

Be somewhere

By  Damon Stapleton

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I want you to imagine I am telling you the story of Goldilocks and the three bears. In your head, run it through. Picture all the details, the twists and turns and the big ending.



Image © [Damon's Brain](#)

Right, now take the same story and tell it in half the time. Now halve the time again. And again. Eventually, your story would be something like: Girl, bear and porridge. This process happens in advertising a lot these days.

You only have to look at the vast majority of advertising to see this. There is a reduction of elements, which is why so much online advertising looks like 1950's print ads. A visual, a headline, a pay-off line. What this often leads to is information with no emotion.

We know from the studies of Les Binet and Peter Field this is not the way forward. So, that's a problem. However, a far larger problem is that the kind of ideas that are now being made are often selected on flexibility rather than impact.



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The only thing in advertising that is worse than being invisible is being invisible everywhere.

The criteria for how a great idea is chosen today is often about how many hats it can wear rather than its impact as a single form of communication.

In essence, an integrated campaign today seems to be far more about counting impressions as opposed to making one. I would say that when measurement becomes more important than what is being measured, there is a problem.

“ An integrated campaign was always supposed to be multiple elements that worked together. It is supposed to be many Lego blocks that build something bigger and better. It was never supposed to be every Lego block and, more importantly, it was never supposed to be one Lego block sliced to within an inch of its life. ”

Today, integrated campaigns as a concept are often replaced with a single asset chopped up to be spread across as many communication channels as possible. Every time I go to a conference, there is somebody saying you shouldn't just put your television ad online. Well, go online and tell me what most brands are doing.

There are many reasons for this happening:

- A budget that has not grown while the amount of communication channels has.
- A lazy agency or marketer.
- The inability to think long term.
- The lack of a brand platform that allows you to have multiple executions that are relevant to their channels yet all contribute to the same idea.

These reasons and many others have resulted in this now often being a blueprint for a modern campaign.

Sadly, you can see the ramifications of this when you look at portfolios of advertising students. You see an average idea repeated across multiple channels, with very little thinking about each channel or how the separate assets work together. And the students always say the same thing – “You see it's a great idea, it works everywhere.”

This is learned behaviour and they are learning it from our industry. They are learning, incorrectly, that picture frames are more important and valuable than the picture.

I think we, as an industry, must be very careful that our quest for flexibility and pragmatism don't lead us down a road of utilitarian mediocrity.

We need to remember being everywhere, averagely, is just another way of saying you are nowhere.

We have never needed brilliance in our industry more than we do now. For that, you need great ideas. Ideas that blow your mind and demand your attention. Ideas that are exciting, audacious and very un-boring. Ideas that have impact. Ideas you won't forget.

“ We need to have the kind of ideas that paint a memorable picture people want to look at rather than have ideas that are a frame for an endless procession of bland and instantly forgettable whitewashed walls, we hope people might remember. ”

Because hope is not a strategy.

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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