

"Find the emotional connection in a pure, authentic way" - David Droga

 By Ann Nurock

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David Droga is founder and creative chairman of Droga5, a creative and strategic agency headquartered in New York with an office in London. Founded in 2006, Droga5 has been named Agency of the Year 13 times and is also the only agency to appear on Advertising Age's A-List over eight consecutive years. To date, he is the most awarded creative at the Cannes International Festival of Creativity and the youngest person ever inducted into the New York Art Directors Club Hall of Fame.



David Droga on stage at Design Indaba. © [Design Indaba Twitter](#).

He is also a laureate of the Asian Media and Marketing Hall of Fame, the AdNews Hall of Fame, the Award Hall of Fame and the American Advertising Federation Hall of Achievement. In 2017, *Adweek* named David one of the top 100 most influential leaders in marketing, media and technology for the third year in a row. That same year, David received the Cannes Lions' Lifetime Achievement Award, the Lion of St. Mark, and was the youngest person ever to receive the honour.



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Here, Ann Nurock chats to him about his success, his values and why he cares so much.

David, welcome to Cape Town. What do you believe has made you so successful?

Maybe my talent is trying to keep things simple and pure to what I believe and not trying to over complicate or prove how creative and smart I am. We are all emotional beings and I try to find the emotional connection between the brand or service I'm selling and the consumer and doing it in a pure, authentic way. I don't let anything get in the way of this.

My main objective is staying relevant. And the only way to remain relevant is to take away the rear-view mirror and forget what you did in the past and think about what you're going to do today and in the future. It's about keeping things simple and pure. I'm still excited about being in this industry and remaining relevant.

■ ***You so often talk about 'caring'. This is really important to you?***

I care a lot about everything we do. My wife asks why do I care so much? I say, I just don't know any other way. I joke with clients that caring is out of scope. You don't pay us to care but I do anyway and that's what you get with everyone in my agency. We put our heart and soul into everything we do.



Caring is out of scope - do the right thing

Ann Nurock 17 May 2016



Maybe it's my background but it's not lost on me that we are privileged to have these opportunities and I still go to bed at night thinking what can I do to make things better, creatively better and more effective, rather than how profitable my business is. Don't get me wrong as a creative owner I still have to have a good business as it provides me with more opportunities and more people I can collaborate with.

■ ***Droga 5 is a pretty young agency at 12 years old and clearly, your values have been ingrained into the business?***

Well, I hope so. There is an alchemy between everyone there. It's such a disparate, eclectic group of people at Droga5 and the only thing we have in common is that no one has to be there. They are all talented and can get a job anywhere else and the fact that they choose to be there so we might as well do something wonderful together.

I have a belief that it takes the same amount of energy to make something great as it does to justify something mediocre, so why not do something great? That's what we as an agency try to do with every job and every client.

■ ***One of the campaigns you showed us today was Nordstrom and having an open mind. Can you talk more about this?***

Well we are living in very divisive times. People are calling each other out. If you're different from me then you're a bad person and ridiculous things like that. It's from DC to fashion and everything else... it's crazy. What I love about the Nordstrom campaign is that it's true to who they are. Their background and the clothes they sell. They're quirky and authentic and we need to celebrate that. And the fact that they can put something out like that in these times is bold and brave.

They want to stand for something and the fact they are willing to do this says everything about them. Nike took a stand with the Colin Kaepernick campaign, that was the best, best move a brand could do and for every person that was offended. Well, screw them. Who cares about them as they're not the core audience. If you just make decisions based on what's going to make you the most money, you're going to end up a very shallow person.

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▣ ***The industry is under duress and what do you think agencies need to do to overcome this?***

The industry is in a swirl and it's definitely harder than it's ever been, and I always joke that between us and Weiden, another great agency, if it's hard for us, I can't imagine how hard it is for anyone else. We are fortunate that we have a good reputation that gives us a head start. I think we need to be more open and supportive of each other. We will always be competitive but we need to stop undermining each other.

Holding companies need to stop cutting their fees as it undermines the creativity of the industry. I'm always open to new ways and new collaborations. What made me successful over the last 12 years is not what's going to make me successful in the next 12 years so whatever is the right thing to do moving forward I'm open to it.

For more:

www.designindaba.com

ABOUT ANN NUROCK

Ann is a Partner at Relationship Audits and Management, a global consultancy that measures and optimizes client /agency relationships. Her proprietary Radar tool is used by 30 corporates globally and as a result she interacts with over 80 agencies of all disciplines. Ann spent 25 years plus in the advertising industry as CEO of Grey Advertising South Africa, and head of the Africa region followed by President and CEO of Grey Canada. Contact details: ann.nurock@relationshipaudits.com | Twitter [@Annurock](https://twitter.com/Annurock)

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