.

having a mobile phone meant your cord could  
stretch from the kitchen to the living room.

creatives had time to airbrush  
subliminal messages into ice cubes.

all media was 'sound off' because  
the talkies hadn't been invented yet.

client presentations involved  
copious amounts of foamcore.

60-second TV ads were  
considered short-form content.

text messages were better  
known as newspaper ads.

every company's brand purpose  
was "to sell our product."



# GAUGING THE FUTURE OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES

By Will Novosedlik

**Above:** Nissan was one of the first out of the EV gate when it launched the Leaf in 2010, and now it's gearing up for a second EV launch, with its Ariya coming to Canada this Fall.

**T**here's the Nissan Ariya. The Ford Mustang Mach-E and its F150 Lightning. The Audi Q4 e-tron. The Mercedes EQS. The Toyota bZ4X. And perhaps the cutest of the bunch, Volkswagen's ID van.

These are just a handful of electric vehicle (EV) models that automakers have committed to producing through 2030 as part of a \$515 billion investment. According to analysts, the shift toward the market is unlike anything the industry has seen before.

"This is a huge battle right now and for years to come," says Robert Karwel, senior manager, power information network, J.D. Power & Associates. "Canadians have been spending about \$45-\$50 billion on new vehicles every year for the past three years. About 3% were specifically EVs. There is a very long way to go, if the end-goal is to dramatically increase EV penetration."

One of the earliest entrants was Nissan, which launched its Leaf in 2010 and is set to debut its second EV, an SUV crossover, called Ariya, in Canada by Fall 2022.

"Consumer demand [for EVs] has been overwhelming," says Ken Hearn, director of marketing at Nissan Motor Corporation of Canada. "We displayed [Ariya] in a space at Yorkdale Mall called Nissan Studio, and in February we launched an online reservation system where you could pay a deposit and place an order. We sold out in two weeks."

But even with an increasing level of demand, will the industry be able to sell enough product to make it worth their while?

"The fear is that people won't buy EVs quickly enough or in enough quantity, and that the OEMs [original equipment manufacturers] will suffer massive financial losses because of the investment they plowed into the tech," says Karwel. "So the government will have to step in, in greater amounts, to ensure that not only do OEMs invest to build EVs and batteries, but that consumers will be there to buy those EVs."

The other issue is supply. According to Karwel, average pricing and dealer profits are increasing, vehicle incentives are decreasing, and retail velocity is quickening. The country doesn't have enough new gas-powered vehicles for the current level of

demand, he says. And EVs, in particular, will be hard-hit going forward with the multitude of global logistics issues and sourcing of metals, materials and microchips.

And then there's competition. With so many models arriving at once, it won't be easy to differentiate. Nissan has the advantage of being first to the market a decade ago, so it can build its messaging around trust. The "Electric Cars for Electric Drivers" commercial it's running in the U.S. right now does exactly that, betting on its heritage and the number of miles that have been driven by Nissan EVs, like the Leaf, since 2010.

The other challenge is infrastructure. Canada only has a total of 7,108 public charging stations, 44% of which are in Quebec, 27% in Ontario, 18% in BC and 11% across the other seven provinces. So the country has a long way to go.

Thankfully, batteries have greatly improved over the last few years. For instance, the Nissan Ariya's top range on a single charge is 482km, a number that will vary with driving speed and ambient temperature. Technically that means you can drive from Toronto to Ottawa on a single charge.

Auto advertising has long been focused on aesthetics and performance. That won't change with EVs. And it won't be much different than weaning consumers off meat: the most successful strategies rely on how closely the taste and texture of plant-based protein resembles the meat they're trying to emulate. But with cars, there is an added purchase driver: the price of gas. And with the situation the world is in right now, 2022-23 could drive a lot more EV purchases.

# INNOVATION, INTEGRATION AND INFLATION

The year's biggest ideas and marketing strategies so far, as reported in *strategy's* C-Suite newsletter. By Will Novosedlik



Above: Miguel Patricio, CEO at Kraft Heinz, and Matias Muchnick, co-founder and CEO at TheNotCompany.

## A BIG CPG INNOVATION PLAY

Large publicly traded organizations generally struggle with innovation, as they are not built for change. Many have innovation teams, but they tend to only push through incremental change.

But then there's Kraft Heinz NotCompany, a joint venture between Chilean food tech startup TheNotCompany (NotCo) and the CPG co that was recently set up to "reimagine global food production and advance toward a more sustainable future." Notco brings start-up thinking to the party while Kraft Heinz brings scale and a multi-category product portfolio.

There's nothing incremental about that.

According to Kraft Heinz, while the popularity of plant-based products is surging, there are barriers to entry, such as taste, texture, variety, and familiarity. Which is why partnering with NotCo makes sense. The start-up makes a plant-based milk alternative called Not Milk, which is lactose-, soy-, gluten-, cholesterol- and GMO-free, and claims that "it sips, slurps and froths like milk, but it's made from 100% plants."

The CPG is looking for other plant-based alternatives to products people know and love without asking them to drastically shift their behaviours. The company is hoping that, by marrying its iconic brands, scale and go-to-market prowess with NotCo's technology, it will be able to innovate quickly across categories without compromising on taste or experience. Kraft Heinz NotCo aims to have its first product in market before the end of 2022.

## LINES BLUR BETWEEN POP AND BOOZE

Alcohol and beer brands are teaming up with soft drink companies to create a sub-category of hard seltzers.

Boston Beer Company is partnering with Pepsi to launch a spiked version of Mountain Dew. Coca Cola also said it's working with Molson Coors on alcohol beverages inspired by its juice brand, Simply, and its Fresca brand is teaming up with Constellation Brands to launch a spirits-based canned cocktail line.

So what's going on here? Bob Russell, co-founder and CCO of Collective Arts suspects that "because [beverage co's] have well-known brands that were introduced to consumers when they were kids, now they want to capture more value as people age into alcoholic beverages and out of sugary sodas." Meanwhile, Peter Rodriguez, CEO of Brand Igniter, wonders if these marriages are solutions looking for a problem: "Are these ideas the result of consumer-centric thinking, or inward-looking planning? They sound like they might be responses to the question, 'What can we do to get in on this?' as opposed to 'What do people want?'"



## SHRINKFLATION TO COMBAT INFLATION

Inflation. It's a word that sends shivers up and down the economy's spine. Michael Graydon, CEO of FHCP Canada, says "the prices of many ingredients, including packaging, have gone through the roof." Manufacturers have responded with the oldest tool in the woodshed: price increases. But raising prices risks losing customers. So what's a brand leader to do?

Well, some will keep the price the same but reduce the size of the item. Sylvain Charlebois, senior director of the Agri-food Analysis Lab at Dalhousie calls this "shrinkflation." In the juice aisle, for instance, you might see an orange juice bottle that's had the bottom scooped out, just like the indent below wine. The packaging looks the same from other angles, but contains less liquid.

"Psychologically, price is a barrier that companies don't want to cross because they may lose market share," he says. "So they'll reduce quantities... which is something we follow closely because it actually contributes to inflation."

Charlebois uses the example of a brand that makes bite-sized cookies. "The brand shrinks the product in a subtle way by making each cookie slightly smaller and sells you 18 per pack instead of 15. A year later, they may decide to go back to 15, allowing them to sell at an inflated price."





**SPORTS**

**BETTING**

**BATTLE**



# A BILL HAS PASSED AND SUDDENLY COMPANIES ARE RUSHING TO BUILD SPORTSBOOK BRANDS IN CANADA'S NEW BURGEONING (AND HIGHLY-REGULATED) CONSUMER MARKET. SOUND FAMILIAR? THINK OF SINGLE-EVENT SPORTS BETTING AS THE NEW CANNABIS.

BY MIKE CONNELL



**I**N JUNE 2021, THE SENATE PASSED BILL C-218, legalizing single-sport betting in Canada and triggering a wave of applications from numerous online sportsbooks looking to tap into the market that is set to officially open up on April 4, 2022.

While the new legislation – which will allow provinces to regulate sports betting – is paving the way for sportsbooks to enter Canada, the fact remains that this is already a competitive space. Betting on single sporting events is currently a \$14 billion industry in Canada, according to the federal government, with Canadians conducting illegal betting in both the local black and offshore grey markets.

Ontarians alone reportedly spend close to \$1 billion a year on online gambling, of which an estimated 70% takes place on unregulated, grey market websites, making it “one of the five biggest markets in North America,” says Scott Vanderwel, the newly-minted CEO of Pointsbet Canada, one of the sportsbooks making a play for the iGaming Ontario (iGO) market this April. Working with the Ontario government and Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, iGO is establishing a

safer online gaming market in the province. “Ontario is a great market to get started in,” adds Vanderwel, noting that it’s “just shy of half the Canadian potential, and a market that justifies investment and focus.”

Boston-based Draftkings – arguably the biggest and best-known name in online sports betting – is also coming to Canada, throwing its hat into the ring alongside homegrown players like theScore BET, Rivalry, and Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG).

All of this activity begs the question: With a number of new entrants, and a previously-existing (and robust) illegal market, how do online gambling operators differentiate themselves?

For players like Australia-headquartered Pointsbet, its focus has been to get boots on the ground. Vanderwel was tapped by the company in July 2021, following a nine-year tenure at Rogers, where he was most recently an SVP overseeing corporate strategy, operational improvement and digital operations. The org also hired gaming vet Nic Sulsky as its chief commercial officer.

Pointsbet is a relatively young company that got its start in Melbourne back in 2015. Canada is the third market the online sportsbook has expanded into, after the U.S., which it entered a couple of years ago, explains Vanderwel. “We’re big enough to be meaningful but small enough to be scrappy,” he says.

While Vanderwel calls out the quality of its betting product, along with the company’s concentration on customer support (something sorely lacking across sportsbook platforms worldwide), Pointsbet’s focus on partnerships is a big part of what they’re betting on to win audience share in Ontario.

“Being local is incredibly important,” says the CEO, noting that while there are parallels between Canadian and U.S. sports fans, it’s not just about how and why audiences watch sports, it’s about what they watch, “and we want to be on top of that.”

In turn, since announcing its move to Canada, Pointsbet has become the official sportsbook of Alpine Canada and Curling Canada. It also teamed up with the NHL Alumni Association as its sports betting partner in Canada and announced an exclusive partnership with Dailyfaceoff.com, a sports fantasy analytics organization with 1.5 million monthly users.

The sportsbook also looked further afield than typical sport-focused organizations to build brand awareness and equity, while trying to be authentically Canadian at the same time. The result? A multi-year partnership with popular Canadian mockumentary brand, *The Trailer Park Boys*, that includes content collaboration appearing on the Trailer Park Boys and Pointsbet Canada-owned channels. The Trailer Park Boys will also appear in Pointsbet’s ad campaigns, activations, and events.



Partnerships with Canadian leagues and personalities – like the Trailer Park Boys – is a big part of PointsBet's strategy to stand out in the fast-growing sports betting market.

As for theScore BET, Ontario is their backyard. And while the Toronto-born company was recently acquired by Pennsylvania-based Penn National Gaming, theScore has always considered itself the number one sports media app in Canada, and the third-most popular in North America.

The company's new structure (as a result of the acquisition) provides its online gaming platform, theScore BET, with the resources to grow its footprint and expand its workforce, said John Levy, chairman, CEO of theScore, in August when the deal was announced.

As far as standing out against other sportsbooks, theScore's mobile app already reaches approximately 3.75 million users in Canada each year, and 1.43 million in Ontario. Its mobile sportsbook, theScore BET, is currently only available in U.S. states where it is permitted (New Jersey, Colorado, Indiana and Iowa), but it will focus on Ontario come April 4.

According to Aubrey Levy, theScore's SVP content and marketing, over 50% of theScore's BET user base currently bet within its "ecosystem," which means they already engage with sports media/content via theScore's app, an integrated experience he says users can't get anywhere else.

"We're not a market leader across North America because we spend more than the competition or because we shout louder. We've given [our audience] what they want on mobile... a better mousetrap," says Levy.

Apart from that, theScore's reputation in the market, and being homegrown, should help it stand out, adds Levy, but so will its business model. "It all ties back to the financial reason we're in the betting business to begin with – which is our belief that people don't treat betting as an isolated transaction. Betting and media are integrally tied together."

From a marketing perspective, there are some

differences between Canada and the U.S., Levy says. "Ontario is very concerned about putting parameters in place to make sure that the large and loud levels of marketing [that happen in the U.S.] don't happen here."

More specifically, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario stipulates that organizations cannot use inducements, bonuses, and credits in their marketing and communication materials – tactics that are prevalent in the States and other markets.

Stateside, ad spend in the gaming space is rampant, says Levy. As a "new entrant" in the U.S., Levy says theScore has had three years to build its ecosystem and nail down a strong

offering, but it was hard to cut through "the cacophony of noise in the marketplace." Canada is a different story, he says.

As one of only a few homegrown players – which already has an integrated media/wagering ecosystem with its app – Levy says theScore is promoting its sportsbook offering with "a very robust, multi-channel campaign including linear, OOH, and radio, along with a number of key partnerships."

In fact, when Bill C-218 was passed last year, theScore jumped on OOH to "finally" announce its intention to enter the Canadian gaming market, and has been using the same tactics to stay top-of-mind ever since.

"We are content creators," Levy stresses. "So we feel like the market is primed for us to come up with a message and push into channels we haven't really pushed into. I think it works to our benefit that the competition can't just come up here and blast away with promotional [inducement-based] marketing."

Partnership-wise, theScore BET has been named the official gaming partner of Golf Canada, its RBC Canadian Open and the CP Women's Open.

Rivalry is also born and based out of Canada, but has, to date, focused on international sports betting. "It's been very bizarre to be a Toronto-based company and building a consumer product that neither we nor anyone we know can actually use here," says Steven Salz, co-founder and CEO of Rivalry. But now that Rivalry is able to do business in Ontario, Salz says its home province "will be a cornerstone market for us."

That said, Salz doesn't believe that having local roots is a significant competitive advantage. He notes that all the players involved can and will hire people who understand the Canadian market. That's table stakes.

"Online sports betting is, everywhere else, a mature and extremely competitive consumer category,"

he explains. “My co-founders and I come from gaming and esports. None of us are sports betting or online gambling guys. We’re technologists who built a sports betting product for our [millennial] generation.”

More specifically, Rivalry focuses on esports bettors and games – for example, *Dota 2*, *Counter-Strike:Global Offensive*, and *Call of Duty* – here in Canada. In comparing his company to the other players in Canada’s burgeoning online gambling space, Salz says it’s essentially Wealthsimple vs. Scotia iTrade or TD Ameritrade. “Two fundamentally different products that do the same thing.”

Rivalry’s average customer is in their 20s, Salz says, whereas the more traditional online sports bettor is typically 10-to-15 years older. From a marketing and advertising perspective, this affects the channels Rivalry focuses on. According to Salz, if you look at a typical sportsbook, performance and affiliate marketing make up the lion’s share of their budget. Instead, “everything we do is influencer-based,” Salz says.

“We’re second to Barstool [Sports] globally for sports betting brands” in terms of social media engagement. “We have 150 influencer partners,” across its markets, and the company is using similar social tactics for its impending launch in Ontario. “We have signed up with a hyper-Toronto-centric Instagram and TikTok influencer who is very on-brand for Rivalry, and we’ll do a bunch of content with him to garner an audience here. We market like Hypebeast. Like sneakerhead culture.”

Another homegrown player that already has strong Canadian roots is OLG, which launched the province’s first legal online sportsbook, Proline+, on August 27, 2021, the same day single event wagering became legal in Canada.

“We were one of the first out of the gate in Canada,” says Dave Pridmore, OLG’s chief digital and strategy officer. “A few months later, we launched our new expanded Proline sports offerings at retail outlets across the province,” making OLG the sole provider of legal in-store and online sports betting in the province, until the other players enter the market on April 4.

Over the past couple of years, Pridmore says OLG has “seen three-to-four times growth in our digital products. And since the launch of OLG.ca and Proline+, we are setting new records in customer growth each week,” with the platform reporting approximately 1.3 million customers (at press time).

Just prior to the Super Bowl, OLG announced a five-year deal with the NFL, making it the first official sportsbook partner of the football league in Canada. OLG is also doubling down on

branded content via a partnership with Corus, Twitter, and so da, launching digital sports betting show *Game Plan*, a weekly 15-min online program hosted by sports commentator Ashley Docking and former CFL player and reality TV star Brad Smith.

For ubiquitous betting brand Draftkings, Ontario remains a significant market. “Ontario is home to some of the world’s most passionate, sophisticated, and knowledgeable sports fans,” according to the sportsbook. “There are slight differences in sports preferences and a heightened love of hockey, the Raptors and the Blue Jays – but overall the province has extremely engaged sports fans.”

Draftkings is relying on its brand positioning and established reputation to win over bettors in the province. “The benefits of playing with a trusted and regulated platform such as Draftkings ensures that the highest standards for consumer protection are in place,” said the company in an email to *strategy*.

“Given there has been a longstanding grey market, there are some operators who will have a higher degree of brand awareness in Ontario,” Draftkings sources add. “Though, rather than a barrier, we are looking at it as an opportunity. Our approach has always been to put the customer first in all we do and we believe that ultimately the best product wins.”

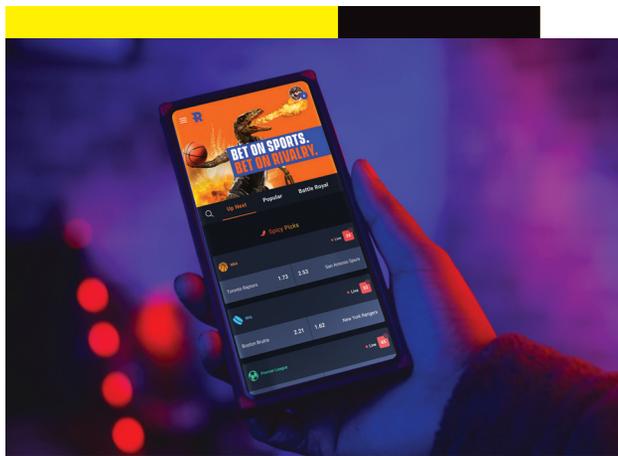
Although Draftkings wouldn’t provide specific details around its marketing strategy, it did say that the company will “rely on data and analytics to drive specific marketing efforts. Whether it’s focused on the Grey Cup, the NBA playoffs or a Senators game, we’ll localize and customize our promotions to reach fans in Ontario in a meaningful way.”

Draftkings says it will also watch for additional exposure around non-mainstream sports,

“like the Canadian Elite Basketball League or Canadian Premier League. We saw this with the Premier Lacrosse League in the U.S. They were able to leverage Draftkings sports betting data and insights to attract new viewers and interest in the league.”

As Canadians embrace new ways to engage with sports content, sportsbook brands will mine for data to see what’s working and what’s not, potentially opening the door for new online sports betting-specific analytics platforms, media outlets, and agencies.

Ultimately, sports betting regulation will ensure money stays in the proper jurisdictions and hopefully raises the bar from a product, service, and support perspective. But these platforms, along with upwards of 30 others, reportedly making a play in the newly regulated market, will have to contend for consumer eyeballs, raising sports betting advertising dollars in this country to unprecedented levels. Who are you betting on? 🎲



Rivalry plans to build its fanbase via influencers promoting its mobile sportsbook offering.

ARE WE ON THE BRINK OF A PARADIGM SHIFT OR DO EXPECTATIONS NEED TO

# A reality check on



**T**

he metaverse is a divisive topic.

On the one hand, you have advocates like Mitch Joel, founder of brand and tech consultancy Six Pixels Group. “The future of connectivity isn’t flat screens and phones in our pockets. We will absolutely have some form of technology that is three-dimensional or more virtual.”

Then you have the less-optimistic like Johanna Faigelman, founding partner and CEO of market research firm Human Branding. “There’s never been a moment in time that is more opposed to the creation of something like the metaverse. On paper, it looks like the worst possible idea to pursue right now.”

The story of the metaverse is similar to most emerging technology. There’s a mix of proponents who see new opportunities to reach consumers and naysayers who perceive it as nothing more than a novelty. And, as usual, the hype has obscured expectations of what’s possible, the risks to prepare for, or how many people will use it.

One reason it’s hard to set expectations about the metaverse is that the definition can be pretty vast, depending on who you talk to.

For some, it’s VR worlds like Horizon, the platform Facebook has been showing off in demos since its name change to Meta in 2021. For others, it includes non-VR worlds aligned with gaming, like Roblox or the crypto-adjacent Decentraland. And then there’s those who include cryptocurrency, NFTs and other blockchain-powered assets under the “Web3” umbrella (which is a telling choice of phrase, as it suggests this technology will have as big an impact on society as “Web2” – the period when social media and apps became the primary ways people engaged online).

Jason Alan Snyder, global chief technology officer at Momentum Worldwide, has a clearer definition for what makes a “metaverse.” He believes it needs to be persistent and in real-time – it never stops or pauses, and a limitless number of users can enter and exit as they please. It also needs to have an economy, and assets obtained from that economy need to be transferable – not just between different virtual worlds, but into the physical world – which is usually where things like NFTs and crypto enter the conversation.

Snyder believes those worlds will bring a sizeable shift, be it in terms of the way people connect, the size of the audience they attract and how marketers execute and measure their interactions with customers.

“A brand is a metaphor for a story, and a virtual story might be told differently than a physical one,” says Snyder. “The opportunity right now is to see what valuable engagement looks like, what your KPIs are and how to tie all of the different pieces together. As brand

BE BROUGHT BACK INTO THE REAL WORLD? BY JOSH KOLM

# the metaverse



**“The opportunity right now is to see what valuable engagement looks like, what your KPIs are and how to tie all of the different pieces together. As brand stewards, make sure whatever that story is resonates.”**



- Jason Alan Snyder, global chief technology officer at Momentum Worldwide

stewards, make sure whatever that story is resonates.”

Others are doubtful many people will see those stories. Sean Monahan, founder of NY trend forecaster K-Hole, says virtual reality’s audience size is currently limited to entertainment (like virtual concerts, tourism and parties) and industrial applications (think virtually operating machinery in a hazardous environment). Stephen Diehl, a software engineer and well-regarded blogger in tech circles, sees three areas where VR adoption could be most prevalent: gaming, teleconferencing and porn.

“Those are real opportunities, those are big industries,” Diehl adds. “But that’s not a paradigm shift. It’s not going to create a whole new market the way the iPhone did. It’s going to capture a portion of the Zoom market, a portion of the gaming market and a portion of adult entertainment.”

Diehl is even more skeptical about NFTs and cryptocurrency – other than crime, ransomware, gambling and sanctions evasion, anything they could be used for is better served by an existing, simpler tech.

But that’s an argument Joel pushes back against. “If people always thought that way, we wouldn’t have any innovation. We wouldn’t have Amazon because we had bookstores. We wouldn’t have cars because horses were already pretty fast.”

Monahan is a bit more open to NFTs, seeing them as a way for people to invest in a brand that’s more meaningful than zero-sum transactions like buying a product – similar to markets that already exist for sneakers and designer bags. However, Monahan doesn’t anticipate brand NFTs will replace or compete with other established lines of business.

Again, Diehl is less charitable. Even if a brand manages to imbue an NFT with the practicality of owning something cool for their avatar, he says NFTs and crypto still operate as unregulated securities. Someone can only benefit from buying one if they sell it after the price has inflated in an extremely volatile market – in other words, the only way someone comes out ahead is if someone else loses. Why would someone risk getting burned?

While Joel believes in the future of the metaverse, he says it will likely be five to ten years before any company delivers the fully immersive and pervasive version we’ve been promised. Given the current advertising opportunity is minor, and most would-be customers don’t have a headset, Joel says building a fully-fledged virtual experience now would be jumping the gun.

“I say this because the vast majority of brands are still struggling to move from being web-based to mobile,” he says. “How brands handle multi-formatted ads in social spaces is pretty indicative of their ability to be compelling in the virtual world.”

But that doesn't mean brands shouldn't experiment with what's available today. Playing with the metaverse "plants a flag," Joel says, and attracts talent who want to work for innovative companies, as well as ensuring

capabilities are in place when/if the metaverse takes off. "Digital platforms, especially community-based ones, take time to build. In the 'Web2' world, brands that were slow to adopt seemed less trustworthy. Brands that got in there early understood the culture and fared much better."

Which leads to the next question: are people actually going to use the metaverse?

Faigelman's company Human Branding relies on expertise in applied anthropology and human behaviour in its work. Given the cultural change the metaverse promises, it is something Faigelman has explored extensively – and she has found a lot of barriers for it to clear.

First and foremost is timing. We are still emerging from a global pandemic. Video calls and hybrid work suggested to many that virtual environments are viable, but they were also adopted out of necessity and, quite frankly, people are sick of digital-everything.

"People want to hug each other, they want to go outside and roll around in the grass," Faigelman says. And, as Monahan sees it, "Zoom fatigue is real, so why would putting a new screen in front of someone's face be the answer?"

That "new screen" and its considerable price could be another barrier, though Snyder doesn't see it that way. While you may need a VR headset to access some metaverse experiences, others can be accessed through gaming consoles people already own, and not every NFT runs for thousands of dollars. However, Faigelman foresees a social divide forming if people who can access the best tech get to set the tone and profit the most.

Monahan sees another issue. "There's been attempts at VR since the 80s, and you start to wonder if it hasn't scaled not just because of the price point, but because the experience is boring," he says. "Even today's headsets only deal in visuals and sounds, when reality has way more to it. It's presented as a fully fleshed out,

immersive technology, but when you use it, it doesn't feel like that, and it's missing all these other important sensory elements."

Hitting that truly immersive goal may also give people pause. Faigelman says successful innovations tend to be similar to things we're already familiar with, but the metaverse is different *enough* that it could trigger people's aversion to change. What some might see as immersive, others see as invasive and the next step to a pop-culture dystopia.

Then there's the environmental cost. Every time an NFT or token representing the deed to virtual land is minted, a massive amount of energy is used. Even though the Ethereum blockchain – one of the most popular – is changing the way it works, those changes will only bring its energy use down to that of a small town, instead of the country of Peru. And even if blockchain is taken out of the equation, the computing power to run an always-on virtual world is massive.

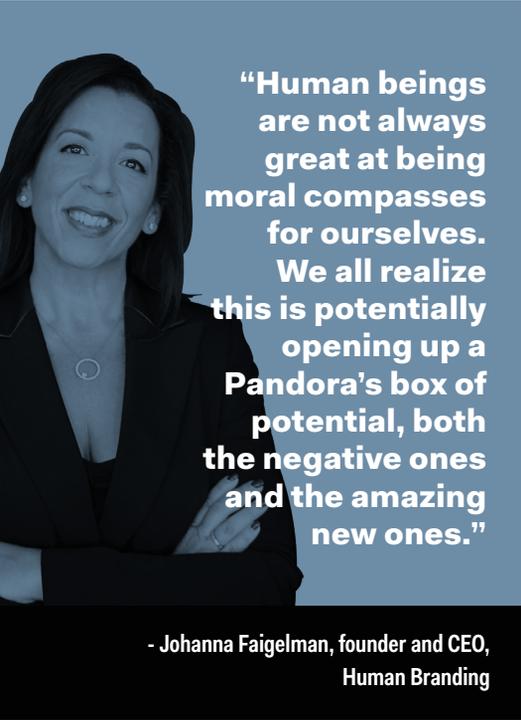
Faigelman also points out that, in most people's minds, the metaverse is largely associated with Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg, neither of whom have sterling reputations among the general public. Or else, it's associated with "crypto-bros" and NFT buyers with smoking monkeys as their profile pictures – people who tend to be regarded as modern-day Gordon Gekkos or internet trolls.

Which brings up one of the most troubling issues for the metaverse. In February, BuzzFeed News reporters tested content moderation in Horizon by creating a world littered with conspiracy theories and misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 U.S. presidential election. Similar content would be automatically flagged on Facebook and Instagram – and get a site blacklisted by brand safety tools – but the Meta world continued even after it had been reported by multiple people who had access to it. It was only taken down once a reporter went through a Meta PR channel.

The experiment showed that AI-powered tools currently supporting (already spotty) content moderation on social media and brand-safe placements on websites won't work in the metaverse. BuzzFeed's Emily Baker-White pointed out that there's no way to moderate users without constantly recording their activities – a privacy-violating practice in a privacy-sensitive time.

But there are other ways in which brand safety cannot be resolved by taking the tools that exist online today and applying them in the metaverse.

In December, Nina Jane Patel, a VP at immersive tech company Kabuni Ventures, published a Medium story detailing how, within moments of signing onto Horizon, she was virtually groped and verbally assaulted by a group of male avatars, describing the psychological



**"Human beings are not always great at being moral compasses for ourselves. We all realize this is potentially opening up a Pandora's box of potential, both the negative ones and the amazing new ones."**

- Johanna Faigelman, founder and CEO, Human Branding

effects as being similar to real-life abuse. (Meta has since created default “personal boundaries” for avatars in an effort to deter virtual assault.)

Molly White, tech lead at HubSpot, pointed out in an article that, once you bring blockchain into the mix, its decentralized and permanent nature creates even more issues. If someone is harassed in a blockchain-powered metaverse, that violation is stored on the blockchain forever. Same goes for someone playing a video of something like revenge porn.

To bring it more explicitly into the brand world, imagine if you couldn’t delete one of those absent-minded “brand fail” tweets. What’s more, tokens, once minted, cannot be refused – so if someone sends an NFT of white supremacist literature to a brand, that association lives on the blockchain forever.

And then there’s simple data security: companies are already susceptible to hacks and data breaches in today’s world, so how will they protect customers’ personal data when it is stored on the blockchain and potentially accessible by everyone?

Faigelman says all of the above is especially important to Gen Z, who are more attuned to social issues, highly knowledgeable about the risks of new technology, and at an age where they want in-person interactions the

most. They are also the first generation to grow up online – millennials joined social media blissfully unaware of the brain-poisoning wave of online arguments, harassment and misinformation to come, but Gen Z see what they could be walking into with open eyes. Given that younger generations are usually a major force in pushing new technology to mass adoption, resistance among Gen Z removes a significant point of traction.

But, “none of that means it won’t reach mass adoption,” Faigelman says, it could just slow down

the rate at which it happens. “Human beings are not always great at being moral compasses for ourselves. We all realize this is potentially opening up a Pandora’s box of potential, both the negative ones and the amazing new experiences that we’ve never thought of before.”

People are social creatures, and Faigelman says new opportunities for socialization almost never get

rebuked. That depends on whether there are enough initial users to make everyone else feel like they are “missing out,” but if it happens, social connection could be the catalyst. And there are good reasons for some to want to try the metaverse, like people with disabilities who have an easier time socializing or traveling virtually.

Humans are also creatures of habit: if they regularly hang out virtually, it’s an easy jump over to a virtual concert or a grocery store, and that’s when it moves away from being a novelty.

While the metaverse has stumbling points, Joel says that’s exactly why brands should start learning now to understand their risk tolerance. Bets are expensive – from hiring talent to buying equipment and virtual plots of land – so now is the time to learn how comfortable they are making them.

Just because people adopt a new technology doesn’t mean their issues with it go away. The fact that people have social media accounts doesn’t mean they’ve stopped trying to make the companies improve their harassment problems. People buying snacks from a company whose operations have an environmental impact doesn’t mean customers won’t keep pushing them to reduce their carbon footprints.

For brands that are eager to explore Web3 because they don’t want to miss the boat, it’s imperative to not make the same mistakes as when they were rushing to catch-up with Web2. 📧



**“Digital platforms, especially community-based ones, take time to build. Brands that were slow to adopt [social media] seemed less trustworthy. Brands that got in there early, understood the culture and fared much better.”**

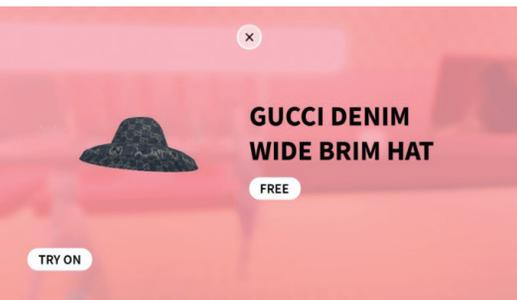
- Mitch Joel, founder, Six Pixels Group



**“There are real opportunities... but that’s not a paradigm shift. [The metaverse is] not going to create a whole new market the way the iPhone did.”**

- Stephen Diehl, software engineer and tech blogger

**Clockwise:** Events in the metaverse work if there is a sense of authenticity and if they're executed in a fantastical way, say experts; In true Nike and Gucci fashion, both brands dropped limited-edition goods.



Though the items originally sold for the equivalent of roughly US\$6 in “Robux,” the game’s currency, resellers soon listed them in the game’s marketplace for much more than that – one sold days later for more than US\$4,000 worth of the game’s currency, roughly US\$1,000 more than its real-world counterpart.

Footwear brand Nike, meanwhile, acquired RTKFT – also a shoemaker, but one that exclusively makes digital footwear – in December of last year. And in February 2022, the brands announced the launch of a limited-edition non-fungible token (NFT) and physical shoe pairing with its special edition “Flying Formation” Air Max 1.

In both Gucci and Nike’s cases, there was a clear and almost 1:1 correlation between the brand’s digital foray and their physical world marketing tactics.

“When Nike drops an NFT, it makes sense, because the way Nike engages its consumers is via a sense of exclusivity,” says Lewis Smithingham, director of creative solutions for Media Monks. “When we talk about showing up in spaces, we need to talk about showing up in an authentic way – not like Steve Buscemi showing up with a skateboard over his shoulder. It needs to create value.”

# The fundamentals of metaverse marketing

BY JUSTIN CRANN

## Live events

For musicians such as Ariana Grande

and Travis Scott, the metaverse provided a way to continue to connect with fans when pandemic restrictions made that difficult (and sometimes impossible).

In 2020, Scott was the focal point of *Fortnite*’s “Astronomical” event – essentially, an in-game re-imagination of a concert. That event, which drew more than 27 million unique participants, was one of the first that Alexander Rea, SVP and global director of creative and technology for Critical Mass, points to as a watershed moment for the future of the metaverse.

“It happened before the metaverse hype cycle began, and I had brands calling me asking me what they could do in *Fortnite*,” says Rea.

The immersive concert experience established by the American rapper has since been repeated by other artists both within *Fortnite* and outside of it, with mixed results.

Pop superstar Ariana Grande’s own virtual concert drew an estimated \$20 million payday for the artist. Meanwhile, Meta has struggled to attract eyeballs to events on its Horizon platform,

**S**pectacular virtual concerts. Digital collector items that sell for thousands of dollars more than their original value. Entire immersive worlds developed specifically for a brand. As the metaverse news cycle grows, and millions of dollars trade hands for real estate in virtual worlds, marketers are increasingly turning their focus to what looks like the next frontier in advertising. Here are three ways brands and organizations are showing up in the metaverse so far.

## Limited-edition loot

Some brands seeking an authentic entry into the metaverse have tapped their reputation in the physical world as status makers.

One of the first to create direct-to-avatar (D2A) goods, luxury fashion brand Gucci broke into the metaverse in May 2021 with a limited-edition line of branded items on video gaming platform, Roblox. The release included items that could be worn by players’ in-game avatars, sold for a limited amount of time.

which has featured musicians Young Thug, David Guetta, and The Chainsmokers.

There are two factors that underpin the success or failure of virtual events. The first is authenticity.

“There have been many virtual versions of analog events that were canceled because of the pandemic. Most of them were not that great,” says Rea. “The reality is that there was a rush to execute things. When you’re doing something in these virtual worlds, you have to create something that is genuine on that particular platform or it will rebel against you.”

Along with authenticity, execution is also important. Rather than recreate the concert experience, the *Fortnite* “Astronomical” concert invented an entirely new experience featuring stunning visuals and action-packed sequences, essentially transporting players inside a fully-immersive music video that didn’t follow real-world rules.

## Total immersion

Some brands are using platforms such as *Animal Crossing*, *Decentraland*, *Fortnite* and *Roblox* to engage with users who are totally immersed for extended periods of time. Once again, the success or failure of these efforts comes down to whether or not the experience is authentic and ownable to the brand behind it – and also if it adds value for users who are native to the platform, says Cam Wykes, VP and head of content with Media.Monks.

Critical Mass EVP and ECD Steve Savic points to an unbranded experience by Reporters Without Borders from March 2020, called the Uncensored Library. The Library contained digital copies of banned reporting from countries including Mexico, Russia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. By allowing users in those countries to access materials that would otherwise be banned, it subverts a concern some brands have over security in an unregulated space.

“This isn’t your traditional brand that is trying to sell a product – this stood for something much larger, and it uses the digital space in the most authentic way. It created an unfiltered environment where people have a voice,” Savic says.

“While a lot of brands are challenged by the lack of censorship [in the metaverse], Reporters Without Borders are using it to their massive advantage.”

Miller Lite’s “Meta Lite” bar in *Decentraland* is a favourite for Rea. When the beer brand was locked out of advertising during Super Bowl LVI, it built a bar in the virtual world specifically so that it could showcase the spot it would have run during the big game.

In doing so, Miller created its own moment – all while showing up in the metaverse in an authentic way and providing value to gamers who used the bar to lounge in and interact with each other, says Rea.

“Success” in the metaverse is a relative term. Primarily because there aren’t universally accepted metrics yet. Part of the issue is that efforts in the metaverse don’t clearly drive real-world conversions.

“There is no funnel, the metaverse right now is a bowl,” says Rea. “These experiences are effective at getting PR, but we don’t know if any of them are successful, because none of them tie into loyalty, rewards, CRM – any of the things we used to track.”

Still, although the technology remains nascent, Scott King, group strategy director at Critical Mass, says it is definitely emerging.

“The truth is, the metaverse is something that brands will have to consider and operate in, within the next few years,” says King. “The brands that are looking at it as a way for their customers to interact with each other, and as a way to deliver things in a better way than they currently do, are looking at it correctly.”



**Above and below:** Brand hubs like Miller’s “Meta Lite” offered value to gamers, who used it to interact with each other; Reporters Without Borders used the metaverse’s lack of regulations to its advantage.

And that kind of fantastical experience is what most metaverse users are expecting.

“You don’t need gravity. You don’t need to have two arms and two legs,” says Rea. “Why run the risk of recreating something in the digital world?”

It’s a fair question – one which fashion brand Balenciaga may have the answer. To reveal its Fall 2021 collection, the brand created a metaverse game called *Afterworld: The Age of Tomorrow*. It essentially acted as a digital fashion show in which players walk around models sporting the brand’s new garb. The endeavour tied in with the launch of merchandise on *Fortnite*, emblazoned with the Balenciaga logo.

The trip to the metaverse generated a fair bit of noise for the brand – enough so that it committed to creating a metaverse business division. The fashion world also took notice, with a *Decentraland* fashion week taking place in the latter half of March 2022.

# Is it more impo to persuade its t Or a judge

## Our industry has lost its way.

There was a time long, long ago when people got into our business to build brands, affect culture, and change perceptions. But as an industry, we now spend much of our time chasing shiny objects. Impressing our peers has become more important than winning over actual consumers.

Agencies create fake work, exaggerate results, and brag about it in case studies that get slicker and pricier every year. All in hopes of adding yet another gold-plated trinket to our trophy cases for creative work that most consumers will never get to experience in the real world.

## How did we get to this point?

It's equal parts ambition, competitiveness, and narcissism, with a smidge of greed sprinkled in for good measure. The truth is awards shows have become a big business and each and every one of us is the reason why.

Millions are spent on entry fees annually and, despite the stereotype, it's not only creative departments who care about the results. As more clients make their way to international creative festivals, many year-end bonuses are increasingly being tied to awards show performance.

## Are international awards rigged?

Sound implausible? If only it weren't true. You see, the world's top holding companies spend huge sums annually in entry fees, entitling them to have the awards show buying power to stack juries with many of their own creative people. They, along with entire countries and regions, organize themselves to block vote for their own work. Some shows have gone as far as to develop



an algorithm to try and prevent this widespread cheating. Several times a year, many holdcos bring together their international committees of highly paid CCOs, not to crack a heavyweight client's latest business conundrum, but to perfect case studies that will improve the odds of winning Network of the Year.

## Gaming the awards game.

With so much invested in the outcome of awards shows, it's not surprising that people have begun to analyze winning formulas and game the system.

Much of the winning work these days is, in fact, inconspicuously fabricated—an outlandish solution for fictional marketing problems with the clients playing ball in so many cases (if they ever existed at all).

Of course, the awards shows aren't complaining. They simply want your entry fees by any means necessary. (They just extended their deadline, btw.) It's all just another part of the international awards game and the prize everyone's playing for is prestige.



Awards Gone Wild

## Could we be any more hypocritical?

At this point, you might be thinking, why would an agency like ours be saying all this? Don't you enter the shows and enjoy the glory of winning? Don't your agency's creative directors sit on awards show juries? Yes, yes, and yes. No, we're not against awards or the shows. We simply want to shine a light on the smoke and mirrors that have become synonymous with the whole awards process.

We believe it's time the entire awards industry levelled the playing field so that



## And yes, this

# Important for this ad target audience? at Cannes?

all the real work can be judged fairly and the bogus work eliminated. A lot of people will tell you that's just how the game has always been played. Well, if that's the case, maybe it's time we all rewrote the awards playbook.

## Is extinction in our future?

Our agency's belief is that awards are a great outcome after you've done all the hard work, heavy lifting, and solved your client's business problem. But if we don't stop putting such single-minded focus on appealing to judges rather than consumers, our entire industry will soon find itself irrelevant.

Agencies today compete not only with in-house creative departments, but also management consultants with a more well-rounded perspective on improving a client's business. We need to better balance breakthrough creative with business effectiveness or they'll continue eating our collective lunch and going in for seconds.

## Call off the dogwalkers.

When we as an industry celebrate and put all our energy into scam work instead of solving a real client's problems, we lose sight of the reason we're in business in the first place. When in doubt, there's one question we should all be asking ourselves: Are we spending our time creating fake work to win awards or real work to win customers?



Let's once and for all put the dogwalkers and scam ads to rest. When we finally do that, we can get back to remembering the good things that come from winning a medal for irrefutable work.

## Awards have their merits. And Golds.

Yes, awards can be a great barometer to gauge how an agency's work stacks up against the very best real work in the world. Award-winning agencies have a distinct leg up attracting and retaining the industry's best talent. (We all know how difficult that's been with The Great Resignation.)

And awarding truly groundbreaking work that affects culture and drastically improves a client's business can help raise the creative bar for every one of us. Make no mistake, brilliant creativity really does work.

## Is our intended audience still reading?

As for the ultimate target of this ad, it's all of us in the industry. Everyone from CCOs to CMOs to strategic planners to creative interns who have never set foot in an actual agency office. We all need to start a conversation and be more aware of the effects that awards have on our creative industry—both good and bad.

So, if you're an awards show, continue to crack down on all the fakery and voting politics. If you're an awards juror, advocate for work that actually ran. Because it's time we all talked about these issues openly and transparently. We encourage you to join the discussion at #AwardsGoneWild.

Phew. You made it right to the end. Who says nobody reads long copy anymore?

  
zulu  
alpha  
kilo

ad really ran.

# CRC

They did it again (after doing it again): Rethink has landed at the top of the Creative Report Card. However, this time, unlike in 2021 and 2020, the shop's creative crew was crowned the #1 CCO, CD, AD, CW, Designer *and* Planner. That's every, single, list. Either the agency is getting exceptionally good at entering awards, or its methods for nurturing and motivating young creatives – half of the #1 CRC-ers have less than five years experience – really do work. Writer Will Novosedlik's feature on Rethink in this special report points to the latter. // As you can see, this year we introduced a Chief Creative Officer list, separating the top (sometimes national) creative honchos from the on-the-ground Creative Directors. Other than that, the CRC methodology remains the same: It tracks and tallies the awards taken home by agencies, brands, creatives and strategists to help the marketing community know who's on top of their game. We select a range of international, national and regional award shows that incorporate a variety of media, and we assign every award a point value, weighted to recognize that global shows are bound to be tougher to win than local programs. // To see the full rankings, make sure to visit [strategyonline.ca](http://strategyonline.ca). For now, flip these pages to learn more about this year's toppers.

BY **JENNIFER HORN**

CREATIVE REPORT CARD

BRAND

- 1 Unilever (Dove)
- 2 Kraft Heinz
- 3 Canadian Down Syndrome Society
- 4 SickKids Foundation
- 5 Ikea
- 6 Molson Coors Brewing Company
- 7 Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec
- 8 HomeEquity Bank
- 9 Google
- 10 Canadian Women's Foundation

AGENCY

1. Rethink
2. FCB
3. Cossette
4. Ogilvy
5. Lg2
6. Zulu Alpha Kilo
7. No Fixed Address
8. Leo Burnett
9. Sid Lee
10. Taxi

CCO

1. Aaron Starkman, Rethink
2. Brian Murray, Zulu Alpha Kilo (formerly Ogilvy)
3. Peter Ignazi, formerly Cossette
4. Nancy Crimi-Lamanna, FCB
5. Jeff Hilts, formerly FCB
6. Zak Mroueh, Zulu Alpha Kilo
7. Lisa Greenberg, Leo Burnett
8. Ian Mackenzie, Performance Art (formerly FCB/Six)
9. Carlos Moreno, Broken Heart Love Affair
10. Denise Rossetto, Broken Heart Love Affair
10. Dave Federico, formerly No Fixed Address
10. Josh Budd, Citizen Relations
10. Todd Mackie, Broken Heart Love Affair

CD

1. Mike Dubrick, Rethink
2. Joel Holtby, Rethink
3. Pam Danowski, Gut (formerly at Ogilvy)
3. Christian Horsfall, TBWA South Africa (formerly at Ogilvy)
5. Elma Karabegovic, Broken Heart Love Affair (formerly at FCB)
6. Marty Hoefkes, FCB
7. Michael Morelli, FCB
8. Zak Mroueh, Zulu Alpha Kilo
9. Jaimes Zentil, Broken Heart Love Affair (formerly Cossette)
10. Leia Rogers, Rethink

AD

1. Zachary Bautista, Rethink
2. Maxime Saute, Rethink
3. Michael Romaniuk, Zulu Alpha Kilo
4. Hayley Hinkley, Rethink
5. Alexandre Jutras, Lg2
6. Vic Bath, Zulu Alpha Kilo
7. Natasha Michalowska, Freelance
8. Patrick Shing, formerly at Rethink
9. Camille Gagnon, Lg2
10. Joel Holtby, Rethink

CW

1. Geoff Baillie, Rethink
2. Shannon McCarrroll, Broken Heart Love Affair (formerly at FCB)
3. Jason Soy, Cossette (formerly at FCB)
4. Justin Santelli, Rethink
5. Xavier Blais, Rethink
6. François-Julien Rainville, Lg2 (formerly at Cossette)
7. Jacquelyn Parent, Rethink
8. Dan Cummings, Zulu Alpha Kilo
9. Jackson Kemp, The DeFi Network (formerly at Taxi)
- 10 Nicolas Boisvert, Lg2

DESIGNER

1. Erin Maguire, Rethink
2. Zoe Kim, Zulu Alpha Kilo
3. Barbara Jacques, Freelance (formerly at Cossette)
3. Jeff Watkins, Freelance
5. Brandon Methner, Rethink
6. Jaclyn McConnell, Rethink
7. Jake Lim, Rethink
8. Mike Nugent, BBDO
9. Ming Mikaeo, BBDO (formerly at Theo)
10. Stephanie Yung, Zulu Alpha Kilo

PLANNER

1. Sean McDonald, Rethink
2. Tom Kenny, Ogilvy
3. Julian Morgan, Rethink
4. Shelley Brown, FCB
5. Shelagh Hartford, FCB
6. Audrey Zink, FCB
7. Eryn LeMesurier, Neo Financial (formerly at FCB)
8. Tim Hopkins, The&Partnership (formerly at Zulu Alpha Kilo)
9. Shereen Ladha, Rethink
10. Darren Yada, Rethink



THE  
TOP  
TEN  
LISTS

# TOP AGENCY

## Rethink's big hairy audacious goals

BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK

**W**ith the number of trophies that Rethink takes home each year, you'd think awards are all the agency cares about. "That's just not true," says Aaron Starkman, national CCO and managing partner, Toronto. "What we want to do is make the most talked about work in the world."

There's two ways to do that. One is to enter a truckload of creative awards shows. Check. The other is to make work that's so compelling it generates a truckload of earned media. Check, check. Either way, it means doing the best work you've ever done, over and over again. No pressure.

When it landed at #1 on last year's Creative Report Card (CRC) Agency list, Rethink talked a lot about the creative process that gets it to such great work. The agency calls it the "1 or 100" method. By that, it means that your best idea may be your first or your 100th, but you won't know what's the best until you've come up with 100.

One of the most common mistakes creatives make is to hit on an idea and fall so in love that it actually becomes a barrier to generating anything else. You end up polishing it to perfection when what you should be doing is pushing yourself to explore as many ideas as possible. They can be rough. In fact, they should be rough. Because you can polish them later.

The "1 or 100" process forces you to be divergent at the beginning and then proceed through various stages of elimination and validation until you arrive at the strongest possible outcome. When done with discipline, it yields very compelling results. But this approach has long been understood by creative practitioners, if not often adhered to.

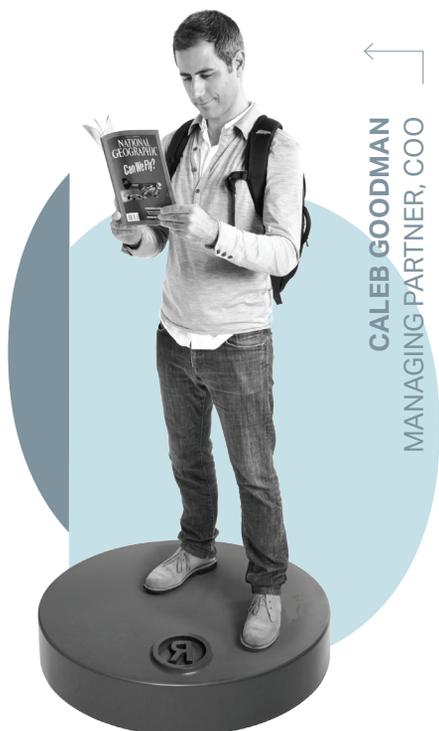
better. This has been in place since day one. It's been especially helpful during the pandemic when we're not seeing each other face-to-face. Every year we set a 'BHAG' (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) and now every meeting begins by restating that goal, just to keep us on track to meeting or surpassing it."

Four times a year, at its so-called "Creative Meeting," every single creative at Rethink congregate to share work, from little acts to packaging and broadcast spots, adds Starkman. "The reason we share everything is because we don't want to be an agency that wins a Cannes Lion or an Effie here and there with one or two clients. We want best-in-class work going out the door every single day, no matter the budget or the medium. The most important thing to us is to set the conditions for the whole company to create a lot of great campaigns for all of our clients."

The agency makes liberal use of Slack channels as a platform for sharing inspiration. For example, there's "act school" for sharing best in class "acts" (not ads) from around the world. Then there's R+D day, where the whole agency gets a brief and works on it for one day, breaking out into small groups of creative, strategists and account people. According to Starkman, some big ideas have come out of there that have won Lions and Effies.

Then there's onboarding. Every new recruit gets a *Rethink the Business of Creativity* book (written by the agency's co-founders) on day one, and Starkman and fellow managing partners Caleb Goodman and Sean McDonald try to meet every new hire across all three offices within the first week of their start date. In that meeting, partners share the company mantra of "people, product and profit" - in that order - and give the new





CALEB GOODMAN  
MANAGING PARTNER, COO

hire a taste of what it's like to be a Rethinker.

These investments in company culture have been more necessary over the last year than ever before. Rethink started 2021 with 200 people. It ended the year with 300. From an onboarding perspective alone, that's almost one new hire every three days. To instill and maintain the culture with that volume and frequency of hires demands the type of cultural discipline described above. And it will come in handy as the agency plans to open a New York office. "As we scale, it's more important than ever to strive for excellence," says COO Goodman.

"While the firm has been working with U.S. clients for a while now, the volume has reached a point where it makes sense to be physically and legally located there," adds Goodman. Rethink's CSO McDonald agrees, adding that "we're very proud to be a Canadian agency with global reach, but since New York is one of the most significant capitals of the business it makes sense for us to have a presence there."

McDonald - who landed at #1 on the Planner list - goes on to explain the new office will help it pursue the types of brands and clients it wants to work with. "I think New York gives us a broader playing field... Plus, rather than take a 'build it and they will come' approach to opening an office down there, we're very much taking a 'come and we will build it' approach," adds McDonald. "We're already very active in the U.S. market for clients like Kraft Heinz and Molson Coors. A lot of agencies open in the States and they're just going hunting. They're hoping that by being there they can build a valuation of their agency that makes it more attractive as an acquisition. We have absolutely no interest in that. This is a humble expansion so that we can

pursue relationships that get us to great work."

And when it comes to great work, this past year has been no exception for Rethink. It was hard to miss the IKEA "Our Little World" campaign, anchored by an epic special effects spot that aired on TV and online. It focused on sustainability - an attribute baked into IKEA's business model - to deliver the message that every little action we take in our own little worlds (i.e. our homes) makes the whole world a better place. It was followed by instruction manuals that show consumers how to repurpose their furniture instead of throwing it away. It later distributed reusable containers to restaurants that did take-out during COVID. And it used the term "Black Friday Savings" to mean saving the environment instead of saving money.

For Heinz Ketchup, Rethink linked the brand's signature slow-mo pour with the slow-moving traffic experienced by people heading to cottages for the weekend. Knowing that cottagers resort to the Waze app to look for alt routes to avoid traffic jams, Kraft Heinz utilized the platform to target people stuck in weekend traffic across Canada. If your car was moving at the same speed as Heinz Ketchup (0.045km/h), you were targeted with an offer for a free bottle of the iconic red condiment.



SEAN McDONALD  
MANAGING PARTNER, CSO

If these campaigns are the result of Rethink's cultural discipline, then the agency is doing something right. Having set the bar so high, keeping it there requires the kind of long-term vision you don't often see in agencies. "We have a plan," says McDonald. "That may sound simple, but in my experience, I have not seen agencies have a plan for themselves. They have conversations about profit and loss, new business wins and Christmas parties and such. But if we went around an agency event and said, 'What's the plan for your agency this year?' I'm not sure we'd get too many considered responses."

# TOP BRAND

## Dove broadens expression of “Real Beauty”

BY JENNIFER HORN

**Y**ou might say that “Courage is Beautiful” was the start of something, well, beautiful. For 17 strong years, Dove has successfully built the confidence of women and young girls by turning “real beauty” stereotypes on their head.

Then came the pandemic. Right from the start, Dove saw the toll it was taking on healthcare workers, and equally realized that Canadians weren’t in the right headspace to hear it talk about societal wrongdoings. A new focal point was needed.

“The pivot away from focusing on physical attributes was 100% intentional,” says Brian Murray, former creative head at Ogilvy (the agency behind the work) and #2 CCO in this year’s CRC.

Without losing sight of Dove’s core mission, the agency found a way to redefine the meaning of beauty at a time when brands feared coming across as tone deaf. “‘Courage is Beautiful’ helped broaden the definition to be about what you *do* and not what you look like,” says Murray, who is now ECD at Zulu Alpha Kilo.

The new articulation zeroed in on the selflessness, compassion and bravery of nurses, medics, doctors and other healthcare workers on the ground, adds Divya Singh, category marketing lead for Dove/Unilever, this year’s #1 CRC Brand.

“The courage to move into that new expression of the platform was essentially dictated by what we were seeing around us at the beginning of 2020... We were listening to what audiences were thinking about at the time, which was the health and safety of their loved ones. So we pivoted.”

And a slow pivot it was not. Ten days was all it took for Murray and his team to conceive, pitch, produce and debut the spot that featured a moving montage of

selfies taken by those on the frontline, showing the markings of protective gear on their skin.

The brief from Dove – which was first presented to Ogilvy’s Canadian team and later shared with its U.K. head office – wanted to “keep the DNA of Dove in mind” but also expand on its efforts to help society and make a “tangible impact,” says Singh. So beyond recognizing pandemic heroes in the spot, the brand also donated \$1 million worth of personal care products to healthcare workers.

“During the six or seven days the campaign was being worked on, we had to have our supply chain and logistics in order. Because we didn’t want to go live until our donations literally started moving out of our warehouses,” adds Singh. “But we were all working together, across different time zones,

to make sure we could go live with it quickly.”

Not only did the Dove and Ogilvy collective make strides in learning how to collaborate across oceans, they also opened up a new door for the “Real Beauty” narrative to be later retold.

Not even two months had passed since “Courage is Beautiful” hit the airwaves before Dove was knocking on Ogilvy Toronto’s doors again to develop the brand’s response to the police brutality and BLM protests in the U.S.

During the pandemic, the team learned that a brand can make its voice heard without coming across as opportunistic or piggybacking on a crisis, says Murray. Taking those learnings, Ogilvy developed “America is Beautiful” as another pivot of Dove’s long-running “Real Beauty” platform.

Focusing, once again, on the strength and resilience of the human spirit (as opposed to physical attributes), the campaign saw six

Black photographers commissioned to document the protests in six American cities. The agency used a soulful rendition of Ray Charles’ *America is Beautiful* as the soundtrack for a spot that juxtaposed the lyrics with the not-so-beautiful things that were happening the United States.

The “Courage” and “America” work set the tone for global discussions that later took place around the next evolution of “Real Beauty,” says Murray.

“There was a big discussion about how [the brand] didn’t want to totally revert back to being about physical beauty. The core mission has always been to make beauty a source of pride, instead of a source of anxiety, and it’s been timeless. Now the challenge for Dove will be to continue to broaden the focus and lead the conversation, because it really is a brand that walks the walk.”



Dove and Ogilvy contacted 100s of healthcare workers to use their selfies in its campaign.



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# TOP CAMPAIGNS

In their own words, creatives share what went into the work that won big.

BY JENNIFER HORN

→ **IKEA's "Our Little World" encouraged people to create a big impact through small eco-friendly acts at home.**

"During lockdown, our homes became more than just homes. They became our schools, gyms, offices, restaurants. That gave birth to the idea of showing how our homes had become little worlds, all floating around each other. Like with any CGI-heavy project the biggest hurdle was the process. It required imagination, trust and a few leaps of faith. We started with a really thorough pre-vis, which almost felt like we were locked into an edit before we'd even done the shoot. Being prepared in advance made us confident and creative during the complex shoot and post-production." - **Rethink's Joel Holthy (#2 CD), Hayley Hinkley (#4 AD) and Jacquelyn Parent (#7 CW)**



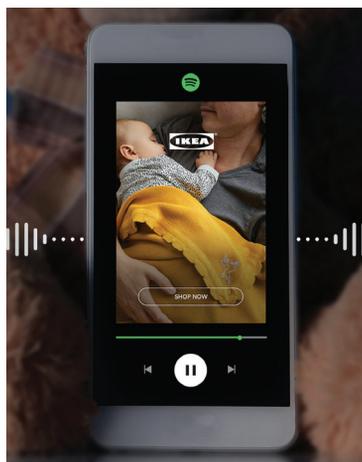
← **IKEA's "Scrapbook" showed how to use food scraps to create meals and built on the brand's eco ambitions.**

"Putting the cookbook [which showed recipes using scraps of food] together with 10 chefs across the continent meant a lot of elaborate coordinating to make it all work, and a lot of time spent on Zoom wishing you could taste what you were seeing. The IKEA client saw this idea on one slide in the back of a deck as a bonus, and immediately said, 'I love it, let's make it great.'" - **Rethink's Justin Santelli (#4 CW)**



→ **IKEA's "Don't Wake The Baby" replaced loud ads during baby-lulling playlists on Spotify with quiet commercials from the retailer.**

"This idea was inspired by a real-life baby. As a new parent, I discovered the magic of white noise for keeping babies asleep, and then dad-brain switched to ad-brain. I brought my sleep-deprived insight to Charmaine, and the idea was (also) born. The concept for these spots was to make audio quiet, which meant we had to find the sweet spot between whispery and creepy for our voice talent. He nailed it. The only other snag was my attempt at presenting the idea to client in "Swedish voice." - **Rethink's Evan Kane (#14 CW) and Charmaine Cheng (#19 AD)**



↑ **"SickKids VS Hard Days" shared stories of moms coping with looking after a sick child at home.**

"The pandemic made it impossible to film real SickKids parents and their immunocompromised children. To keep the story as authentic as possible, we interviewed 10 moms remotely about their daily struggles and challenges. On one call, we were interviewing a mom who was taking care of her son with an undiagnosed illness. During the interview, she would have to stop to tend to her child as he threw up off camera. However, she really wanted to tell her story and pressed on. Stories like these were eye-opening and made this film so real and visceral." - **Cossette's Kyle Lamb (#22 AD)**



↑ SickKids “This is Why” zeroed in on why its hospital needs more space, showing 40 child patients as they fight for the lives.

“While working in the hospital during production, we’d get chills every time a Code Blue (cardiac arrest) was announced over the loudspeaker. It would sometimes be 5-10 times a day. Imagine hearing that as a parent with a child in the hospital. To capture that feeling, Mark Zibert and his team were embedded in the hospital like war photographers. Some of the footage was too emotionally intense and we pared it back in the edit so as to not make it feel scary for the viewers.” – **Cossette’s Jake Bundock (#20 CD)**



← CDSS’ “Mindsets” saw those with Down syndrome participate in a study on how exercise improves cognitive function.

“We had the idea, but no clue how to pull it off. We don’t have people at the agency with experience running global research studies. But the team worked the problem from every angle, and we found a research partner in Dr. Dan Gordon, and partnered with the world’s first person with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman, as well as with BrainHQ to handle the brain training portion. Then, with the help of CDSS, we began recruiting participants to run the study.” – **FCB’s Marty Hoefkes (#6 CD)**



→ Heinz “Draw Ketchup” asked people to draw the first thing that came to mind when they thought of the red sauce.

“If you ask someone to draw ketchup, odds are they’re going to draw Heinz. 18 countries and 100s of drawings later, that proved to be true. (One guy drew mustard. We didn’t have the heart to stop him.) We worked with participants from all over the world, and we couldn’t let them know they were in a Heinz commercial. We were lucky to have an amazing client who was eager to bring this idea to life from billboards to hand-drawn labels on bottles in store.” – **Rethink’s Zach Bautista (#1 AD) and Geoff Baillie (#1 CW)**



↑ CDSS’ “Project Understood” set out to improve voice-recognition models by asking people with Down syndrome to donate their voices.

“We knew that voice technology didn’t work for the Down syndrome community, but the big challenge was finding the right voice company to partner with. We reached out to over a dozen companies, and still couldn’t find the right fit. Our CIO was aware of our struggles when he ran into a colleague at Google who coincidentally had atypical speech. They discussed the project, and the next week, we were put in touch with a team at Google, who we still work with today.” – **FCB’s Michael Morelli (#7 CD)**



MIKE DUBRICK  
MANAGING PARTNER, ECD

# TOP CREATIVE DIRECTOR

**Years at Rethink:** 10

**Years in the biz:** 12

**First job:** My first job was a paper route for the *Toronto Star*. My first advertising job was an internship at Zig. I feel lucky to have done both. At Zig, great work was the expected, not the exception. That didn't make the job scary, it made it fun. It set a standard that I'm still chasing.

**A fun fact:** At CP+B, I tanked a game of ping pong against Rob Reilly on purpose because I was worried he'd fire me if I beat him. Rematch?

**Award you were most excited to win:** It's not an award, but a handful of Rethink work appears in the latest edition of *Hey Whipple Squeeze This: The Classic Guide to Creating Great Ads*. For those that don't know, that book is like the copywriter's bible. It's the book you read and say "I want to do that." I've read that book 50 times. And now we're in it?

**How you arrived at the idea for a 2021 winning campaign:** For Heinz, we talk a lot about the brand's role in culture. We refer to it as the Coca-Cola of condiments. We don't think of it as the "best" ketchup – it is ketchup. We gave that notion to the team and they came back and said "if you close your eyes and picture ketchup, we bet you'll picture a bottle of Heinz." That simple thought ended up becoming "Draw Ketchup."

**Your creative process:** Our goal is to create work that earns attention in pop culture. So, we start with that end goal. Our creatives pitch most ideas as a press headline. It forces us to distill the idea down to its simplest form. It also pushes us beyond what the idea is and into why the idea matters. We break the idea down to an MVP that will earn headlines in the press. We then put it into the world and let people decide if it's powerful or not. If it is, we pour gas on the fire. We call that approach "Go then Grow." For the Heinz Puzzle, we launched with 57 puzzles, then we did 1,000, then 10,000, and now you can buy it at Walmart.

**Beyond making ads, what fuels your creative drive:** I've been teaching at Miami Ad School for a few years now. I think I learn more from them than they do from me. I'm not sure what that says about my teaching skills.

**Your secret sauce for success:** The secret is realizing there is no secret.

**A memorable lesson advertising taught you:** There's a good podcast out there and I think the name says it all: It's Only F\*cking Advertising.



ZACHARY BAUTISTA  
CD

# TOP ART DIRECTOR

**Years at Rethink:** 5

**Years in the biz:** 7

**First job:** I was a custodian at the mall.

**A fun fact:** I've been tasered by accident. It wasn't fun but it is a fact.

**A passion, project or past-time born out of the pandemic:** Ordering things off Amazon.

**How you got into advertising:** I'm terrible at math.

**Number of awards won in 2021:** 113 awards or commendations.

**Which shows:** One Show, Cannes, D&AD, Clios, Epica, ADCC, Kinsale, AToMiC, Effies, Marketing Awards, Andys, Strategy Awards, Communication Arts, Applied Arts, CMA, SIAs, Adobe Print Awards, Idéa, The Drum Chip Awards, and the constant overbearing love from my parents.

**Award you were most excited to win:** The Kinsale Award, because it's a shark head.

**How you arrived at the idea for a 2021 winning campaign:** At the start of the pandemic everyone was posting photos of puzzles on Instagram. We just texted our ECD "all red puzzle = Heinz slow?"

**Your creative process:**

1. Stare at a blank page.
2. Write on the page.
3. Throw that page out.
4. Walk away.
5. Start over with a fresh pot of coffee.

**Beyond making ads, what fuels your creative drive:** This industry is always adapting and evolving. I find it exciting to think of all the creative possibilities that come with that change. Learning new ways to bring ideas to life keeps me going and something I always want to be a part of as a creative.

**Piece of advice you'd pass on to an aspiring creative:** Keep going.

**Your secret sauce for success:** The idea needs to be more appealing than the Skip Ad button.

**A memorable lesson advertising taught you:** Framing a camera for both 9:16 and 16:9 is not a good start to a shoot day.

**Looking back, you would have been most likely to...:** Become the most-awarded custodian in Canada.



←  
GEOFF BAILLIE  
ACD

## TOP COPYWRITER

**Years at Rethink:** 4

**Years in biz:** 4

**First job:** I was an usher at a rural community theatre when I was in Grade 8, where I had to watch a production of *Cats* 11 times in one week.

**How you got into advertising:** Humber copywriting class of '18 baby!

**A fun fact:** Kanye West stood behind me in line at a sandwich deli. No one believes me.

**A passion, project or past-time born out of the pandemic:** Looking at properties in Belize on [Realtor.com](https://www.realtor.com).

**Number of awards won in 2021:** According to Zach Bautista, 113-ish.

**Award you were most excited to win (and why):** It's a 113-way tie. But having our ad featured in the book *Hey, Whipple, Squeeze This: The Classic Guide to Creating Great Ads* was crazy.

**How you arrived at the idea for a 2021 winning campaign:** "Draw Ketchup" was inspired in part by an activity my mom had me do when I was seven or so. She asked me to draw a scientist, and I drew a Doc Brown-looking old guy in a lab coat. Then she asked why I didn't draw a woman or a young person, exposing my unconscious bias as a seven-year-old. 20 years later we thought, 'Let's do this, but with ketchup.'

**Your creative process:** I try to keep things in a notebook for as long as possible. The internet is a blackhole.

**What fuels your love for advertising:** I'm motivated by the process of jotting down a stray thought one day and months later seeing it brought to life by all these amazingly talented directors and producers and editors. It's a surreal feeling.

**Piece of advice you'd pass on to an aspiring creative:** Read *Mirror Makers* and *Capitalist Realism*.

**Your secret sauce for success:** Heinz Ketchup.

**A memorable lesson advertising taught you:** Try to be in on the joke.

**Looking back, you would have been most likely to...:** Get his ad ideas from his mom.



←  
ERIN MAGUIRE  
JUNIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER

## TOP DESIGNER

**Years at Rethink:** 3

**Years in the biz:** 3

**First job:** Making a mean Blizzard at Dairy Queen.

**How you got into advertising:** A co-op position for design school turned into a full-time job.

**A fun fact (about you):** My clothes are organized by colour. This probably isn't that surprising.

**A passion, project or past-time born out of the pandemic:** Perfecting the ability to shave, bleach, and colour my own hair.

**Number of awards won in 2021:** 40-ish

**Which shows:** One Show, Cannes, D&AD, Clios, Epica, ADCC, Kinsale, AToMiC, Effies, Marketing Awards, Andys, Strategy Awards, Communication Arts, Applied Arts, CMA, SIAs, Adobe Print Awards, Idéa.

**Award you were most excited to win:** Cannes Lion.

**How you arrived at the idea for a 2021 winning campaign:** When the team turned the IKEA catalogue into a coffee table book we seized the opportunity to dive deep into printing finishes. It was a natural progression to create a tactile experience for consumers on the page to feel the products. We also got to nerd out on printing. Win-win.

**Your creative process:** Get a blank page. Start with a mind map. Fill it with immediate thoughts and start to physically connect them. Take those connections and thought starters, and just start sketching. Once I sketch all the ideas I can think of I look back at the mind map and keep sketching some more. And then scroll Pinterest.

**Piece of advice you'd pass on to an aspiring creative:** Create work that you truly feel inspired by or driven to make. The care shows.

**Your secret sauce for success:** Being passionate. And making friends with really smart people.

**A memorable lesson advertising taught you:** Turns out, copywriter doesn't mean someone who works in copyright law. OOH means Out-Of-Home. Google slide specs are 1920 x 1080. (Hope this saves you from some of the Google searches I had to make.)

**Looking back, you would have been most likely to...:** Be a graphic designer with a shaved head and typography tattoo.



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The ATOMIC Awards is not just one thing. It's everything. Not only does it believe that the boldest ideas challenge our expectations of advertising and the way we consume media, but also that those ideas are hatched in company with technology, media, content and innovation. ➤ This year's special report is a highlight of the Gold-winning work, parcelled out into themes like hacking culture, physical (un) distancing, and bringing diversity to the masses. It also features the creme-de-la-creme of advertising shows, the Grand Prix winners. ➤ This year, two campaigns were given the top award. The first Public Service Grand Prix went to "The Lost Tapes of the 27 Club," a digitally complex platform created for Over the Bridge by Rethink in support of mental health awareness. And the second Commercial Grand Prix was awarded to Pfaff Harley-Davidson's "Tough Turban" by Zulu Alpha Kilo, which developed a helmet for Sikh riders so that they didn't have to choose between their safety and beliefs. ➤ The winners, chosen by a jury of digital, agency, marketing and media execs, offer examples of how to engage audiences on multiple screens and in new environments. Read on for the insights that shaped this year's winning work.

BY WENDY KAN



## DIVERSITY TAKES CENTRE STAGE

From beer to bikes, mass market brands address DEI in big-spending campaigns.

Diversity was top of mind for consumer-facing brands in 2021, with some taking significant steps toward inclusion by shifting their thinking on everything from sponsorships to products.

Take this year's Grand Prix winner Pfaff Harley-Davidson. While the brand (which also won two Golds in Diversity and IP, and two Silvers in Idea and Niche Targeting) has been long associated with older white men, it actually appeals to riders of varying cultures – an insight that led Zulu Apha Kilo to create “Tough Turban,” which addressed an issue specific to male Sikh riders.

The law has long required motorcycle riders to wear helmets, forcing Sikhs to choose between their beliefs and safety. But in 2018, the Ontario government passed legislation exempting Sikh men from having to wear a helmet while riding. The new law was a step forward, but it also introduced a critical question: how

could Sikh riders indulge in their love for the open road while ensuring their safety?

The answer was found in Sikh history. Through conversations with Sikh riders, the agency discovered that in ancient times, warriors would go into battle with chain mail woven into the fabric of their turbans. This provided protection without violating religious tenets.

So Pfaff Harley-Davidson and Zulu created a modern-day equivalent. The protective turban was a marriage of ancient tradition and modern engineering. The team worked with industrial design experts with experience in 3D printing and composite fabrics used in bulletproof clothing, creating a turban with impact-resistant materials.

A website housed a video demonstrating how the turban was engineered while also profiling Sikh riders. Open-sourced files for the turban were published so that manufacturers in any country could produce

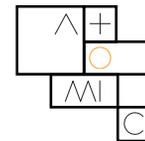
the turbans in their own market.

The story of “Tough Turban” was picked up by media outlets across Canada the U.S., the U.K., and India. Total circulation of the media coverage in the first two weeks was 238.8 million, with an advertising value of \$2.19 million. Three manufacturers reached out to explore large-scale production. And in an unexpected twist, the new turban prompted British Sikhs to ask their government for exemptions to workplace safety helmets.

Hockey, just like the motorcycle world, is associated with white culture – despite the fact that Canada is one of the most diverse countries in the world. Approximately 350,000 people immigrate to the country every year, and 192 languages are spoken outside of the two official ones.

Recognizing how difficult it must be for immigrants to follow a fast-paced sport with a lingo of its own, Molson Canadian and Rethink looked to reshape hockey culture, making it more accessible while growing its fan base.

For nearly 70 years, hockey games have been called in English and in French. For hockey to speak to more Canadians, Molson realized it needed to change the



way viewers heard the games. So, on April 24, 2021, Molson Canadian, in partnership with Sportsnet, created “Hockey Night In Canada, Multilingual Edition.”

Two games – the Toronto Maple Leafs vs. the Vancouver Canucks, and the Edmonton Oilers vs. the Winnipeg Jets – were broadcast in seven additional languages: Cantonese, Mandarin, Hindi, Vietnamese, Tagalog, German, and Arabic. The languages selected were the most commonly spoken in each Canadian city with an associated NHL team.

The initiative kicked off with a co-branded TV spot, which aired during regular *Hockey Night in Canada* programming.

Leading up to game day, digital and social placements drove visitors to a microsite where games were streamed in the seven languages. PR pitches were directed to language-specific outlets to ensure they reached new Canadians. Hockey fans from each culture were invited to become the voices for their communities.

At retail, limited-edition multilingual Molson Canadian cans reflected the languages of the broadcasts.

In addition to the 32 million paid and 4.5 million social impressions, Molson saw 55.5 million impressions across earned and sponsored media – surpassing the goal of 15 million by 254%. Over 1.1 million Canadians tuned in on game day, with the broadcast microsite bringing in 31,000 visitors. At AToMiC, the work landed three Golds in Diversity, Broadcast Engagement, and Cause & Action, plus another Silver in Brand Integration and two Bronzes in Collaboration and Idea.

Bud Light was yet another beer brand that created a more meaningful (and inclusive) connection with consumers – this time by plugging into the issue of inequality.

The brand’s challenge was to make itself relevant among women age 19 to 26, many of whom perceived Bud Light as the “bro beer” that men brought to parties.

Research showed that traits of Gen Z include a sense of responsibility to make the world a better place, a cynical view of traditional ads, and a tendency to gravitate toward brands that align with their values.

To play a more purposeful role, Bud Light worked with Anomaly to find a social

issue that resonated with young female adults using one of their passion points: music.

Its research found that, in 2019, only five of the top 100 DJs were women and the 10 highest-paid DJs were all men. With that insight, the team produced *Underplayed*, a feature-length documentary that followed the top female DJs in the world, drawing attention to the subject of gender inequality in the music industry.

The 88-minute film – which landed an AToMiC Gold in Brand Content and another in Collaboration – portrays an industry in desperate need of change and

distributed globally by major streaming platforms and launched on International Women’s Day.

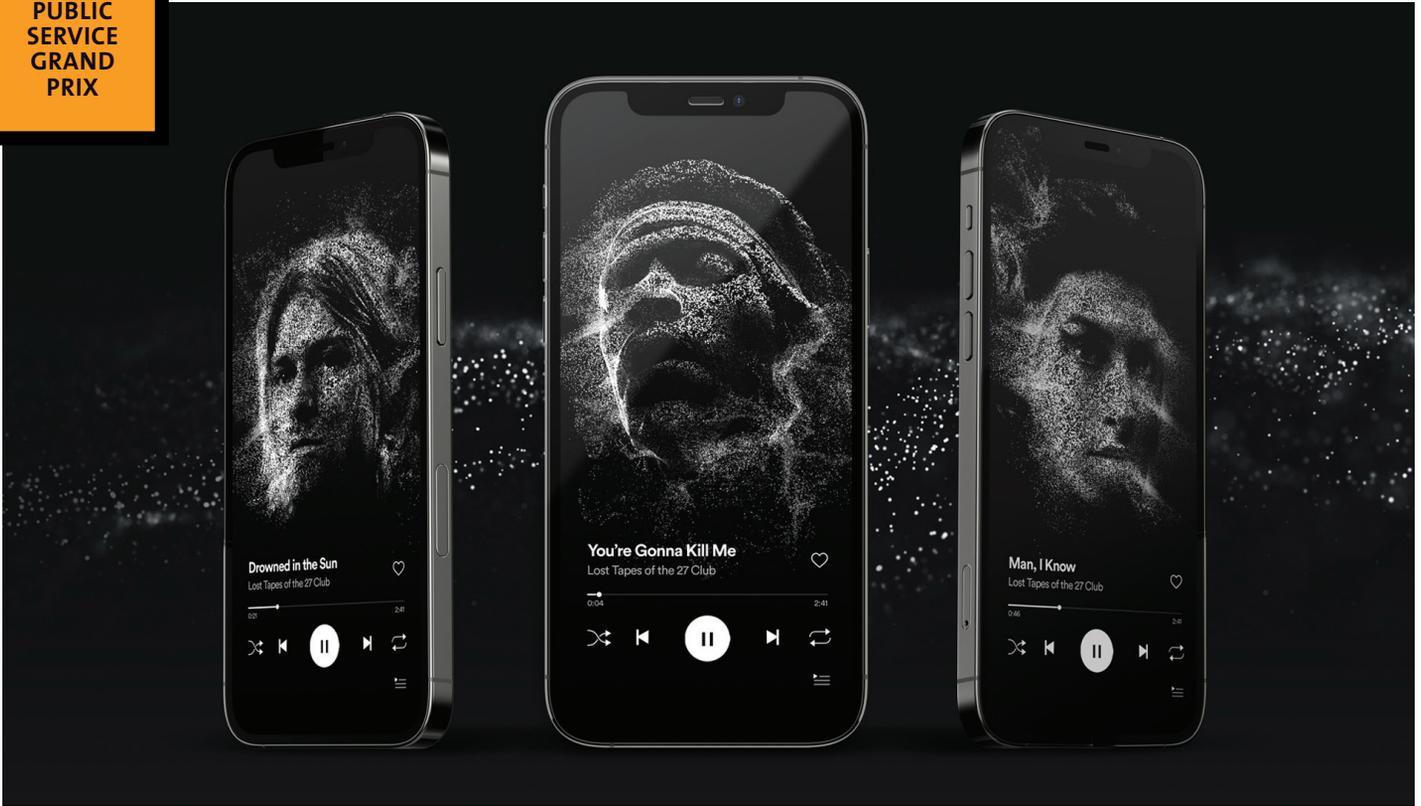
Globally, *Underplayed* has received over 300 million earned media impressions, with hundreds of stories appearing in publications such as *Rolling Stone*, *Variety* and the *Washington Post*. On social media, the documentary sparked a much-needed conversation around gender disparity in music, with over 16.2 million impressions culminating from 131 pieces of social content. The campaign also led to a 33% increase in Bud Light searches.



takes an all-encompassing look at the exclusion of female DJs from the electronic music scene. Documenting the personal experiences of producers and artists, *Underplayed* was shown at festivals such as the Tribeca Film Festival and the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), where it made its debut.

The film was subsequently acquired and

As the centerpiece of the campaign, the documentary drove deep meaning and purpose for Bud Light. The film’s impact extended even further, as *Underplayed* inspired artists and industry leaders to champion gender equality in the music industry and beyond, leading to a more diverse pool of participants and role models for future generations.



## SEIZING A MOMENT

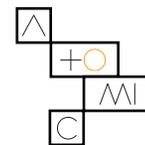
Bold and brave programs that tackle taboo subjects and spark change.

Some of this year's Gold- and Grand Prix winners not only captured public attention by highlighting taboo topics and longstanding social issues, they did so with the utmost care and sensitivity.

It's no secret that mental health problems are prevalent among those working in the music industry. However, the image of the "tortured artist" has long been normalized, if not glamorized. With the help of Rethink, Grand Prix winner Over The Bridge sought to raise awareness of the issue and encourage people who were struggling to seek help.

For "Lost Tapes of the 27 Club," the agency produced music tracks that would have been created by legendary musicians Jimi Hendrix, Amy Winehouse, Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain – had they not died at the age of 27, lost to anxiety, depression and addiction.

The team used Magenta, an artificial intelligence platform developed by Google, to sift through and analyze audio data from the four musicians and identify specific patterns in their riffs, rhythms, vocals, and melodies. From the results, four entirely new songs were produced, one of the first occasions where AI was used to create



new music from late artists.

The album was launched on Spotify and YouTube Music, as well as on a microsite that featured information on Over The Bridge and the music industry's mental health crisis. Fans also participated, creating their own content, performing cover songs, producing music videos, and adding "Lost Tapes" sheet music to guitar websites.

The campaign – which also won three Golds in Idea, AI and Audio Branding, plus four Silvers in Engagement, ROI, Digital Engagement and Brand Content – garnered more than two million streams in one week, with listeners from over 160 countries. More than 400 publications in 54 countries talked about the work across radio, TV and online, while the microsite received over 127,000 unique visitors from over 164 countries.

The effort paid off, many times over: Over the Bridge saw an 830% increase in musicians reaching out to the organization for help.

Mental health issues don't just affect the rich and famous. And they are not just a byproduct of a life lived in the fast lane. Some of the most challenging mental health problems are brought on by sexual assault, much of which sadly happens at a young age.

Through stories told by the youth it is set up to help, the Canadian Centre for Child Protection is well aware of the role Twitter plays in allowing child sexual assault imagery (CSAM) to proliferate across its platform.

More than 6,000 tweets are sent every second, yet Twitter lacks the infrastructure for users to report posts containing CSAM. Without a reporting process in place, CSAM cannot be removed promptly when found. And the longer a post remains online, the greater the chances it can be seen, shared and reshared.

So for its 15th birthday, the centre worked with No Fixed Address to create "Happy Birthday, Twitter" to educate people about the company's failure to protect survivors from repeated harm, as well as pressure it to take action.

Four days prior to Twitter's birthday, Canadian Centre for Child

Protection released a powerful video capturing the collective voices and raw emotion of real survivors.

At first, the film appears to start on a high note, with people wishing the social media giant a happy 15th birthday. But the tone shifts, as survivors recount personal experiences at that age, the abuse they suffered that was recorded and shared, and how they've tried to convince Twitter to remove images of their sexual abuse from the platform.

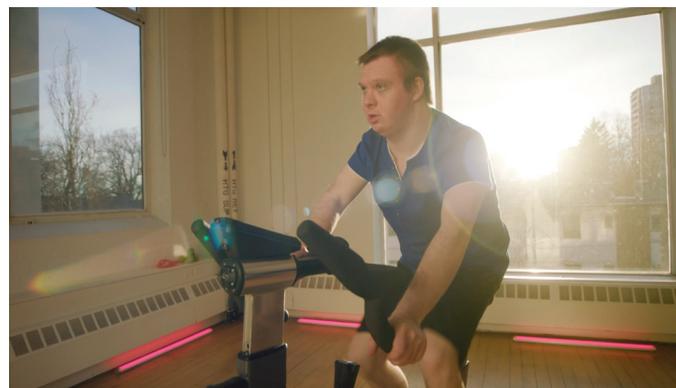
The video was released on the very platform where change is needed, using the reach and scale of the social media giant against it. The team seeded the video with influencers ranging from celebrities to columnists and survivor advocates. Its microsite housed the video, as well as data on the scope of the problem, and a custom birthday cake map illustrated the speed at which Tweets spread around the globe.

The call-to-action was simple: share this message and demand change from Twitter. The four-day campaign generated over 330 million impressions worldwide. On Twitter alone, over 30 million impressions were generated with thousands of people sharing the #TwitterBirthdayPlea – results that helped the team win an AToMiC Gold in Video and two Silvers in Idea and Social.

In the days that followed, Twitter refused to comment outside of its automated response. However, two weeks after the campaign broke, The Five Eyes – an intelligence alliance comprised of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S. – invited the Canadian Centre for Child Protection to speak at a meeting concerning the global epidemic of CSAM.

Another hidden conversation was put on full display when the Sunnybrook Hospital Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network and – once again – No Fixed Address created "#UnsilenceTheConversation."

Families typically wait three months before they announce a pregnancy, in case they suffer from a miscarriage. When parents lose an unborn child during this time, they typically suffer alone, and in silence. Social media, meanwhile, becomes a triggering reminder of the loss. Sunnybrook set out to change the online



## Beyond advertising

Advertising has, over the years, evolved beyond billboards and commercials, with agencies like FCB helping organizations like the Canadian Down Syndrome Society (CDSS) create non-traditional advertising programs that do good.

The CDSS's "Mindsets" campaign resonated with many, as it set out to combat a long-held fallacy that people with Down syndrome shouldn't engage in exercise.

In an unprecedented global study, CDSS – together with the Anglia Ruskin University in the U.K. and BrainHQ in the U.S. – set out to prove a positive link between fitness and cognition, with the hope that doctors and parents will encourage those with Down syndrome to exercise in order to strengthen memory, enhance learning, boost social skills, and increase confidence.

CDSS created a Mindsets app to track their cognitive data using BrainHQ brain exercises and data from Fitbit. To precisely measure the impact of exercise, researchers recorded standard physical and cognitive assessments at the beginning and the end of the study.

To recruit participants for its study, the team created a video that showcased the barriers people with Down syndrome face when it comes to exercise, which was then shared by over 50 influencers in the Down syndrome community. In the end, 200 people from four continents were recruited to participate in the study. With a media budget of only \$5,000, the campaign achieved 180 million media impressions, and 1.6 million video views across social (not to mention picking up an AToMiC Gold in Diversity).



## Discrete distancing

Staying at home during pandemic lockdowns was meant to keep everyone safe. But for women in abusive relationships, home was not a place where they were free from harm.

Interval House, a shelter for abused women, experienced a lower occupancy rate than normal during the crisis and knew domestic violence was on the rise. It had to find a simple way to provide access to the lifesaving information that women needed,

but in a place where their abusers typically wouldn't be present. That place was the grocery store.

Created by DonerNorth, "Bruised Fruit" featured a produce display filled with bruised apples, each with discrete stickers containing information about abuse and the phone number for the org's Crisis Line.

Recognizing that many people had pivoted to ordering groceries online, Interval

House took the additional step of adding their bruised apples to delivery orders.

The small message had a big impact. Interval House saw a 90% increase in site visits and a 17% increase in calls to their crisis line. It also walked away with an AToMiC Gold in Experiential Engagement, plus a Silver in print/OOH and a Bronze in Niche Targeting. But the most significant metric for success was found in shelter occupancy: it rose 66%, a sign that its message reached women who needed help.

conversation and provide parents with an outlet for their grief.

The "Unbirth Announcement" allowed grieving families to share their message, normalizing the conversation about pregnancy loss. The team created a tool called the Baby Opt-Out Ad Browser Extension, which helped eliminate online triggers by removing all baby-related content and ads from a person's social media feed.

It also created a support site, where professionals who are caring for someone who is suffering a loss can find resources, and where volunteers could find opportunities to help. The campaign (which medalled an AToMiC Gold in Niche Targeting) saw a 7,200% increase in conversation, allowing those who experienced a loss to find comfort in the fact that they were not suffering alone.

While some conversations are silenced, others cannot be ignored.

With Canada's 400 years of Black history largely absent from the education curriculum, the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) set out to find a way for the Black experience to be included and taught in schools. It worked with DDB Canada to highlight this glaring issue in a way that provincial policymakers would find impossible to ignore – and it, too, created a tool to prove its point.

To show how history curriculums skew towards a singular white male perspective, the organization's "#BlackedOutHistory" campaign

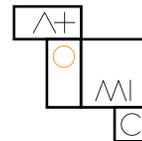
featured a Grade 8 textbook currently being used in Ontario schools, with all of the non-Black history blacked out. Of the 255 pages, only 13 remained.

The OBHS sent the blacked out textbooks to policymakers, activists, and the media. In addition to the textbooks, the packages included a letter from the organization demanding that Black History become a mandatory part of the curriculum. It also encouraged Canadians to participate in the conversation using #BlackedOutHistory online.

The double Gold-winning campaign (in Niche Targeting and Idea) received over 5.6 million impressions and achieved a 90% positive sentiment score.

It also made an industry-wide impact. Educators and teacher unions across Ontario requested copies of the textbook, and used it to teach students about prejudice and bias.

Nielsen, the textbook publisher, began a review of the company's policy and process for writing textbooks. And policymakers also took notice: MPPs shared photos of themselves posing with the blacked-out textbook, MPP Jill Andrews made a speech on the topic in Parliament, and the Official Opposition began a push to change the curriculum.



# HACKING A MOMENT

How marketers and creatives collaborate and act at the speed of light to hack the cultural zeitgeist.

Going “viral” was not an easy feat for brands over the last two years. With so many more people tethered to their computers and phones during the pandemic, breaking through required strategies that tapped deep audience insights, seizing the cultural zeitgeist, and acting with nimble efficiency.

Take IKEA’s “Cristiano Ronaldo Water Bottle” campaign by Rethink, for example. The Swedish retailer demonstrated the rewards that can come from being agile and creative when it comes to product naming – or to put it more accurately, renaming.

In the summer of 2021, IKEA became one of the most talked-about brands when it jumped on a cultural moment during the UEFA Euro tournament, one of the first major international sporting events to allow fans in the stands after more than a year of lockdowns.

To capitalize on the global appeal of football, brands spend millions of dollars to sponsor the tournament. Given that IKEA was not a sponsor and had zero spend dedicated to the event, Rethink found an ingenious way to capture sports fans’ attention.

In a spontaneous and stunning move, Portuguese legend Cristiano Ronaldo rejected two Coca-Cola bottles displayed on a table in front of him during a press conference. He expressed his preference for a bottle of water instead, pointedly saying “Agua.” IKEA and Rethink sprang into action, renaming the brand’s popular reusable KORKEN glass water bottle “CRISTIANO” and posting the newly rebranded product across its social channels.

The move was more than just a buzzy stunt designed to capture media attention for the retailer. It also promoted IKEA’s message of sustainability, and perhaps most significantly, hijacked conversations around the tournament.

The post exploded online, resulting in 700 million earned impressions in 48 hours and \$25 million in paid media value. IKEA saw a 14% increase in sales the day of the post and a 7% increase in web traffic.

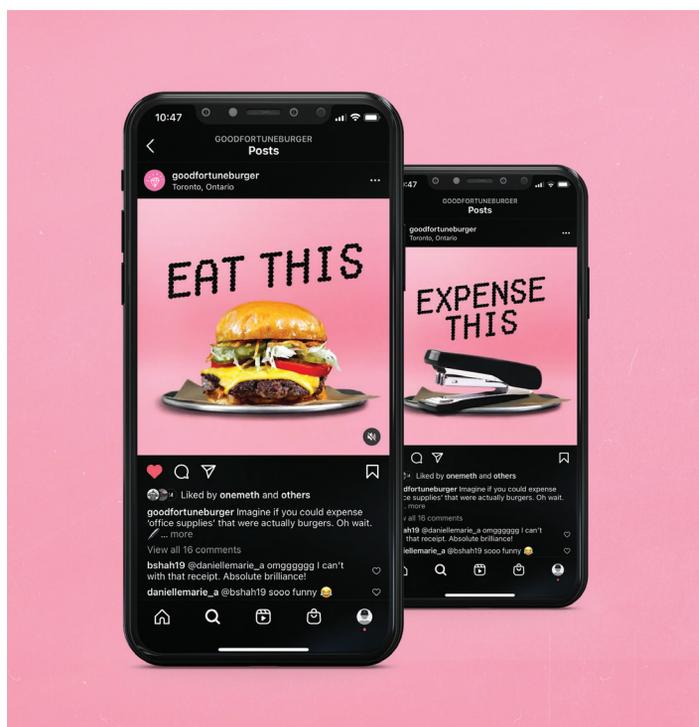
The campaign now holds the distinction of being IKEA’s most talked-about social post, eventually leading it to win two AToMiC Golds in ROI and Social, as well as a Bronze in Digital Engagement.

Reacting to cultural shifts and taking a playful approach to product (re)naming were also drivers behind “Receats,” the brainchild of Good Fortune, a Toronto resto-bar, and its agency team OneMethod, Bensimon Byrne and Narrative.

With restos struggling to stay in business during Toronto’s longest lockdown, and with many flooding food ordering apps, Good Fortune needed a way to stand out and boost delivery sales. The team landed on an idea to disguise items on Good Fortune’s menu as office supplies and list them on UberEats and DoorDash.

The covert strategy allowed customers to expense orders to the companies they work for, during a time when customers were also building out their home offices. Burgers became “Basic steel staplers” and chicken sandwiches became “Dry erase whiteboards.” To round out the ruse, receipts were issued from a fictional company called “GF Office Supply Co.”

The play – which took home two Golds in Digital Engagement and Brand Experience, a Silver in Social, and two Bronzes in ROI and Shift – initiated ethical debates alongside chatter across Reddit, TikTok, Twitter and LinkedIn. More than 300 articles appeared in 16 countries. It was also used as a business case at the Ivey Business School at Western University. But, most importantly, the strategy yielded a 34% increase in mobile-driven sales for the restaurant, providing Good Fortune with enough financial thrust to continue operating beyond the pandemic.





peer-to-peer nature of blockchain allowed the storage of every action to become part of a permanent digital record.

ActToo launched on the third anniversary of the viral #MeToo hashtag. It garnered global press and conversation, generating 1.6 billion impressions, and reaching 71 countries in the first 48 hours. The work received praise from politicians, celebrities and global leaders.

At the time of its AToMiC award submission – which led it to win a Gold in Digital Engagement and a Silver in Diversity – ActToo had recorded more than 54,168 actions to the blockchain. The platform is immortalizing thousands of acts used in the fight to end sexual violence, while also creating a celebratory measure of progress.

Continuing to drive momentum and consumer participation during the last two years was also a challenge for sponsors of live sporting events. How does a brand replicate the excitement of a crowded arena when fans are watching the game at home with friends, family, or even alone?

As the Official Pizza of the NHL for the 2020/21 season, Little Caesars shifted its marketing strategy beyond the expected rink board. With the pizza chain already experiencing its highest sales on Friday and Saturday evenings, it looked to ramp up purchases on Wednesdays with the “Pizza Night Hockey” program. The idea was to

# PHY-GITAL COMMUNITIES

Brands physically engage with consumers in a virtually distanced world.

With pandemic-induced mandates requiring everyone to stay at home, some of this year’s AToMiC-winning brands centred their marketing tactics around online communities and also reimagined how they engage with consumers in physical spaces.

Take “ActToo,” for example – a database that was developed to help resurrect momentum for MeToo during a time when non-profits struggled to generate attention for their cause.

While the MeToo movement lit up on social in 2017 and set the stage for everyone to join the fight, its pace eventually slowed and a key question emerged: how do you convert a movement about eliminating a behaviour into one that drives people to act on an ongoing basis?

With the help of agency FCB/Six, MeToo developed the first recommendation engine for activism to end sexual violence. The team first built a database filled with common ways organizations ask for help, such as volunteering or donating. The natural language-processing engine then identified and extracted the metadata from these actions. This was followed by a scrubbing process that involved combing search, social, and e-commerce to find more acts, which unearthed tips such as reading a memoir or shutting down rape jokes.

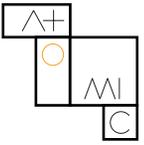
Finally, all of the actions were tagged by topic, interest and involvement type to help fuel recommendations. The decentralized,

give hockey and pizza fans a different day of the week to look forward to, while also boosting delivery sales.

Naming rights to a hockey arena are worth millions. Little Caesars decided to have fun with the concept on a much smaller scale, applying it to people’s homes. Working with No Fixed Address, the company’s “Naming Rights” campaign invited consumers to sell the rights to their living room, basement, or wherever they enjoyed the game, by signing a not-legally-binding digital contract. Once signed, Canadians gained access to exclusive deals for every Pizza Night Hockey of the season.

On social media, the brand gave fans the opportunity to “renegotiate” their contracts. Real-time digital auctions allowed fans to name their price – in pizza – for their commitment to place Little Caesars branding in their home. Live negotiations saw fans offer up the naming rights to their dogs and even their kids. Every box sold came with a “seat number” and a unique registration code, which could used to win prizes, with winners announced during a hockey broadcast.

Little Caesars saw a 21% increase in Wednesday store traffic, a 15% increase in sales, and a 10% increase in delivery. And, as the ultimate compliment, the Little Caesars U.S. team adapted the successful Canadian campaign (with its two AToMiC Golds in Engagement and Brand Integration) for their own market.



# THE POWER OF DESIGN THINKING

Reimagining iconic manuals and symbolic flags to address the world's most complicated issues.

Design is a powerful thing. It can be used to translate difficult, complex issues into simple, visceral images, which is exactly what “Colours of Pride” set out to do.

Montreal non-profit Fondation Émergence and Rethink were inspired by the insight that, more than just a symbol of celebration, the Pride flag is also a reminder of past and ongoing hardships – and that the fight for acceptance and safe spaces needs to continue.

Indeed, many in the Western world believe that the acceptance of LGBTQ2+ communities is widespread. But in some countries, Pride marches and parades remain illegal and are repressed. In Russia, waiving the pride or transgender flag is seen as a provocative gesture and can lead to prosecution. Both in Canada and abroad, many homosexuals and transgender people are still targeted by hateful and violent acts.

“Colours of Pride” reinterpreted the Pride flag by using real bruises and injuries suffered by members of the community in Canada and around the world – converting the iconic symbol of joy into a version that was dark, haunting and powerful.

The campaign launched with a video introducing the “new flag” and featuring prominent members of the community who had suffered hate crimes. Seeded across social pages belonging to the foundation and the IDAHT (International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia) and boosted via a PR push, the video quickly garnered interest from local and international news outlets.

Posters and pamphlets were translated into more than twenty languages and sent to Fondation Émergence’s allies and counterparts across the world, for distribution in schools and community centers. A website featured the stories of courageous “victim-ambassadors” and provided tools and resources to help others heal.

“Bruise flags” were also sent to United Nations Member States that still have homophobic laws, specifically the six where the death penalty is prescribed as punishment for consensual sexual acts between people of the same sex.

The campaign further cemented Fondation Émergence’s role in the fight against homophobia. The campaign video generated more than 2.4 million views and Émergence’s social channels also grew by more than 150%, expanding its network of allies. Several officials and

political decision-makers, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, mentioned Émergence and its campaign in official statements. And the work eventually went on to win two Golds at AToMiC, one in Design and another in Print/OOH, plus a Silver in Diversity.

IKEA also used the power of simple design to bring awareness (and one solution) to a complex issue. Over the years, the retailer had become the poster child for disposable, fast furniture. But with a mission to become fully circular by 2030, the brand looked to become a leader in sustainability and needed a way to align consumers with its purpose.

Research showed that sustainable practices among Canadians had dropped as a result of COVID-19. Consumers were buying more and conserving less. So IKEA and Rethink created “Repurposeful Instructions,” manuals that provide guidance on how to give new life to old furniture.

IKEA created 12 sets of instructions showing Canadians how to upcycle some of its iconic pieces. Using “Repurposeful Instructions,” consumers could turn an IVAR cabinet into a beehive, convert FRAKTA shopping bags into a hanging garden, or change a BLANDA MATT salad bowl into a birdhouse.

The campaign was picked up in media around the world, and featured in publications such as *Fast Company* and the *Daily Mail*. The instruction sets exceeded the download target on IKEA’s website by 37% and consumers spent 75% more time on IKEA’s website.

With the success of its campaign, IKEA was able to demonstrate its sustainability commitment while also helping Canadians live a more eco-friendly life at home (and picking up an AToMiC Gold in Sustainability plus a Silver in Cause & Action along the way).



CO-CHAIRS



**IAN MACKENZIE**  
Performance Art



**NINA PATEL**  
Kraft Heinz

ONLINE JURY

**LEILAH AMBROSE**  
Edelman Canada

**ESTHER BENZIE**  
CIBC

**PETE BRETON**  
Anomaly

**PRANAV CHANDAN**  
Unilever

**RANA CHATTERJEE**  
Lg2

**KARINE COURTEMANCHE**  
PHD & Touché!

**DAVE FEDERICO**  
No Fixed Address

**DAVE GOURDE**  
Glassroom

**MITCH JOEL**  
Six Pixels Group

**ELMA KARABEGOVIĆ**  
Broken Heart Love Affair

**BERNICE LO**  
Dentsu One

**JULIE MARKLE**  
Bleublancrouge

**MEGAN MCCRAE**  
Organigram

**CRAIG MCINTOSH**  
Broken Heart Love Affair  
(formerly at Cossette)

**CORY PELLETIER**  
Core Communications

**JUSTIN SENIOR**  
Mediabrand

**BAILEY WILSON**  
Facebook

**CAMERON WYKES**  
Media.Monks

JURY



**BUNMI ADEOYE**  
Proof



**PAULA AMOS**  
Indigenous Tourism BC



**ALYSSA BUETIKOFER**  
McDonald's Canada



**JEFFREY DA SILVA**  
Sid Lee



**GLEN D'SOUZA**  
Forsman & Bodenfors



**SHERRY FENG**  
Canopy Growth



**ISHAN GHOSH**  
Barrett and Welsh



**ROBERT JENKYN**  
Media Experts



**ALLISON LITZINGER**  
The Bay



**AMIR SAHBA**  
Thinkingbox



**CAROL SHMYGOL**  
ATB Financial



**STEPHANIE YUNG**  
Zulu Alpha Kilo

Pickup games

First scrapes

Battling weeds

Grass-stained knees

Chasing pets

“Are we there yet?”

First skate

Frozen toes

No more training wheels

“Look at me go!”



“Caaar!”

It's hard to imagine a Canadian memory without Canadian Tire in it.  
Congratulations on your 100th anniversary.



# client love

*(luv) noun*

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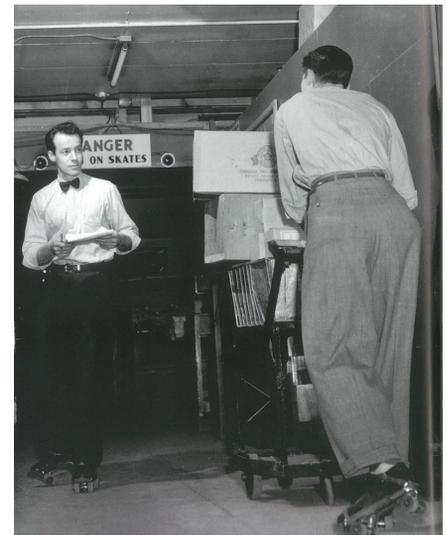
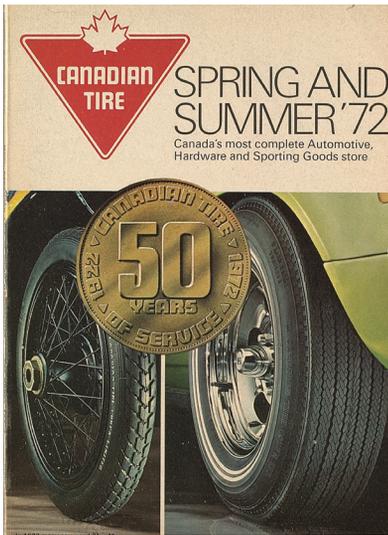
Giving them the last slice of cake,  
no matter how much you want it.

**Happy 100<sup>th</sup>**



+





**CANADA'S  
STORE  
TURNS  
100**  
BY WILL NOVOSEDLIK



Clockwise, top left: CTC celebrates its 50th anniversary; its first Toronto location opens in 1923; clerks on skates race to fill catalogue orders in the '30s; the first Canadian Tire bills from 1961; CT offers an unconditional guarantee on its tires; the Billes brothers who co-founded CTC.

There's nothing quite as Canadian as Catherine O'Hara talking about Canadian Tire. In a recent Instagram post, the star of *Schitt's Creek*, *Home Alone* and *Best in Show* reminisced about how, when their boys were little, she and her husband had a bright idea. For the sons' birthdays, they would set each of them loose at Canadian Tire so they could pick out their own presents. It became a tradition they continued for 20 years. "You've heard the saying 'like a kid in a candy store'? Well, for our family, it should be 'like a kid in a Canadian Tire store,'" O'Hara wrote. It's difficult to imagine saying that about another brand. Sure, Tim Horton's comes close, but you can't buy camping equipment or skates at Timmies while your car is on a hoist getting the oil changed. There's something unassumingly Canadian about the Tire. It's the lumberjack shirt of brands. Unpretentious, practical, always there when you need it and known to every living Canadian, the 100-year-old retailer has earned its place in our hearts and minds as "Canada's Store."

## IN THE BEGINNING

J.W. Billes and his brother A.J. – who cofounded the Canadian Tire Corporation (CTC) in 1922 – were born entrepreneurs. And like the small business owners they were, the brothers showed an early talent for pivoting whenever circumstances required it.

For instance, every car needs tires, but back in 1922 it took longer to wear them out because people tended not to drive during the winter. That meant no tire sales until the spring thaw. Realizing that folks needed a place to store their vehicles when the snow arrived, J.W. and A.J. turned their store into a storage facility for 20 cars while it was closed for the winter.

By 1924 they had moved to their first long-term location in downtown Toronto, where they honed their business model – low prices, loyal employees, a broad array of products, multiple stores run by independent dealer-owners and clever marketing.

One of their early promotional ideas was a free one-page poster-sized "catalogue," with price lists on the front and a sought-after road map on the back. Doesn't

**Gutta Percha Tires**  
GUM CUSHIONED  
Built Better to Wear Better

**YOU GET**  
One Year's Free Gum-Cushion Guarantee with every Gum-Cushioned Tire.

**30 x 3 1/2 Tires and Tubes**  
"UTILITY" CORD Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. J. King's make. 4,000 miles. A. medium. \$ 6.95  
"TWIN SEVEN" CORD Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 7,45  
"PARAGON" CORD Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 7.95  
"CROSS" CORD Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 9.45  
"GP" CORD Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 10.95  
Inner Tubes Equipment Value \$1.19 Standard in Ontario \$1.49 Tor. Extra Heavy \$1.85

**29 x 4.40 Balloon Tires and Tubes**  
"TWIN SEVEN" A great automobile tire, built for long service. Its value \$8.95  
"GP" TRUCK Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 10.45  
"GP" TRUCK Standard on 3.00 wheel. A. medium. 12.45  
Inner Tubes Equipment Value \$1.49 Tor. Extra Heavy \$1.95 Standard in Ontario \$2.45

**GP Balloon Tires and Tubes**

SIZE	Standard	Extra Heavy
22 x 4.00	15.45	1.50
22 x 4.50	16.95	1.50
22 x 5.00	18.45	1.50
22 x 5.50	19.95	1.50
22 x 6.00	21.45	1.50
22 x 6.50	22.95	1.50
22 x 7.00	24.45	1.50
22 x 7.50	25.95	1.50
22 x 8.00	27.45	1.50
22 x 8.50	28.95	1.50
22 x 9.00	30.45	1.50
22 x 9.50	31.95	1.50
22 x 10.00	33.45	1.50
22 x 10.50	34.95	1.50
22 x 11.00	36.45	1.50
22 x 11.50	37.95	1.50
22 x 12.00	39.45	1.50
22 x 12.50	40.95	1.50
22 x 13.00	42.45	1.50
22 x 13.50	43.95	1.50
22 x 14.00	45.45	1.50
22 x 14.50	46.95	1.50
22 x 15.00	48.45	1.50
22 x 15.50	49.95	1.50
22 x 16.00	51.45	1.50
22 x 16.50	52.95	1.50
22 x 17.00	54.45	1.50
22 x 17.50	55.95	1.50
22 x 18.00	57.45	1.50
22 x 18.50	58.95	1.50
22 x 19.00	60.45	1.50
22 x 19.50	61.95	1.50
22 x 20.00	63.45	1.50
22 x 20.50	64.95	1.50
22 x 21.00	66.45	1.50
22 x 21.50	67.95	1.50
22 x 22.00	69.45	1.50
22 x 22.50	70.95	1.50
22 x 23.00	72.45	1.50
22 x 23.50	73.95	1.50
22 x 24.00	75.45	1.50
22 x 24.50	76.95	1.50
22 x 25.00	78.45	1.50
22 x 25.50	79.95	1.50
22 x 26.00	81.45	1.50
22 x 26.50	82.95	1.50
22 x 27.00	84.45	1.50
22 x 27.50	85.95	1.50
22 x 28.00	87.45	1.50
22 x 28.50	88.95	1.50
22 x 29.00	90.45	1.50
22 x 29.50	91.95	1.50
22 x 30.00	93.45	1.50
22 x 30.50	94.95	1.50
22 x 31.00	96.45	1.50
22 x 31.50	97.95	1.50
22 x 32.00	99.45	1.50
22 x 32.50	100.95	1.50
22 x 33.00	102.45	1.50
22 x 33.50	103.95	1.50
22 x 34.00	105.45	1.50
22 x 34.50	106.95	1.50
22 x 35.00	108.45	1.50
22 x 35.50	109.95	1.50
22 x 36.00	111.45	1.50
22 x 36.50	112.95	1.50
22 x 37.00	114.45	1.50
22 x 37.50	115.95	1.50
22 x 38.00	117.45	1.50
22 x 38.50	118.95	1.50
22 x 39.00	120.45	1.50
22 x 39.50	121.95	1.50
22 x 40.00	123.45	1.50
22 x 40.50	124.95	1.50
22 x 41.00	126.45	1.50
22 x 41.50	127.95	1.50
22 x 42.00	129.45	1.50
22 x 42.50	130.95	1.50
22 x 43.00	132.45	1.50
22 x 43.50	133.95	1.50
22 x 44.00	135.45	1.50
22 x 44.50	136.95	1.50
22 x 45.00	138.45	1.50
22 x 45.50	139.95	1.50
22 x 46.00	141.45	1.50
22 x 46.50	142.95	1.50
22 x 47.00	144.45	1.50
22 x 47.50	145.95	1.50
22 x 48.00	147.45	1.50
22 x 48.50	148.95	1.50
22 x 49.00	150.45	1.50
22 x 49.50	151.95	1.50
22 x 50.00	153.45	1.50
22 x 50.50	154.95	1.50
22 x 51.00	156.45	1.50
22 x 51.50	157.95	1.50
22 x 52.00	159.45	1.50
22 x 52.50	160.95	1.50
22 x 53.00	162.45	1.50
22 x 53.50	163.95	1.50
22 x 54.00	165.45	1.50
22 x 54.50	166.95	1.50
22 x 55.00	168.45	1.50
22 x 55.50	169.95	1.50
22 x 56.00	171.45	1.50
22 x 56.50	172.95	1.50
22 x 57.00	174.45	1.50
22 x 57.50	175.95	1.50
22 x 58.00	177.45	1.50
22 x 58.50	178.95	1.50
22 x 59.00	180.45	1.50
22 x 59.50	181.95	1.50
22 x 60.00	183.45	1.50
22 x 60.50	184.95	1.50
22 x 61.00	186.45	1.50
22 x 61.50	187.95	1.50
22 x 62.00	189.45	1.50
22 x 62.50	190.95	1.50
22 x 63.00	192.45	1.50
22 x 63.50	193.95	1.50
22 x 64.00	195.45	1.50
22 x 64.50	196.95	1.50
22 x 65.00	198.45	1.50
22 x 65.50	199.95	1.50
22 x 66.00	201.45	1.50
22 x 66.50	202.95	1.50
22 x 67.00	204.45	1.50
22 x 67.50	205.95	1.50
22 x 68.00	207.45	1.50
22 x 68.50	208.95	1.50
22 x 69.00	210.45	1.50
22 x 69.50	211.95	1.50
22 x 70.00	213.45	1.50
22 x 70.50	214.95	1.50
22 x 71.00	216.45	1.50
22 x 71.50	217.95	1.50
22 x 72.00	219.45	1.50
22 x 72.50	220.95	1.50
22 x 73.00	222.45	1.50
22 x 73.50	223.95	1.50
22 x 74.00	225.45	1.50
22 x 74.50	226.95	1.50
22 x 75.00	228.45	1.50
22 x 75.50	229.95	1.50
22 x 76.00	231.45	1.50
22 x 76.50	232.95	1.50
22 x 77.00	234.45	1.50
22 x 77.50	235.95	1.50
22 x 78.00	237.45	1.50
22 x 78.50	238.95	1.50
22 x 79.00	240.45	1.50
22 x 79.50	241.95	1.50
22 x 80.00	243.45	1.50
22 x 80.50	244.95	1.50
22 x 81.00	246.45	1.50
22 x 81.50	247.95	1.50
22 x 82.00	249.45	1.50
22 x 82.50	250.95	1.50
22 x 83.00	252.45	1.50
22 x 83.50	253.95	1.50
22 x 84.00	255.45	1.50
22 x 84.50	256.95	1.50
22 x 85.00	258.45	1.50
22 x 85.50	259.95	1.50
22 x 86.00	261.45	1.50
22 x 86.50	262.95	1.50
22 x 87.00	264.45	1.50
22 x 87.50	265.95	1.50
22 x 88.00	267.45	1.50
22 x 88.50	268.95	1.50
22 x 89.00	270.45	1.50
22 x 89.50	271.95	1.50
22 x 90.00	273.45	1.50
22 x 90.50	274.95	1.50
22 x 91.00	276.45	1.50
22 x 91.50	277.95	1.50
22 x 92.00	279.45	1.50
22 x 92.50	280.95	1.50
22 x 93.00	282.45	1.50
22 x 93.50	283.95	1.50
22 x 94.00	285.45	1.50
22 x 94.50	286.95	1.50
22 x 95.00	288.45	1.50
22 x 95.50	289.95	1.50
22 x 96.00	291.45	1.50
22 x 96.50	292.95	1.50
22 x 97.00	294.45	1.50
22 x 97.50	295.95	1.50
22 x 98.00	297.45	1.50
22 x 98.50	298.95	1.50
22 x 99.00	300.45	1.50
22 x 99.50	301.95	1.50
22 x 100.00	303.45	1.50

**High Pressure Tires and Tubes**

SIZE	Standard	Extra Heavy
22 x 3 1/2	12.45	1.45
22 x 4.00	13.95	1.45
22 x 4.50	15.45	1.45
22 x 5.00	16.95	1.45
22 x 5.50	18.45	1.45
22 x 6.00	19.95	1.45
22 x 6.50	21.45	1.45
22 x 7.00	22.95	1.45
22 x 7.50	24.45	1.45
22 x 8.00	25.95	1.45
22 x 8.50	27.45	1.45
22 x 9.00	28.95	1.45
22 x 9.50	30.45	1.45
22 x 10.00	31.95	1.45
22 x 10.50	33.45	1.45
22 x 11.00	34.95	1.45
22 x 11.50	36.45	1.45
22 x 12.00	37.95	1.45
22 x 12.50	39.45	1.45
22 x 13.00	40.95	1.45
22 x 13.50	42.45	1.45
22 x 14.00	43.95	1.45
22 x 14.50	45.45	1.45
22 x 15.00	46.95	1.45
22 x 15.50	48.45	1.45
22 x 16.00	49.95	1.45
22 x 16.50	51.45	1.45
22 x 17.00	52.95	1.45
22 x 17.50	54.45	1.45
22 x 18.00	55.95	1.45
22 x 18.50	57.45	1.45
22 x 19.00	58.95	1.45
22 x 19.50	60.45	1.45
22 x 20.00	61.95	1.45
22 x 20.50	63.45	1.45
22 x 21.00	64.95	1.45
22 x 21.50	66.45	1.45
22 x 22.00	67.95	1.45
22 x 22.50	69.45	1.45
22 x 23.00	70.95	1.45
22 x 23.50	72.45	1.45
22 x 24.00	73.95	1.45
22 x 24.50	75.45	1.45
22 x 25.00	76.95	1.45
22 x 25.50	78.45	1.45
22 x 26.00	79.95	1.45
22 x 26.50	81.45	1.45
22 x 27.00	82.95	1.45
22 x 27.50	84.45	1.45
22 x 28.00	85.95	1.45
22 x 28.50	87.45	1.45
22 x 29.00	88.95	1.45
22 x 29.50	90.45	1.45
22 x 30.00	91.95	1.45
22 x 30.50	93.45	1.45
22 x 31.00	94.95	1.45
22 x 31.50	96.45	1.45
22 x 32.00	97.95	1.45
22 x 32.50	99.45	1.45
22 x 33.00	100.95	1.45
22 x 33.50	102.45	1.45
22 x 34.00	103.95	1.45
22 x 34.50	105.45	1.45
22 x 35.00	106.95	1.45
22 x 35.50	108.45	1.45
22 x 36.00	109.95	1.45
22 x 36.50	111.45	1.45
22 x 37.00	112.95	1.45
22 x 37.50	114.45	1.45
22 x 38.00	115.95	1.45
22 x 38.50	117.45	1.45
22 x 39.00	118.95	1.45
22 x 39.50	120.45	1.45
22 x 40.00	121.95	1.45
22 x 40.50	123.45	1.45
22 x 41.00	124.95	1.45
22 x 41.50	126.45	1.45
22 x 42.00	127.95	1.45
22 x 42.50	129.45	1.45
22 x 43.00	130.95	1.45
22 x 43.50	132.45	1.45
22 x 44.00	133.95	1.45
22 x 44.50	135.45	1.45
22 x 45.00	136.95	1.45
22 x 45.50	138.45	1.45
22 x 46.00	139.95	1.45
22 x 46.50	141.45	1.45
22 x 47.00	142.95	1.45
22 x 47.50	144.45	1.45
22 x 48.00	145.95	1.45
22 x 48.50	147.45	1.45
22 x 49.00	148.95	1.45
22 x 49.50	150.45	1.45
22 x 50.00	151.95	1.45

**Winter Car Needs and Sporting Goods**

**CANADIAN TIRE CORPORATION, LIMITED - TORONTO, CAN.**

1242 Bloor St. W. (at McCowen) Phone: GERRARD 1111 and 1714  
1400 Denison Ave. (at Bay St.) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
1500 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
1600 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
1700 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
1800 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
1900 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2000 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2100 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2200 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2300 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2400 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2500 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2600 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2700 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2800 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
2900 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
3000 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
3100 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
3200 St. Lawrence St. (at St. Patrick) Phone: GERRARD 1011  
3300 St. Lawrence St. (

Below, clockwise from top left: Doner's iconic commercials "Albert," "Bike Story" and "Give Like Santa" touched Canadians, setting an emotional tone for future Canadian Tire ads like Cleansheet's "We All Play For Canada" and "Wheels."

Doner's "Albert" – which told the story of how the retailer played a role in a young boy's journey to become a professional hockey player – and "Bike Story" – featuring another kid longing for a bike he found in the Canadian Tire catalogue – focused on emotional moments that capitalized on Canadian's memories of the brand they grew up with.

Along with those two classics, Doner created the "Give like Santa, Save like Scrooge" Christmas campaign to remind Canadians of CTC's long tradition of value messaging. Scrooge lasted for 21 Christmases.

The emotional tone established by Doner was picked up by its partner agencies like Taxi (which was CT's AOR from 2005 to 2021), Leo Burnett and Cleansheet Communications. Over the years, the retailers' commercials have continued to capture moments that

surprised when the boy next door and a group of his friends include him in a game of basketball. They even the odds by playing on wagons and tricycles as makeshift wheelchairs.

"It was an instant viral sensation, getting somewhere around 17 million views in the first few days, with no paid media put against it," says Salem. It's still getting hits – 252 million at last count, according to Cleansheet.

Salem says that the second narrative stream "focuses on our functional role as the retailer that makes life in Canada better by equipping Canadians for the jobs and joys of the seasons in this country."

It includes the "Tested for Life in Canada" series, a long-running platform that has allowed CT to show off the quality of its various products, with the retailer recalling the "Tested" seal that appeared on products in



resonate with our collective sense of what it means to be Canadian – which Eva Salem, SVP marketing and brand says is one of two narrative streams that CT still taps into.

"Canadian Tire has a track record of turning small moments into relatable stories. They're based on simple insights and told in what has become a very authentic voice," she says.

Salem points to "Wheels" by Cleansheet Communications as an example. Part of Canadian Tire's "We All Play for Canada" platform, the spot tells the story of how a disabled boy in a wheelchair is pleasantly

CT stores as far back as 1935.

Finally, the marketer describes its long-running "Canada's Store" (also by Taxi) as a platform that successfully delivered on both fronts.

"[Canada's Store] has given us so much over its 12-year run," says Salem. "It has allowed us to address our eclectic assortment of products. It's allowed us to address all seasons. And it's allowed us to show both the emotional and functional sides of our messaging platform. It's been one of the brand's greatest accomplishments and certainly one of the high points of my career."



Clockwise, top left: The brand opened 2022 with an anniversary campaign, saluting to the “Next 100 Years”; Employees climb Mount Kilimanjaro to raise funds for Jumpstart; CT shows its support for Canadians during the pandemic.

## FROM NOW TO THE NEXT 100

The year 2022 has already been a very busy year for Salem and her team. In celebration of its 100-year story, Canadian Tire recently launched an anniversary campaign, which was led by Leo Burnett, in collaboration with Canadian Tire’s new AOR Publicis, while Veritas handled PR, Touche on media and OneMethod leading social.

The first phase included “Snapshots of a Century,” reprising some of the retailer’s most iconic campaigns over the years. “We went out to influencers like Catherine O’Hara, Ryan Reynolds, Scott McGillivray, Ashley Callinbull, Kayla Grey and Priyanka, as well as to the rest of our customer base, and asked them to give us their favourite Canadian Tire memory. Thousands of Canadians have shared their stories,” says Salem.

Next, an anniversary TV commercial will feature Canadian Tire’s own rendition of *Ahead of a Century* by The Tragically Hip, which Salem says will be performed by youth choir Young Voices Toronto, as well as Quebec artists 2Freres for a French version. There will also be an online contest and auction, supported by The Tragically Hip with the band donating signed memorabilia to Jumpstart’s Girls in Sport Initiative.

Going forward, Salem is optimistic about steering the brand into the next 100 years, having recently revitalized its marketing strategy. “As we evolve from ‘being there for Canadians’ – which in recent years has been led by initiatives like our COVID-19 Relief Fund and Jumpstart Sport Relief Fund – to ‘making life in Canada better,’ we’re focusing on our core values and

supporting our communities where they need it most.”

For instance, this year’s “We All Play for Canada” platform brought to life the spirit of the Olympic and Paralympic Games while encouraging Canadians to connect with one another through sport and cheering on Team Canada through a digital activation: The Canadian Tire Puck Pass Challenge. Canadian Tire leveraged notable Canadian athletes and media personalities to encourage Canadians to “pass the puck” (words of inspiration and support) and share on their social channels.

With very “pass” made, Canadian Tire donated \$1, up to \$300,000 towards Jumpstart, the Canadian Olympic Foundation and the Paralympic Foundation of Canada. Some Canadians had their “pass” selected to be featured in the brand’s TV spots, which ran during the men’s and women’s ice hockey finals, with a final spot running during the Paralympic hockey finals.

It’s also supporting communities by investing in future Canadians. “We committed \$200,000 to the Red Cross’ Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Appeal and are working with the Federal government and settlement agencies to provide up to \$500,000 to help support the thousands who will be seeking refuge in Canada,” notes Salem. “We also have ongoing programming with Jumpstart as we continue to provide the means to get our kids back into sport and keep them there.”

“We are focused on our new brand purpose of ‘making life in Canada better,’” she adds. “It’s really a celebration of shared Canadian values of community, inclusivity and sustainability – values that will help make life in Canada better for the next 100 years.”

CONGRATULATIONS



CENTRE CANADIEN TIRE

ON 100 YEARS!

THE NHL CELEBRATES CANADIAN TIRE  
ON 100 YEARS OF CONNECTING  
FAMILIES ACROSS ALL OF CANADA  
TO THE GAME THEY LOVE



2022



Meet the \*new\* New Establishment. Since its launch in 2017, strategy magazine has separated the program's three distinct categories with winner profiles in different print issues throughout the year. For the first time, we've brought all three together, recognizing the strengths, successes and secrets behind three extraordinary individuals in one special report. In addition, we've rebranded the program and renamed the "Innovator" category to celebrate the junior to mid-level "Agency" professionals who are making an impression in the advertising industry. This year's New Establishment winners Janine Russell, Alicia Roberts and Oumaima Tahir come from ATB Financial (Brand), Cossette (Agency) and Touche! (Media). These pages showcase what the industry superstars have been doing at their companies to push the communication industries forward.



## JANINE RUSSELL MAKES ATB FINANCIAL MORE AGILE

The scrum master sparked an entirely new way of working at the company.

BY DANNY KUCHARSKY

**F**ew have been able to “deeply influence and shape” a whole new operating model, organizational structure and way of working for their company. According to SVP Carol Shmygol, that’s exactly what Janine Russell did for Alberta-based financial services company ATB.

Last year, the company’s senior scrum master, reputation and brand operations implemented an “agile” practice – common in the software development world but slowly being adopted in marketing and advertising – within the company’s reputation and brand department, which consists of 85 employees.

“Everyone understood there was probably a better way of doing things” than the previous “hurry up and wait” working model, says Russell. “The idea of agile is that you work in smaller increments, in periods of one to four weeks, and the team focuses on a specific piece of work,”



she says. “It’s about incremental change and improvement.”

As part of an agile practice, a scrum master supports and coordinates the team and eliminates impediments to ensure work is done as smoothly as possible. Curious about the practice, Russell travelled to San Francisco on her own dime to become certified as a scrum master. Soon after, she was tasked with implementing the agile way of working for her department. (At press time, Russell reached the highest level of scrum certification and was named a Certified Scrum Professional – Scrum Master.)

Some of the changes she brought to the ATB department included a new organizational structure, with “squads” (teams) supporting ATB’s key business areas, such as brand, everyday financial services, business banking and wealth management services.

As campaign work is broken into bite-sized pieces every few weeks, there is a sense of accomplishment “which is very novel in the advertising world, where you run flat out and then you’re onto the next,” she says. The risk of failure has also been reduced significantly. “You’re not investing everything in one campaign that takes six months to launch and then doesn’t hit the audience the way you hoped it would.”

Russell says teams are now being built to trust each other, communicate better and enjoy working together. Previously, employees were siloed, says Russell, which was a detriment to the work because there was a lack of communication.

While there is usually a challenging learning curve when it comes to adopting the practice, within just six months, more than 82% of the reputation and brand team said they had a good understanding of agile principles and 74% said they were finding new ways to work collaboratively. Both results exceeded expectations.

“Through Janine’s leadership in standing up an agile practice, our team has moved from a limited understanding or capabilities in this space to it now being the foundation of how we work,” adds Shmygol. “It’s difficult to quantify the ROI, but beyond the positive adoption metrics within the reputation and brand team, our relationships with internal clients have never been stronger and our work never more powerful.”

Now that the new way of working is entering year two, adds Russell, “I’m excited to see where we can go next. Our practice is going to get so much better.”

## ALICIA ROBERTS OPENS DOORS FOR BIPOC AT COSSETTE

The producer is playing an influential role from outside and inside the agency. BY WENDY KAN



PHOTO: DEVANTA THOMAS

Alicia Roberts is proving to be a powerful force for Cossette, the ad industry, as well as the community of Black creatives in Toronto. In her role as a producer at Cossette, she helps fulfil the agency's ambition to hire more BIPOC talent on both sides of the camera. Since joining the shop just over a year ago, 85% of all non-agency crew and talent on Robert's productions have been BIPOC. She's also recruited BIPOC creatives to join the agency, and she's mentored three recruits from Cossette's summer internship program, established for Black students and early career professionals.

"I understand the importance of my representation as a Black producer and I understand the barriers young BIPOC creatives might face," says Roberts. "If I know an aspiring director who is still getting set experience, I can bring them in as support in some capacity. I'm intentional on social media, keeping track of projects in my network and of creatives in the city. I'm being mindful and circulating them when I can."

One of her greatest accomplishments at Cossette was achieving 98% Black representation (with the exception of the agency's creatives) as part of a campaign for TD. The video highlighted how the bank is helping to fund Black businesses and organizations – featuring an interview with the founder of Black Moms Connection, a global online community and non-profit in Toronto, as well as a participant who benefitted from the program. Behind the camera, Roberts brought in a Black director, his director of photography and built a crew from there.

Roberts relishes opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the industry. She is a member of the EDI committee for Plus Company (Cossette's parent co.) and a project lead for BERG (Plus's Black Employee Resource Group). In that role, she led its Black History Month programming, producing three events: a speaker series on the Black experience at a communications agency; a Black film party; and a discussion for Black employees only, which allowed them to get to know each other in a safe space.

Outside of the agency, Roberts is passionate about supporting others, developing her skillset and making a meaningful impact within the Black creative community. Her recent freelance work includes acting as assistant director for a Black History Month video on Black female athletes and their hair journey, produced by youth-focused company YUTE Studio and Sportsnet.

She has also spoken on panels at Guelph University and OCAD on topics from her career journey and entrepreneurship, to Afrofuturism and Black liberation. And she tends to Jaded Cultur, a wellness blog and community for BIPOC creatives and entrepreneurs, which she launched in March last year.

Roberts' personal interests and work fuel each other. Her passion for wellness reminds her to incorporate mindfulness into the "hustle" culture of agency life, and her freelance producer work keeps her tapped into the city's community and bring in fresh talent. Working at Cossette also allows her to apply her professionally-honed skills to personal projects with a social lens. With this "holistic ecosystem," Roberts feels enabled to play a part in shifting culture.

"I want to be a key player and influencer at the agency, but also in the industry, to open doors for Black and BIPOC creatives and producers and for anyone who wants to be in this space."

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A hand is shown typing on a silver laptop keyboard. The laptop is resting on a light-colored, woven placemat. In the foreground, a blue pen and a yellow sticky note are visible. The sticky note has a handwritten shopping list: - COFFEE, - MILK, - SUGAR, - FLOUR. The background is slightly blurred, showing a laptop screen and a keyboard.

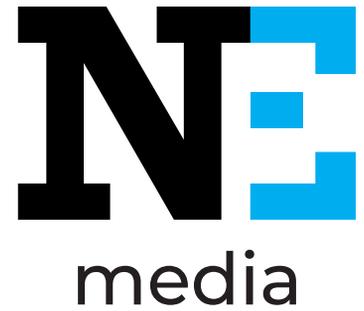
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## TOUCHE!'S OUMAIMA TAHIRI'S FRESH APPROACH TO MEDIA

How the media strategist helped client Mark's from losing brand awareness.

BY STEPHANIE MARCUS

**O**umaima Tahiri thinks most people would describe her as a “ball of energy.” She speaks quickly – almost breathlessly – peppering her words with laughter to convey her genuine excitement at being named a 2022 New Establishment: Media winner. Her supervisor at Touché!, Antoine Nguyen, describes her a little differently: “strategic with panache.” Both are accurate descriptions.

Tahiri is relatively new to the media industry, having started at the Montreal-based agency a little over two-and-a-half years ago after graduating from university. Since then, the media strategist has attacked her work with unbridled enthusiasm.

When her client Mark's underwent a massive repositioning in 2021 to create more awareness of its casualwear, Tahiri was pivotal in shaping its success. The retailer sought to rebrand itself with the “All Things

Simple” campaign, which showed how even basic wardrobes can be versatile. While the creative concept was solid, Tahiri realized that Mark's needed more media weight to build momentum – which meant a bigger budget. Tasked with convincing Mark's CFO to increase media dollars, Tahiri built an awareness model that eventually sealed the deal and secured an additional 20% to the media budget.

Using the model she was able to demonstrate how consumers feel about the brand, as well as understand the actual impact of the media investment, based on each channel and in terms of message retention for a single exposure. From there, she was able to look at the different weighting of each channel and found that it was possible to improve the impact of the message when it came to recall, not just simply reach.

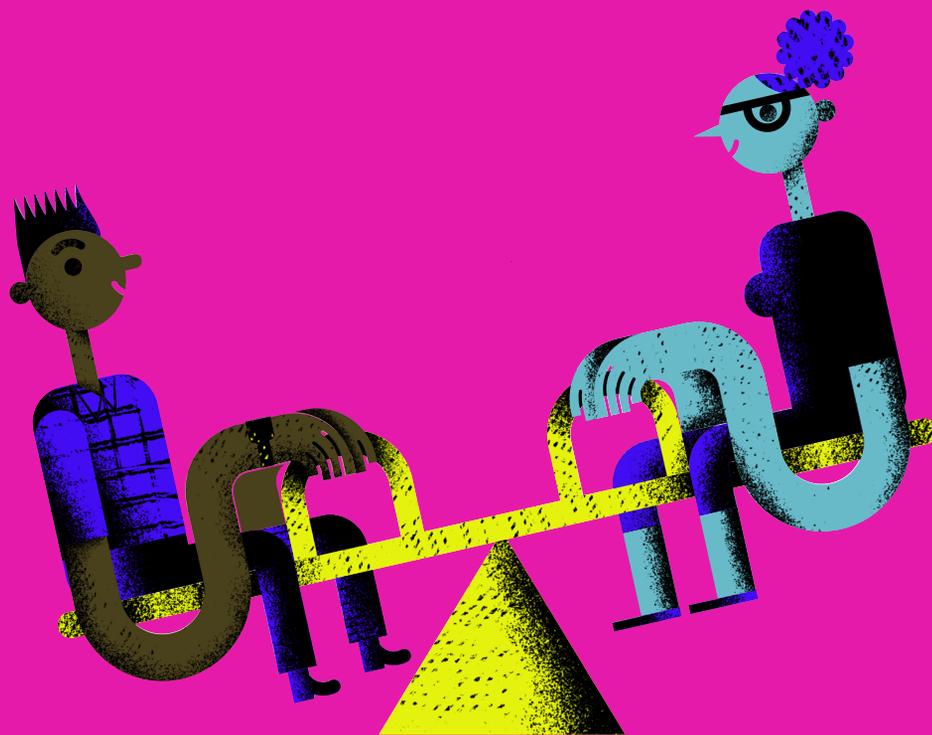
“The base of the framework already exists. But the way that we make it better is to adapt all of the data points and variables to reflect Mark's media and consumer reality,” she says, adding that the model she created takes into account the awareness and performance data specific to the client and campaign. “It's really customized.”

Tahiri says the agency was able to pinpoint when Mark's Fall campaign, “All Things Footwear,” should launch and helped to convince the client to add additional dollars around its holiday program, “All Things Holiday.” Touché! found that if the brand didn't follow its Fall campaign with another one during the holidays it would lose all of the awareness it had created earlier in the year. Additionally, with the help of Tahiri's model, the agency convinced Mark's to allocate more dollars to OOH.

The awareness model is just one of the tools in the media strategist's arsenal when it comes to planning brand campaigns. “I'm always trying to think of ways to do media differently, be more strategic, bring lateral ideas and different ways of looking at things to solve problems.”

She's also passionate about helping others discover a career they may find equally rewarding, and is actively involved with recruiting at the agency and also speaks to students considering careers in media.

Tahiri may only be a few years into her career in media, but she has her sights set on a leadership position one day, which Nguyen says is possible, given that “she has an uncanny ability to rally people and influence them, thanks to her magnetic personality.”



# THE NEW COLLABORATORS

To get a sense of how brands are meeting changing audience expectations, *strategy* checked in with some of Canada's unique content studios and specialist shops. Here they share how they are reinventing and expanding their offerings to handle those new briefs.

# Tearing down the silos

## Collective IQ gives brands access to a team of virtual virtuosos

**T**ORONTO-BASED COLLECTIVE IQ (COIQ) was ahead of its time. The full-service agency was purpose-built as a virtual offering from its 2016 launch – well before the pandemic forced everyone out of their offices. President and founder Natalie Serkin says she designed the agency that way because she saw the value and opportunity in a different kind of model – one focused on collaboration that would benefit both clients and her network of experts.

As brands bring more of their content needs in-house – and the scope and complexity of those programs grow – COIQ is designed to support or augment a client’s own marketing team, providing experts ranging from creative directors to data scientists and strategists who can integrate into a seamless partnership. By diving in to fully understand the business needs and brand culture, it can give clients the flexibility to scale up or down as needed.

For Serkin, it’s about tearing down the silos to give clients access to the best teams of talent. And COIQ boasts a roster of more than 350 experienced creative and subject-matter specialists.

She says for them to join the COIQ fold, “They need to be ego-free, top-level Canadian talent that is successful in their areas of expertise. We’re able to pull in senior-level people and do it in a cost-efficient, nimble way for our clients so they don’t need to go to a big agency. When it comes to the talent and project management, we can do it better.”

It’s about creating purpose-built full-service teams for the client or project that can seamlessly work with the client’s capabilities. Case in point: Collective IQ doesn’t have a pitch team. The



Collective IQ rebranded The Ottawa Hospital. The “Creating Tomorrow” campaign fundraised for Ottawa’s patient focused new hospital build, with an omni-channel campaign which focuses on the impact their quality of care and research has, told through stories of the hospital’s staff and patients.



In Sobeys’ ongoing commitment to sustainability, it made fresh produce grown in-store available for the first time in Canada. Collective IQ launched this first-to-market offering, developing the program and providing ongoing support in three of Sobeys’ banners, including Sobeys, Safeway, and Thrifty Foods.

people at the table at the start are the ones who will shepherd the projects collaboratively throughout the process.

Serkin says the relationship with clients requires trust, integrity and transparency and must be nurtured. “All our clients have ballooned into much bigger clients, but we didn’t come in demanding anything from them. It’s, ‘Try us out and let’s see how it goes.’”

It’s an approach that speaks to confidence in the model – and it resonates. The COIQ client roster includes Coca-Cola, wine and spirits agency PMA Canada, The Ottawa Hospital, the Aga Khan Museum and Sobeys, for which COIQ has executed some of the brand’s most demanding work.

For 2020’s Waste Reduction Week, Sobeys launched a fall food waste campaign to drive awareness and engagement, educate consumers and inspire them to do their part in reducing food waste in their homes. It featured highly engaging educational food-waste messaging with activations across in-store POS, digital, CRM and social for all of Sobeys’ banners.

To tackle the work, COIQ built a team that began with a strategist, creative director, art director and writer, and then bolted on a half dozen more talents to dive deeper into each channel.

“We were able to pull that together within six weeks – a major campaign for seven different Sobeys brands that had to be in market nine weeks after we were briefed,” recalls Mary Georgio, who worked as strategist on the campaign. “And it was seamless for the client. We could have never pulled it off in that time frame if we were set up with the layers of a traditional agency. Our lean model allows us to operate in a more nimble fashion.

“We’ve been at this for a while,” she says, “so I always like to say we’re virtual virtuosos.”



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# Rewriting the playbook

## Moving at the speed of culture, Salt XC launches real-time media and influencer platform



Salt XC took Xbox Canada's desire to make relevant local content to the next level. With nothing more Canadian than the Canadian Tuxedo, the denim controller was born. Boosted via Frontrunner, the controller quickly became the talk of the gaming community drawing attention of some of the biggest gaming influencers in the country.

**A**FTER TWO YEARS, Salt XC finds itself at a unique moment in its evolution. Still a scrappy start-up at heart, it's an agency that's experienced incredible growth in both size and capability in a very short time. Salt grew up in the pandemic. It was only two months old and home to 15 staff when the world shut down. As the world opens up again, Salt finds itself a thriving agency of about 120 in offices in Toronto, Montreal, Chicago and L.A. The roster has grown to more than 20 clients in Canada and the US, including Labatt, Kraft Heinz, RBC, Coca-Cola and Xbox.

Salt is driven by what it calls "experiential commerce"—it looks to break down the walls between online and offline worlds using first-party data, digital media and memorable moments that drive valuable transactions for brands.

Throughout the pandemic, Salt has focused on investing in the digital media and influencer side of the business, and with great success. "Over 80% of our revenue comes from our digital connections and content service offerings," says Salt VP Jil Lohnes.

"Our model combines moving at the speed of culture, content at scale and performance marketing," she says. "We deliver full-funnel marketing, but our sweet spot is delivering mid-to-lower funnel results for our brands."

Salt is a unique hybrid: part full-service agency, part tech company. So, when more tools are required, it develops them. Consider Media Mob, the agency's content freelancer marketplace, or smart social-boosting tool Frontrunner.

"Social boosting across the entire industry has traditionally been more of an art versus science, with arbitrary dollar amounts applied to posts. Because of the volume, it's a time-consuming process, and usually done manually with limited or no optimization strategy," says Alex Buckby, managing director of media.



Flavour photography played a key role in everie's 2021 trade strategy, with the goal being to showcase the delicious taste of the brand's CBD beverages. This photography was used throughout all trade assets, trade media and on social, through 2021.



The Kitchen creates content at the speed of culture for Kraft Heinz brands on social. Salt Media & Frontrunner build boosting strategies in real-time for all the brand's social content, including pieces like a children's book about pronoun use starring the Kraft Peanut Butter Bears.

Enter Fronrunner. A social boosting tool built around a proprietary algorithm. It is automated with direct APIs to all social platforms, allowing Salt to mathematically determine the most effective boosting budget per post based on its performance potential. The algorithm can be tailored to any client objective, such as brand engagements, video views, click-throughs, etc.

Buckby calls it a game-changer, and says brands like Kraft Heinz and Xbox have seen an exponential increase in ROAS through lower costs per engagement, follower or click, at scale.

Lohnes says Salt's creative and media teams are closely integrated to ensure they can deliver against their real-time marketing model with the utmost effectiveness. Rather than wait to see what message is resonating and build creative to suit, media works closely with the creative team to proactively create a library of hundreds of assets so that messaging can pivot several times a day if needed.

Salt is also innovating in influencer marketing. Using an internal dedicated team, the agency has begun to develop an extensive network of micro influencers – passionate and engaged experts in specific fields.

"Usually," Lohnes says, "everyone wants to go after the macro influencers, but once you start getting around 500,000-one million followers, a good percentage of them fall outside of Canada. This can result in a lot of wastage. We saw a lot of opportunity in the micro/nano space."

Instead of affording just a few influencers, a client can have hundreds, each targeting the audience from a different perspective. That could mean a collection of fashion, music and food influencers all speaking to the target consumer in different ways.

"It's a huge test-and-learn model," says Lohnes. "If we find the fashion and music influencers are converting better than the food influencers, it allows us to pivot. We're not putting all our eggs in one basket. We're casting a wider net and then optimizing and focusing over time."

Salt is building influencer programs for clients like The Bay, US pet food brand Better Choice Company and forthcoming online sportsbook PointsBet Canada.

Meanwhile, the agency is not neglecting the value in-person experiences still hold. In February it acquired retail innovation and pop-up house Brika, which will help its client brands have temporary, high impact physical retail presence.

Tying all these efforts together is the underlying philosophy of immediacy and accountability, driven by data.

"It's about getting that transaction between a consumer and a brand," Lohnes sums. "We've been successful on the media and influencer side because we've honed in on what our role is. And if you can prove bottom-line success for a brand, they're going to continue to invest."



Reactive and trending moments have become a pillar of success on Xbox Canada's social channels. When Drake launched *Certified Lover Boy* with billboards letting his fans know who would be on the album, Salt XC jumped on the trend of blatantly obvious statements to remind everyone with a faux billboard that Master Chief would in fact be featured in the upcoming launch of *Halo Infinite*.

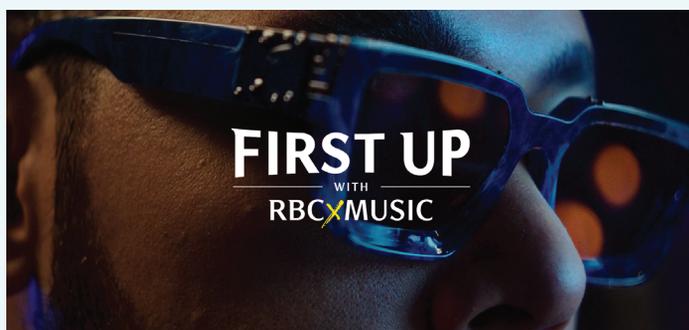


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With concert venues shut down around the globe, RBC worked with Salt XC to develop a breakthrough way to continue to support Canadian artists, using content to grow increased program awareness. Tapping into Media Mob to build a custom production solution, the spot was conceived, produced, shot and trafficked in four weeks, airing on the Canadian Grammy's broadcast.



As the fully-integrated agency partner for PointsBet Canada, Salt XC worked with the brand to develop a unique positioning in order to set itself apart from competition for its market launch. Connecting with its audience by being Canada's sportsbook gives the brand a unique voice with breakthrough partnerships (like the Trailer Park Boys).

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# What it takes to design better brand content

Globe Content Studio is focusing on elevating the art and science of storytelling

**W**ITH MORE THAN A CENTURY OF industry-leading journalism under its belt, *The Globe and Mail* has clearly established itself as a content-creation powerhouse. But don't expect its Globe Content Studio marketing division to rest on those laurels.

Over the last year, Studio head Sean Stanleigh and his team have built out a class-leading creative house that aims to elevate content with superlative design. The goal, he says, is a more comprehensive approach to telling stories.

"We want to be thought of as a place where brands can come to get not only great storytelling, but great creativity as well – great design and different approaches to the way stories are told," he says.

He adds that Globe Content Studio offers a 360° approach to storytelling that requires more expertise at the table – content makers, interactive designers, social strategists, data analysts, and researchers, all working together to elevate the experience and bring it to life.

"We're thinking holistically about the implementation of a program – how the content fills a broader purpose when it comes to storytelling," he says.

You can see that attention to the creative in the Studio's recent work for government-backed tourism marketing agencies Destination Ontario and Destination Canada. Despite COVID-19 restrictions and understandable caution on the part of consumers, travel providers want to make sure their destinations are top of mind when people are ready to return to normal.

One of the mandates for Destination Canada was to engage consumers to keep travel top of mind, even through lockdowns. So, working with Globe Content Studio, it launched two



Destination Canada turned to Globe Content Studio to engage consumers about travel during the pandemic. The Studio created dedicated digital collages that captured the essence of 10 Canadian cities, attracting an audience 101% over target.

comprehensive travel guides for last fall and winter, each focusing on 40+ ways to experience five Canadian cities. Using expansive digital collages that capture the personality and aesthetic of the city, the executions were intended to give consumers the feeling of what it was like to travel there. The visual-first approach delivered online page views 101% over target.

"We doubled down on showcasing some of the great places to travel within the province or country, and packaged them in engaging ways," he sums.

Its work for Destination Ontario, meanwhile, focused more on top-of-the-funnel awareness. Strongly targeted to new Canadians, Globe Content Studio chose to tell visual stories of first winters in the province. It hired diverse illustrators to tell tales of their respective communities, and then brought it all to life with motion graphics to create an immersive experience.

But it's not only big executions. For luxury beauty brand Caudalie, the Studio created a single-page execution, working with a specialty-product stylist/photographer to create a dream world that brings the brand aesthetic and vision to life. Stanleigh notes that simpler endeavours such as this call for a consistency of brand voice and presentation, and care that every part of the page is telling the same story.

Leveraging *The Globe's* deep audience understanding to strategize how best to meet brand goals, the Studio combines its expertise in the craft of storytelling with intel gleaned through the news organization's investment in data science. "We'll find the best distribution platform and the best creative approach," says Stanleigh. "We can really dial in and target that specific demographic or target audience brands are looking for."



For luxury beauty brand Caudalie, Globe Content Studio worked with industry-leading specialty-product stylist/photographer Dani Reynolds to create stunning visuals that capture the essence of the brand.



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# Cracking the content code

Corus offshoot so.da creates “thumb-stopping” moments at scale



so.da worked with Mindshare and Appleton Estate Rum to create the Canada *Hidden Gems* series. While it began on social, so.da went on to create long-form content for Global, Food Network, StackTV and the Global TV app.

**S**INCE ITS 2017 LAUNCH, Toronto-based so.da has grown into a content powerhouse. It's an offering unique in the market – part agency and part social publisher, all deeply integrated into one of Canada's largest media companies. From its unique vantage point, so.da has access to more than 20 Corus media brands and uses its expansive capabilities to produce about 1,500 pieces of content per week, generating more than five billion views annually.

And, thanks to this positioning, so.da offers clients access to inhouse, state-of-the-art infrastructure, including multiple production studios, dozens of editing suites and social-first, broadcast-quality equipment.

so.da was purpose-built to tell stories through video – at scale – using content to create communities and generate engagement, regardless of where consumers congregate.

So it's not surprising that so.da has forged close partnerships with Canada's leading social media companies. so.da recently announced an original lifestyle content venture for Snapchat's Discover section – the fifth social platform to partner with so.da, following partnerships with TikTok, Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter with a unique offering in the marketplace, Twitter Originals Fueled by so.da.

Launched in 2018, the latter partnership has created 10 premium programs with top brands, including #ShopSmall with AMEX, #BestNightIn with Stella Artois and #PowerUp with Samsung Canada – each averaging over 50 million views. The Samsung partnership helped power the Galaxy Note 10+ launch, driving more than one million engagements, and earning two Digiday Content Marketing Awards (Best New Product/Launch Campaign and Best Brand/Influencer Collaboration).

so.da creates content for its owned networks, as well as clients' brand handles (as in the case of Samsung), and supports brands with their social efforts (such as Amazon Prime Video Canada and General Mills), helping with strategy, content, community management, influencers, analytics and more.



For the #PowerUp influencer execution for the Galaxy Note 10+, Samsung partnered with so.da and Director X (Julien Christian Lutz). The campaign helped elevate the product and brand during a key launch moment, driving more than one million engagements and earning two Digiday Content Marketing Awards.

Corus' 2019 acquisition of Kin Community provides so.da access to hundreds of thousands of creator/influencers in the arts, beauty, food, DIY, wellness, parenting and other categories.

The combination of assets was key for a recent Complex Canada series for Appleton Estate Rum called *Hidden Gems*, which features Jamaican Canadian trailblazers in music, style and visual arts. While the series began on social, so.da developed a 30-minute special to extend the content to broadcast on networks including Global and Food Network and streamers StackTV and the Global TV app, then layered on additional social and ancillary content.

With all that amplification, the campaign beat the impression benchmark by about 85%. It was an effort that clearly demonstrated so.da's holistic approach to community-building.

"Five years ago, you would have defined buckets: 'This is the PR bucket, this is the digital bucket, this is the stunt or experiential bucket,'" says Dervla Kelly, SVP marketing Corus Entertainment and GM, so.da. "Now the best campaigns cross over all of them." (To cover all its bases, so.da launched its own PR arm last year.)

She stresses that in order to resonate, campaigns must be informed by good data, and that's another area where so.da has an advantage. Its proprietary networks give so.da an opportunity to test and gain insights across verticals before they take that learning to clients. The agency evaluates data second-by-second – learning why audiences drop off, fast-forward, and other key takeaways.

"Creating as much content as we are, we can piece together valuable insights," she says. "We see patterns in the content well before your average agency or brand, and that informs where the strategy is going and what we're going to lean into."

So, what's the key to consumer engagement? Kelly points to contextual relevancy: content can't be forced, and the story must be compelling. That's especially true for younger demos, who will willingly engage with branded content if they think it's worth their time. Complex Canada's branded content will often outperform editorial content, proof that so.da is able to create

branded content that truly resonates with audiences.

Kelly says so.da asks itself, "What can we give consumers that's adding value? Are we entertaining them? Are we educating them? Informing them? Because you're driving engagement in that value exchange. What's that 'thumb-stopping moment' that's going to get them to pause and engage?"

"The average person now scrolls through about 300 feet of mobile content every day – that's the size of the Statue of Liberty. We're wired to fly by ads. Our brain recognizes the visual signal of an ad and we keep scrolling. But consumers will pause and engage when the content's good, and we've seen that our branded content can outperform organic content."



OLG joined forces with so.da and Twitter for #OLGGamePlan, an interactive digital sports betting series. Developed under the Twitter Originals Fueled by so.da offering, so.da will produce more than 800 pieces of content over the course of the campaign.

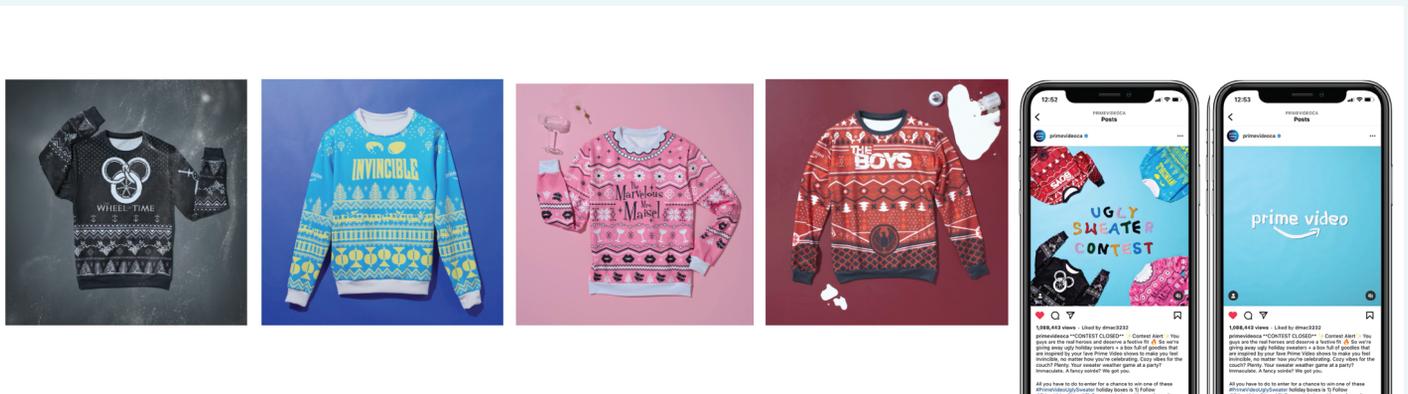


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so.da leads the organic social strategy and content execution for Prime Video Canada. To drive awareness, mass engagement and follower growth of Prime Video Canada's social accounts, so.da developed a holiday campaign fueled by fandom. The campaign featured seven variations of custom produced ugly holiday sweaters inspired by Prime Video Originals' titles that fans could win through a social-first contest.

We were delighted when we were invited to come up with a concept for the strategy magazine back page. It was supposed to be fun. A cool challenge. An in-joke. For us industry people. Ah, but there's the problem. Advertising doesn't seem all that important right now, as bombs fall and people die, while others fight or flee. We can send thoughts and prayers. We can stand together. Make donations. But we have to face up to the fact that sometimes we are simply helpless. What we do often doesn't matter. So why do we stress so much about the latest campaign? Why do we care? Is it possible that marketing is meaningless in the age of pandemics and dictators, of misinformation and hate? Why discuss the metaverse when the real world is so viscerally vicious? Maybe we should all just stay silent and throw in the towel. Is a new flavour really that important? Getting placement in the end-aisle? Long debates over that logo tweak? These aren't exactly existential questions when people all over the world are threatened by tyranny. But hold on, let's pivot for a minute. Let's look at this fraught, frightening reality of the twenty-first century through a new lens. What if we embrace the fact that ads are mainly an annoyance, that no one needs to hear another promo code, that influencers invade our feeds? How lovely it will be, if and when the world is lucky enough to have a boring year, to laugh with the team at a crazy concept the client will never accept. To frown over a budget. To choose a font. To set KPIs. To draw a storyboard. To plan a multi-channel engagement strategy covering every consumer touchpoint. Because here's the thing: the points where we genuinely touch people are where we do our best work. And even though deep-down, we know that wars will never cease, that suffering will only increase as the climate catastrophe worsens... on some future day when we can nudge a shopper to choose our brand and keep the economy of the free world chugging along, we should all be grateful for that freedom.



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