

Clients and creativity

In partnership with:



July 2022



Contents

Background	3
A superhero with clipped wings	4
Performance self-assessment	5
The gaps to bridge	6
Creativity blockers	7
Culture wars: best practice is an inhibitor	8
Short-termism: creativity needs time and space	9
Too many cooks	10
Enabling creativity	11
Human heart > data conformity	12
Briefing: bring back the human touch	13
Better ways of working	14
Better clients make better partners	14
People first	14
Diverse talent, diverse thinking	15
Awards reward	16
Maybe we are “saving lives here”	17
Same world, different challenges	18
Conclusions: differentiation in a sea of sameness	21



Background

We know that creative communications effectiveness is in decline¹. Which poses a huge problem. We also know clients feel not enough is being done to address this. The majority feel that, at an industry level, ‘we focus too much on problems and plumbing and not enough on people and art’.

That’s why, to complement the many studies and work featured during Cannes Lions and other within other industry platforms, we launched the world’s first global study focused specifically on clients’ roles in the seemingly terminal decline of creativity in marketing and advertising: exploring the client-centric barriers to creativity and what we might do to tackle these issues.

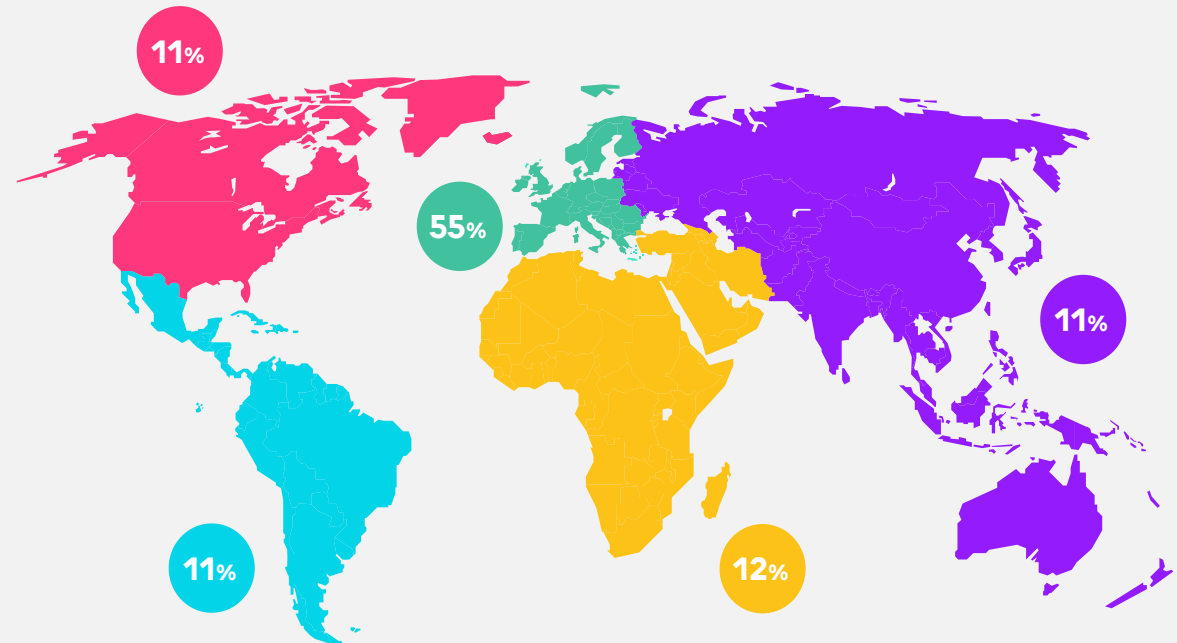
With the partnership of 34 national advertiser associations, [Contagious](#), [The Observatory International](#) and [WFA](#) were able to conduct a global study amongst senior client-side marketers.

Within this project we also sought to speak to industry leaders (client and agency side) to help bring to life some of the challenges we have identified and propose solutions.

Our thanks go to the creative leaders who informed our research and to the 640 respondents, from 34 different countries, consisting of global (10%), regional (44%) and national (46%) marketers. This would not have been possible without the support of WFA’s member associations².

Our goal is to help brand owners address, and reverse, the decline in creativity in marketing communications to drive sustainable brand growth.

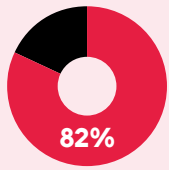
Our sample included 640 senior client-side marketers across 34 markets



Source: WFA survey on ‘Clients and Creativity’ in partnership with Contagious and The Observatory International, Q2 2022.

A superhero with clipped wings

Most marketers come into our industry to create things. They intrinsically know that creativity is an important skill for those in the function.



82% agreed that 'creativity' is marketing's super-power.

There appears, however, to be something of a disconnect when we link this back to the business of marketing.

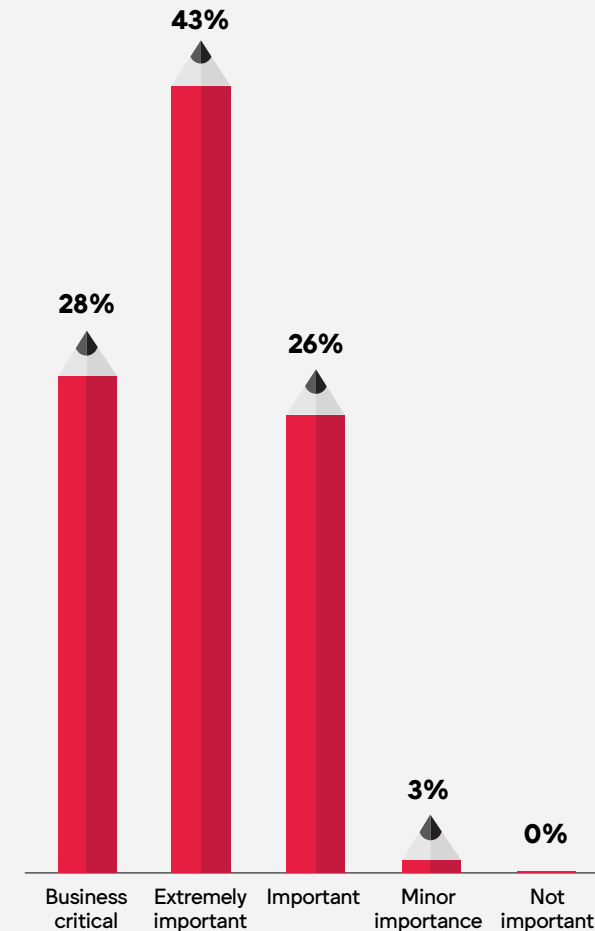
When we asked, 'How important is marketing communications creativity for your organisation?', only 28% of our sample said they saw creativity as 'business critical'.

It is noteworthy that the number of clients saying creativity was 'business critical' increased amongst those companies who said they were 'growing' (33%) as opposed to respondents coming from 'maintaining', 'recovering' or 'declining' businesses (25%), suggesting those who fully embrace marketing's 'super-power' are rewarded for it.

This point is underlined by respondents' reaction to Bill Bernbach (of DDB fame)'s observation; almost half agreed that...

"creativity is the last unfair advantage we're legally allowed to take over our competitors."

How important is marketing communications creativity for your organisation?



"You can't buy something you can't remember."

Sir John Hegarty
Co-Founder and
Creative Director

the
GARAGE
SOHO

Performance self-assessment

Looking at our 'clients and creativity performance scale' our respondents were relatively humble in terms of how they feel they are doing with their marketing communications.

The largest share, 42%, saw themselves in the middle of the scale as 'original and impactful'.

Followed by 27% claiming to be only 'practical and promotional'.

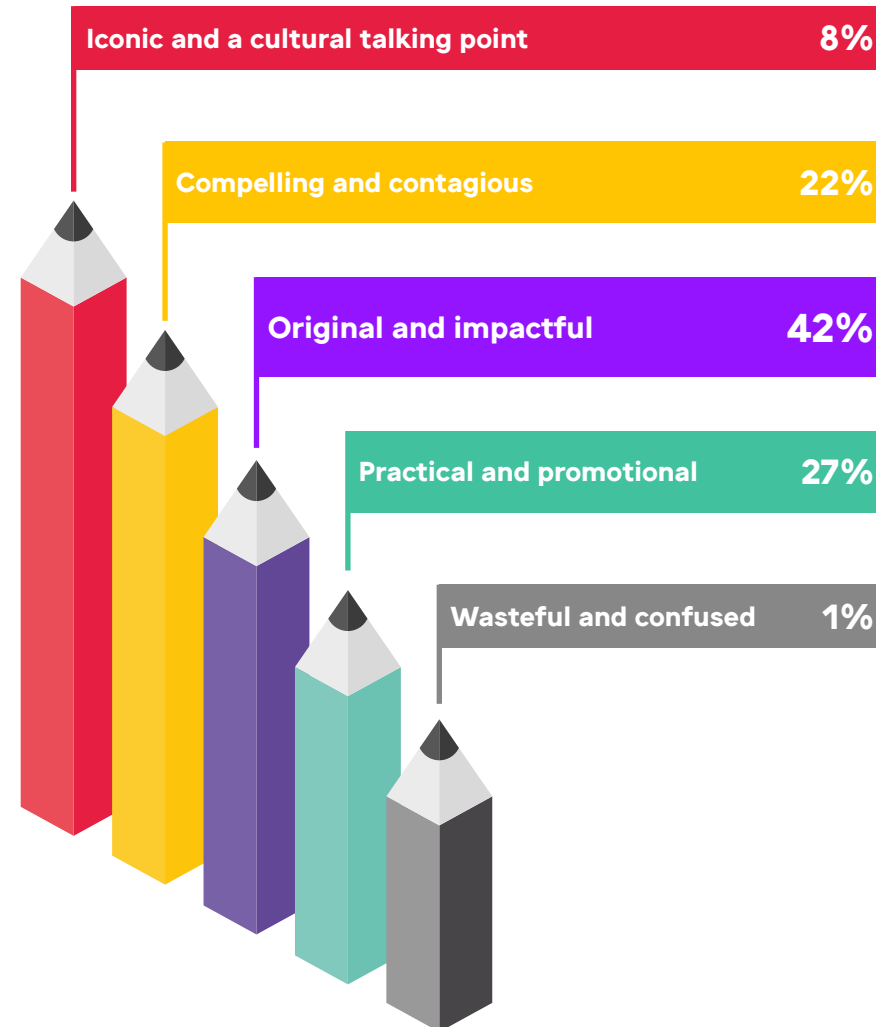
22% saw themselves as compelling and contagious, the 3rd highest grouping in our scale.

A confident 8% saw themselves as being iconic and a cultural talking point.

Whilst our respondents have tried to be honest, these are self-evaluations and would be interesting to compare this to the perceptions of their colleagues, views of their agency counterparts and, their ultimate audience - consumers.

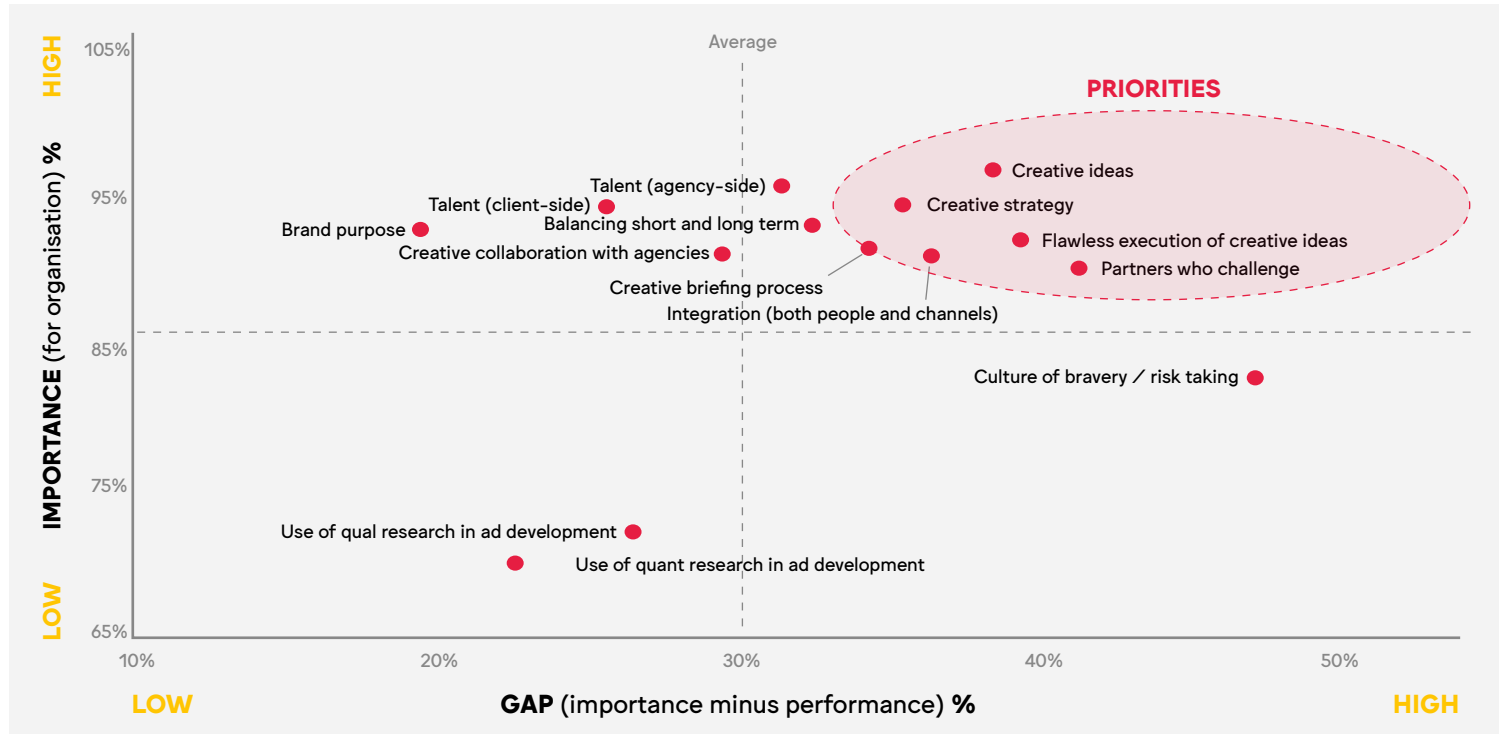
Whilst our sample feel they are making an impact with their communications, we know they also recognise the barriers to reversing the decline in creative communications effectiveness.

Which of the following most closely reflects how your organisation is performing in terms of marketing communications creativity?



The gaps to bridge

When looking at areas which impact creative effectiveness, we can map the importance of a factor against the perceived performance of our sample. That's where we start to see the priority areas to address.



“It’s a tough job to be a client nowadays because there’s a long checklist of things you must do: the KPIs, the ROIs, measurement, checking the boxes - oh is this purposeful enough? Are we featuring enough diversity? ... Everybody’s time is finite. So once you check all the boxes, there’s very, very little time and effort and energy left for true creativity.”

Natalie Lam
Chief Creative Officer
APAC and MEA



The areas where importance is high yet the gap to bridge is highest feature quite fundamental areas including:

1. Creative strategy and ideas
2. Flawless execution of those ideas
3. Partners who challenge [the client]
4. Integration (between people and channels)
5. ...and the creative briefing process

We will seek to unpack these areas in this report and propose solutions to address them

Creativity blockers

The biggest barriers identified by clients in relation to their own organisations' creative communications were a risk-averse culture (51%), short-term focus (48%), having too many decision makers (44%) and reductions in budgets (40%).

Relatively few blamed in an over-emphasis on data and analytics (21%), the shift towards investment in digital channels (17%) and ever-tightly defined audiences (9%).

Clearly there is a long list of blockers and, for many, more than one will apply. This, inevitably, will significantly compound the overall complexity of driving better creative outputs.

Talent, perhaps surprisingly - given the well-documented crisis in this area, is only seen as a barrier by 29% and even fewer (23%) blame the talent within their own (client-side) organisations, suggesting the vast majority of clients do not feel that issues lie with their partners or their own people.

We do, however, know our industry has a gap to bridge in relation to diversity of talent and thought. Inclusive workplaces inspire diversity of thinking, which drives creativity & innovation. This allows us to better understand consumers and, in turn, helps brands differentiate. This is explored further in WFA's Guide to Diversity and inclusion-in the creative process³.

Which would you say are the main barriers to becoming a more creative (and effective) client?



Culture wars: Best practice is an inhibitor

Rather than the people, it is the environment in which they operate - one which seems not to allow for a culture of risk - that is the main perceived problem. A 'risk-averse culture' (51%) is the most cited barrier to effective creative communications. Insights from qual interviews conducted with a global cross-section of industry experts back up the importance of this by showing that 'brave' creativity can serve as a competitive advantage for brands.

Current marketing practice leaves little room for deviant ideas. Management expert Lynne Vincent [quoted in The Contagious Commandments book⁴] says: **'Creativity is inherently risky. A creative idea by definition is novel and useful. If the idea is truly novel, it will have some risk attached... Because of this risk, people often feel more comfortable maintaining the status quo.'**

Andy Nairn, Founding Partner, Lucky Generals urges marketers to leave some wiggle room! "We've accumulated too many rules (category/ sector conventions, assumptions about target audiences, about brands) - the best campaigns break some of these rules and it's really a skill to know what rules to break and when."



This explains why, when it comes to marketing, companies tend to retreat to the known. It's especially easy, within a large multinational company, to grab a metaphorical security blanket and wrap themselves up tight.

It explains why advertising is an industry where the status quo reigns, and why so much content stays within customary guardrails. 'Washes Whiter', 'Bite & Smile'; the clink of ice in a glass of spirits. Insert your own cliché, or category convention here. It's easier to play it safe.

Natalie Lam, Chief Creative Officer, Publicis Groupe Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa argues that guardrails and internal systems can hamper great creativity: "The end goal is diminishing the gap between amazing work, amazing creativity that cuts through and the so-called Best Practice and standard practice. Because a lot of times nowadays, people will set the bar whereby the ceiling is the best practice - and that basically blocks anything that is interesting."



Getting to the best creative ideas isn't always easy. Clients need to tolerate an internal culture where dissent and awkward questions are tolerated. Don't be afraid to polarise.



"Creativity isn't about safety. Creativity is actually about taking some huge, massive chances and believing in something."

John Schoolcraft
Global Chief Creative Officer

OATLY!

Short-termism: Creativity needs time and space

The second most mentioned barrier to becoming a more creative organisation was short-term focus, cited by 48% of our sample.

Much industry work has been done around this, for example by Les Binet and Peter Field⁵ in 2013. Clearly this has resonated as 93% of our sample see that addressing this balance will be critical to being more effective in the future.

David Golding, Strategist, New Commercial Arts sees short-termism as “the biggest and most profound challenge’ that the marketing industry faces: ‘There’s a sense of money and “now - I need it now, I need to show proof” ... There’s a lot of focus on marketing to build brands quickly, rather than to build a platform which will be phenomenally strong for 10-15 years to come. Imagine if marketers were able to stand in front of boards and say “you know, the one thing I promise you is it won’t work this year.” Imagine if we gave ourselves the freedom to say we’re not in it for what’s going to happen in the next six months: come back to me in five years’ time... We’re looking to build a platform or a strength of brand that is longer term.”

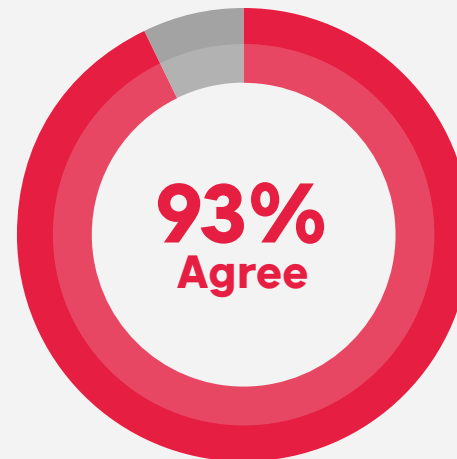


NCA.

Although an idea can come from anywhere and creativity can happen in a very short space of time, true creativity and innovation need space and time to breathe.

Reporting on regular targets does not allow for a longer-term approach driven by strategic thinking. Instead, it leads to tactical approaches to ‘plug the gap’ and deliver.

Brand building - balancing the short and long-term is critical to becoming a more creative organisation



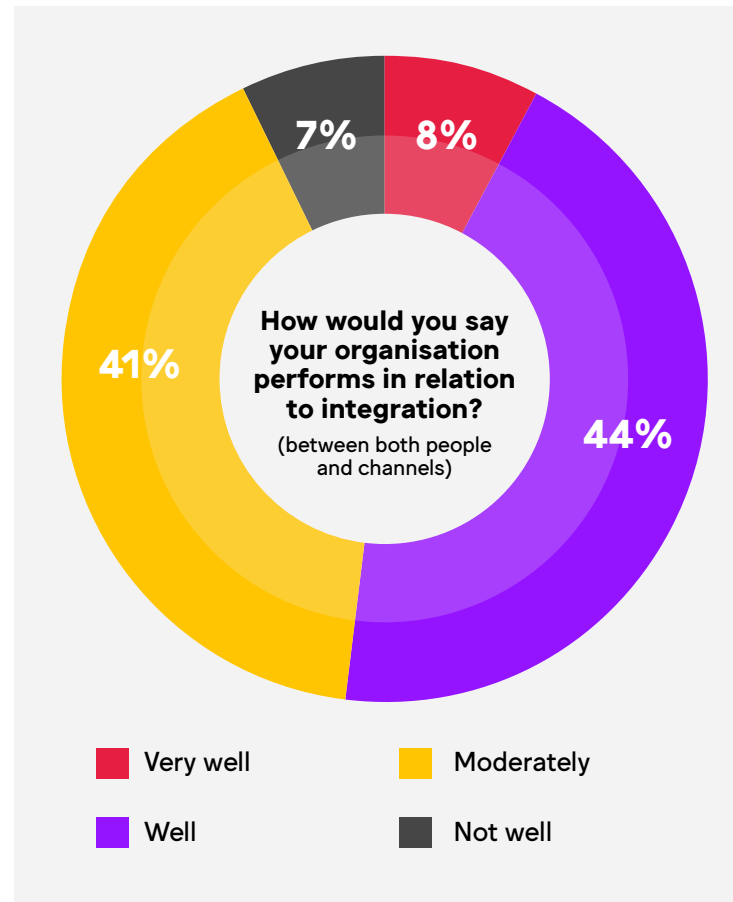
Too many cooks

Linked to this, in third place, 44% cite the ‘too many creative cooks’ syndrome. A process-driven environment within an organisation with many layers and stakeholders risks creativity by committee. A ‘risk-averse’ environment where creativity can be stifled, and communications become unexceptional.

This issue is not new, especially for those who work in large multinational, often matrixed, organisations.

The prevailing thinking is that organisation complexity can be addressed by taking a more integrated approach. However nearly half (48%) say they are performing only moderately or not well at all in this area.

Integration is often achievable with strong client leadership; however, complexity is often the enemy of creativity. Not everyone needs to have their say. Which is why smaller, more agile teams with far clearer roles and responsibilities are on the rise within many of the more forward-thinking client-side organisations.



“Creativity and innovation is not a democratic process. Everyone does not get a voice.”

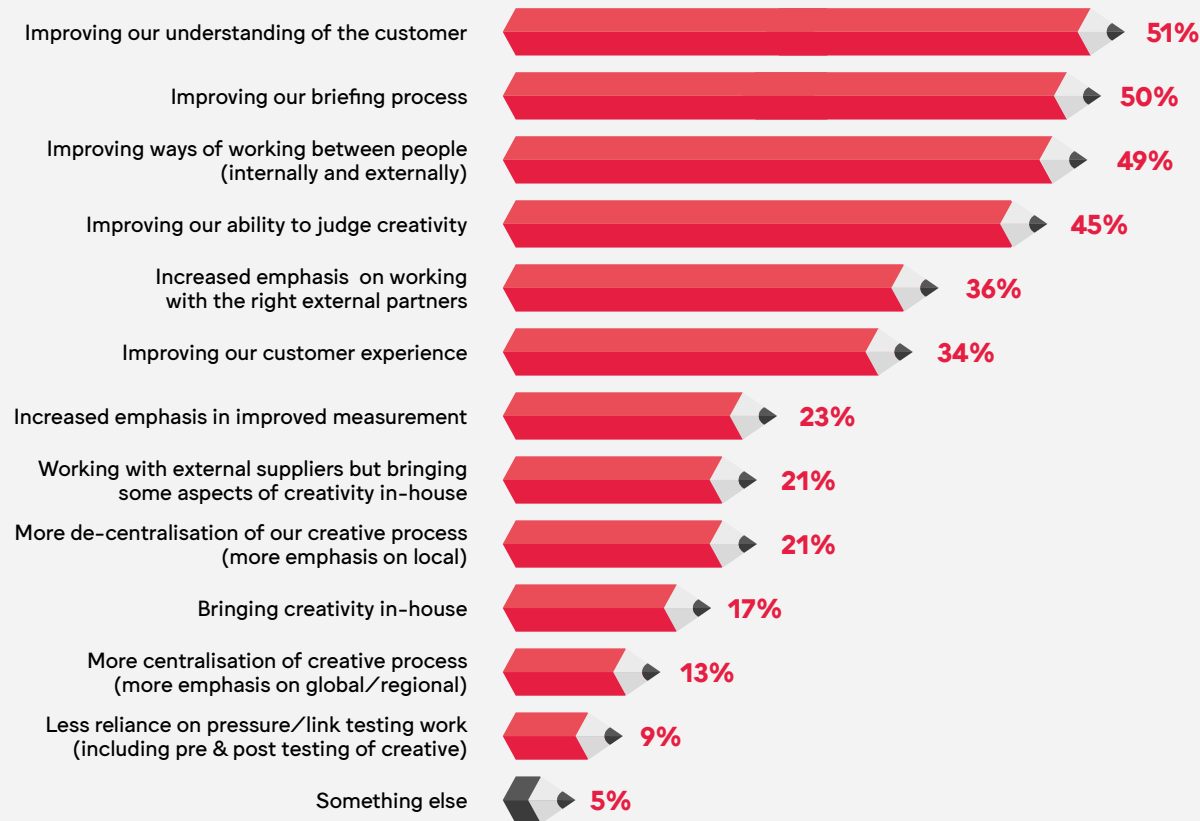
Vicky Free
Head of Global Marketing



Enabling creativity

When asked which actions brand owners plan to focus on to help make their organisations more creative, the top enablers were improved understanding of the customer (51%), improving our briefing process (50%), improved ways of working (49%), improving our ability to judge creativity (45%) and increased emphasis on working with the right external partners (36%).

Which of the following will you focus on to help make your organisation more creative?



Human heart > data conformity

Effectively leveraging consumer insights was cited as the number 1 driver of creativity amongst our brand owner sample. However, copy testing approaches were much maligned by those we talked to...

David Golding, Strategist, New Commercial Arts says “Don’t test to oblivion, too often ‘it’s a case of: I’d like to reach for the stars, but under no circumstances can afford to crash to the ground.’”



Many of our discussions with creative leaders also warned of research as a crutch.

For example **Merlee Jayme, Chief Creative Officer APAC, Dentsu International** has often witnessed an over-reliance on research serving as a comfort blanket: “Research makes you safe to defend your idea to your higher boss, a validation, a guide. But where does it lead? It leads to tested ideas. It actually follows a format of the past. You end up doing the same thing over and over again. It is the safe and correct ideas that get you in trouble, that they don’t get you noticed. You actually waste your money in a safe campaign that takes you further a little bit, but won’t start conversations, and worse, it will be forgotten.”



However, a large share (45%) said that improving their ability to judge creativity was a route to progress. This may explain the increasing number of organisations putting in place ‘creative councils’ as a means of bringing the outside in to objectively judge their creative approach. This is also being addressed by many through training solutions, to try and take the subjectivity out of reviewing and inputting on creative work.

Relying purely on data means missing a significant piece of the puzzle. Knowing when, how and what the outcomes are via data is critical – but this leaves a vacuum if you don’t understand the why. Consumers are real people with thoughts and attitudes – not simply data-points to react to, and insight derived from them will help inform ways to persuade their decision making/choices.



“Data is not king, while data can really direct us, we can’t let it make decisions for us. Creativity necessitates that there’s a human heart at the centre of it.”

Tiffany Rolfe

Global Chief Creative Officer

R/GA

Briefing: Bring back the human touch

The need for improved briefing is an area as old as the briefing process itself, yet not enough has been done to improve this. The “briefing by test” examples are all too common and underline a lack of rigour from the client perspective. The expectation that creativity will simply be delivered on a plate is still common. Briefing is fundamental to the role of the client and, if not delivered against, demonstrates negligence on behalf of the brand owner.

Merlee Jayme, Chief Creative Officer APAC, Dentsu International: “You cannot beat the competitor by being the same.” She says briefs need to leave room for an emotional reaction to an idea: “Is it fresh in the category? Different, distinctive enough? Is it unsettling? Does it give you butterflies in your stomach? Makes you lose your sleep? A combination of any two of these is key.”



dentsu
international

Briefing is something of a lost art and is, in some cases, the most important role a client plays in the creative process. Train colleagues to create briefs which truly inspire.

Patricia Corsi, Chief Marketing, Digital and Information Officer at Bayer Consumer Health sees benefit in ‘overinvesting’ during the briefing phase: “Collaborate with your partners and give them a holistic view of your business, not just project by project. I think this is really fundamental.”



Linked to the briefing process is the need to budget creativity. As one WFA member shared in a London Forum; before considering ring-fencing 10 to 20% of your budget to address “consumer needs from a brand building perspective, with a 3-year horizon”. This may help to protect longer-term thinking and potentially boost creativity.

Much is talked about in terms of working and non-working dollars. It is perhaps poor terminology as non-working refers to agency outputs – creativity. And unless messaging is engaging and persuading the consumer about your brand or product, then the working dollars are quite simply wasted.

Better ways of working

Linked to briefing challenges and the ‘too many cooks’/‘integration’ issues mentioned above, ‘improved ways of working (internally and externally)’ rounds out our top three solutions mentioned by our respondents.

Better clients make better partners

One of the most notable changes amongst client-side organisations is the continued growth of in-housing creativity. Whilst the **majority of our sample agreed that ‘internal agencies will never replace the benefit of external agencies’**, that figure was only 51%; suggesting the balance may think that external agencies are ‘replaceable’.

Though only 19% cite ‘bringing creativity in-house’ as a top solution, one of the reasons for the increase in in-housing’s popularity, and perceived success, is that it acts as a catalyst for internal creative transformation – where the needs are most pressing. It helps most not because of the shortcomings of agencies but due to the shortcomings of client-side organisations.

A way to build trust is to ensure better communication between agencies and clients:

Marta Garcia Alonso, Global Director Brand Building Transformation at Heineken:

“I find that that we are not talking enough to each other. And I think both of us will benefit if clients and agencies will work together to co-create the solution together ... Only with long term relationships, having this idea of co-ownership and co-accountability of the creative output, is when amazing things happen, is when the best creative ideas happen.”



People first

Whether internal or external, it’s critical to take a people first approach. As one marketing leader shared at a WFA Forum: “Look to invest time in your brightest stars. Within large multinationals it pays to identify the top talent and arrange mentoring programmes. This is especially valuable in an increasingly remote world”.

Arguably the most important aspect in any creative process is your people. Look to empower key decision makers in the

business to try and avoid endless layers of approval. Be crystal clear on roles and responsibilities in the creative process or risk confusion and a further decline in effectiveness. **Good process can be an enabler, unclear process leads to the death of creativity.**

The same people-centric approach should apply in relation to your audience. Design for human beings. Don’t ask what’s in it for us (the brand) – ask what’s in it for them (the consumer).



“Creativity doesn’t show up on an Excel spreadsheet. It doesn’t show up on a toolkit checklist. It shows up in the hearts, minds and wallets of consumers because they desire to be a part of something: a brand’s identity. That’s why creativity is so important ... Creativity starts when you slow down to think deeply about the why not just the what, but the why? Because the why is what connects humans to humans. And at the end of the day, brands and companies are made of humans and we have to create time and space in the right conditions to be creative.”

Vicky Free
Global Head of Marketing



Diverse talent, diverse thinking

Our respondents confirm that it's people who make the difference when it comes to becoming a more creative organisation. When the people who get the opportunity to create within marketing organisations do not reflect the diversity of our consumers, we have a problem.

Diversity of thought and better understanding of audiences only comes with the diversity of talent - within client-side organisations and those of their partners.

We work in a global marketing industry vying for talent with many others. Yet 1 in 7¹ currently say they would consider leaving their companies and the industry based on a lack of diversity and inclusion. A lack of diversity is clearly exacerbating the talent crisis we face. Leaders must foster equitable and inclusive work environments where diversity can thrive if they want the best talent within their companies and amongst their partners.

Being diverse and inclusive is not just the right thing to do. Having diverse perspectives around the table throughout the entire creative development process also helps organisations deliver creative work which better resonates with the consumers they serve and can help boost the bottom line.

For more around DEI in marketing and the key stages to achieve a diverse creative process, visit [WFA's Diversity Hub](#).



“Diversity is a priority which impacts not only internal inclusion, but also external representation. Inclusive workplaces inspire diversity of thinking, which drives creativity & innovation. This allows us to better understand & reflect consumers, and in turn helps brands differentiate. Inclusive marketing and communications not only make a positive impact on society but also have been shown to outperform from an effectiveness perspective.”

Jerry Daykin

WFA Diversity Ambassador
VP, Head of Media

Beam **SUNTORY**

Awards reward

Most of our respondents back up the perspective that awards have a positive impact and correlate to advertising effectiveness, as the majority (56%) agree that ‘effectiveness awards focus agencies to produce better work’.

The majority of our sample (85%) also say it’s important to work with agencies which are highly awarded in term of effectiveness. Yet fewer, 67%, say the same thing for agencies which are awarded for creativity.

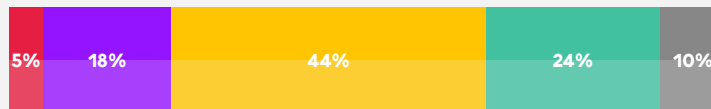
In reality, those figures should likely be closer given that years of evidence from industry bodies (e.g. IPA, Effies, Lions) show a clear correlation between award-winning creativity and business success for the brands concerned.

A notable minority of respondents, however, do not see the importance of awards with a 34% saying creative awards are of minor, or no importance, 15% said the same for effectiveness awards. Like Byron Sharp⁶, a third (29%) they do not see creative awards as being fit for purpose.

How important is it to work with agencies that are highly awarded in terms of effectiveness?



How important is it to work with agencies that are highly awarded creatively?



Business critical Extremely important Important Minor important Not important

Clearly, there’s room for progress in this area, as our study indicates that 30% blame a ‘lack of demonstrable proof’ (and poor measurement) of the impact of creativity. Either this should come from more proof within awards entries (more effectiveness focused) or a better understanding of the value of creativity amongst clients.

As **Carl Johnson, Founding Partner & Executive Chairman at Anomaly** says:

“Creativity is not a shortcut, it’s a power that clients have to use. If you’re not investing in creativity, you’re not investing in effectiveness.”



Anomaly

Coming back to the need for culture change, several WFA members shared how they had set up (internal) “bravery awards. Opportunities to showcase the bravest and best work, within our company”, to inspire colleagues around the world with ‘fearless’ case studies.

Getting to the best creative ideas isn’t always easy. Clients need to foster an internal culture where dissent and awkward questions are tolerated.



“Creativity has to be provocative, if everyone thinks it’s good, then you’re missing the mark. One of the plagues of creativity is to seek this alignment where everyone feels comfortable. I’ve never seen a wonderful campaign where everyone is comfortable.”

Patricia Corsi
Chief Marketing, Digital and
Information Officer



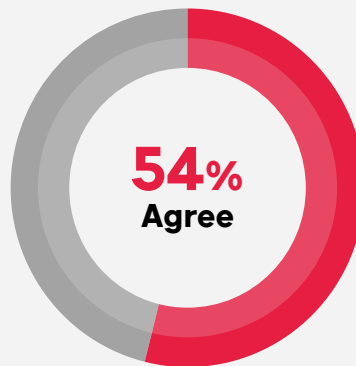
Maybe we are “Saving lives here”

Looking beyond company P&Ls and the marketing/advertising industry, we live in challenging times. The world faces a huge to-do list, including those outlined in the United Nation’s 17 sustainable development goals⁷.



We have a duty to play our part and we can make a difference. The UN’s climate champions⁸ have told us in their own words that they need marketers’ creativity and innovation if we are to effectively tackle our sustainability objectives.

Ignoring marketing’s super-power⁹ will be to the detriment of individual companies’ prospects. Wasting, or losing, this level of creativity will rob an industry of what first made it great and steal away an opportunity for a better world.



Creativity is the most valuable contribution marketing can make towards tackling the world’s problems

(for example the UN’s sustainable development goals)



“Marketing has incredible power in creating tangible and exciting visions of ourselves and our future, and in explaining the benefits of this critical transition to a zero carbon world. Given how important climate change is to their business and to our planet. Chief Marketing Officers should quickly become the new climate activists and lead the way in the Race to Zero”

WFAplanetpledge.org

Nigel Topping
High Level Climate Champion
for COP26

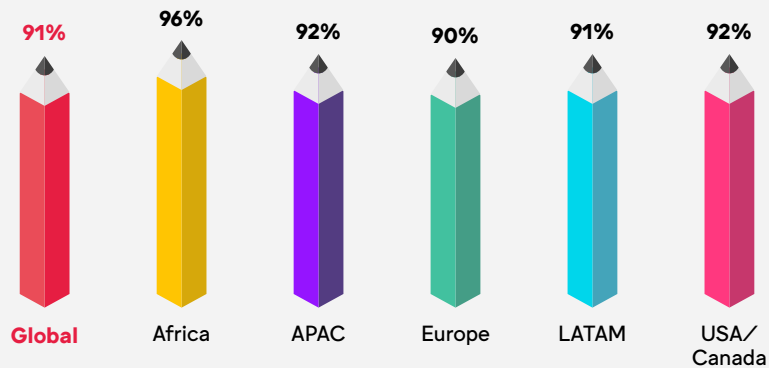


Same world, different challenges

Our research gathered the perspectives of senior marketers from 34 countries around the world.

It would be convenient, from a global marketer perspective, to imagine consistency across the world. In some cases, this is true. For example, the shared belief in briefing being one of the most important levers to becoming a more creative organisation.

Agree that the briefing process is important in terms of becoming a more creative organisation



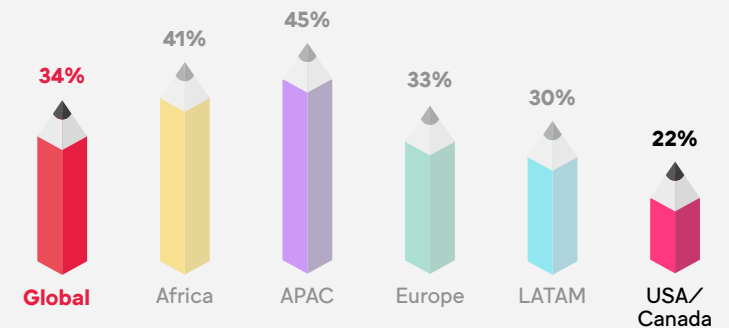
Yet there are many instances where perspectives, needs and challenges differ. Here we highlight, based on the key threads of this document, some of the noteworthy differences we came across regions.



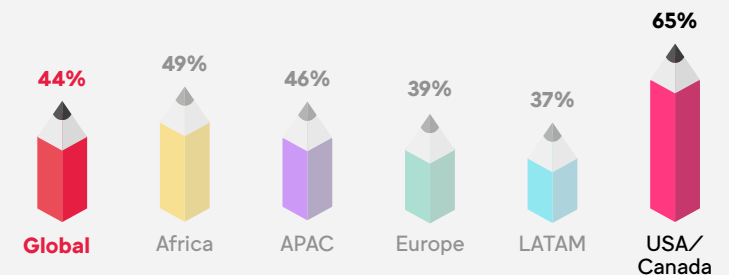
For example, in the **US/Canada**, creativity is defined in relation to business results more than any other part of the world. It is therefore understandable, that our respondents in North America were humbler around their perceived performance in terms of having a 'culture of bravery/risk taking'.

Linked to this, marketers from this part of the world are also more likely to see organisational complexity as being responsible for the death of creativity - the 'too many cooks' issue which often makes companies more risk averse.

Performing well or very well in terms of a 'culture of bravery/risk taking'



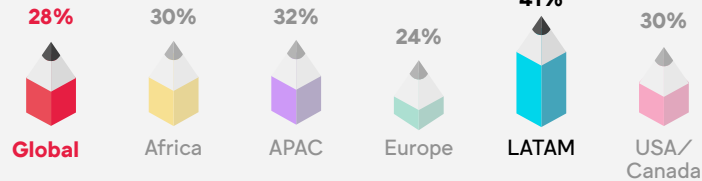
'Too many decision-makers' is a main barrier to becoming a more creative (and effective) client



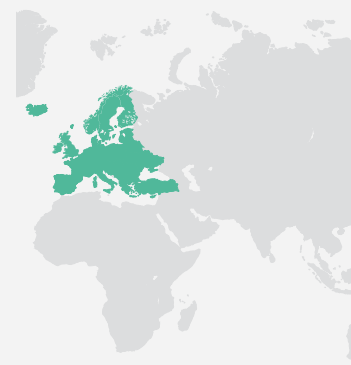
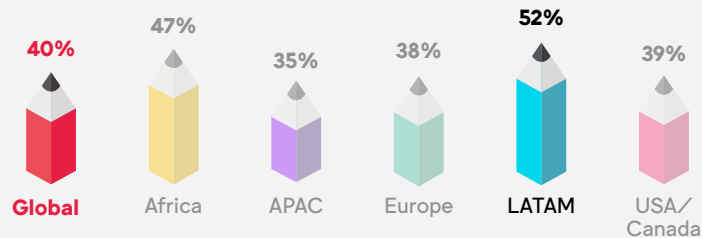


To the south, in **Latin America**, marketers are more likely to see creativity in marketing as 'business critical'. This is perhaps, in part, explained by the fact that the definition of creativity is more focused on innovation and new products than any other region of the world.

See marketing communications creativity as being 'business critical' for our organisation



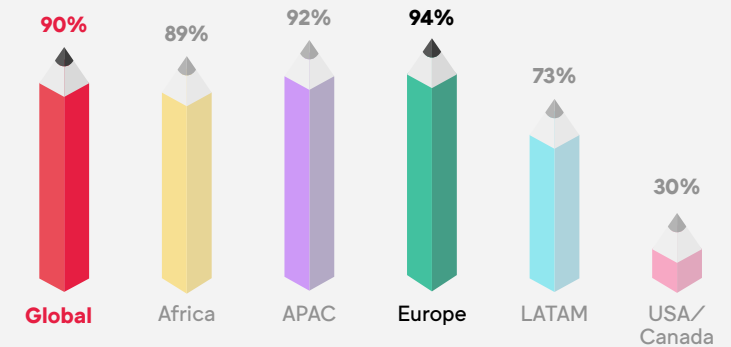
Creativity is defined by originality e.g. Innovation & new products



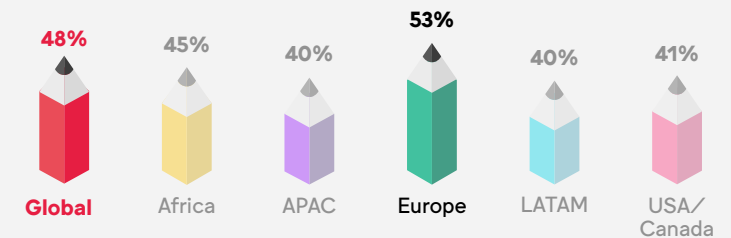
In **Europe**, marketers are more inclined to put an emphasis on their agencies and 'partners who challenge' as being an important factor in becoming a more creative organisation.

Yet they see their own over-emphasis on short-termism as being the major barrier.

'Partners who challenge' seen as critical to being a more creative organisation



'Short-term focus' is a main barrier to becoming more creative (and effective) client

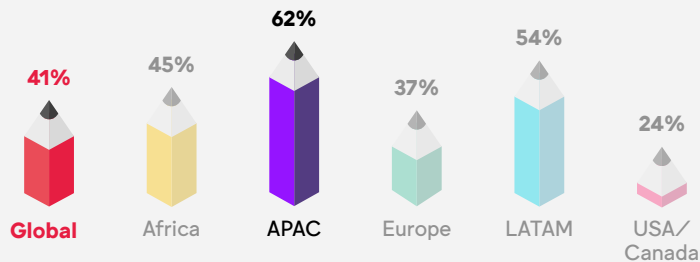




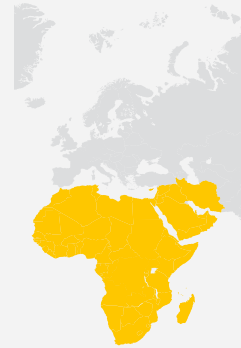
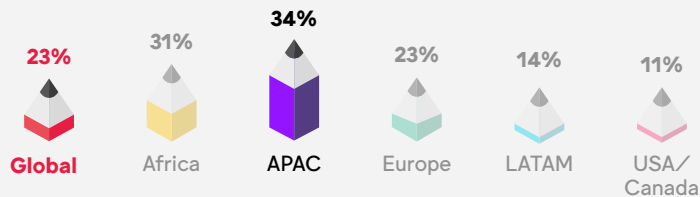
It will likely come as no surprise that in the vast, and hugely diverse, ‘region’ of **Asia Pacific**, marketers believe more in the power of local strategy and locally developed creative.

And when looking outside of their organisations for agency partners, marketers in this part of the world attach more importance in the status and recognition of industry awards than anywhere else in the world.

Believe that ‘local strategy/local creative’ is extremely effective

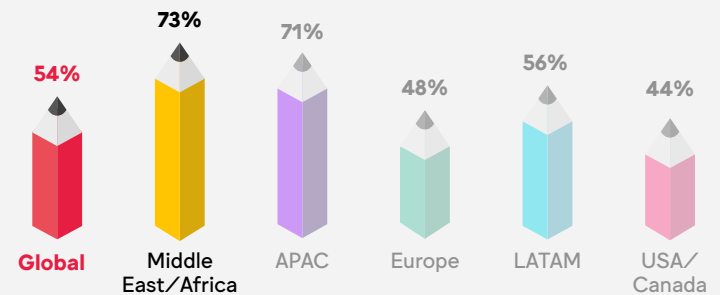


It’s important to work with agencies that are highly rewarded

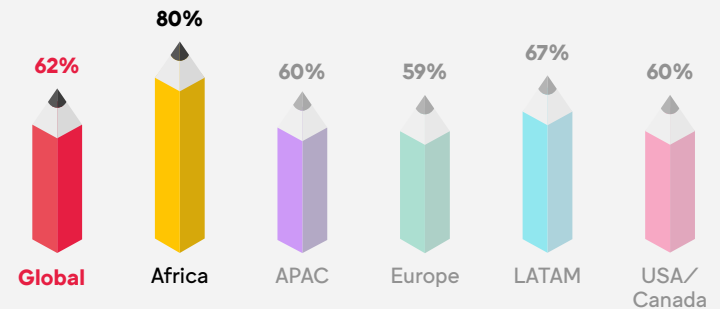


Africa and Asia are home to some of the countries which are already feeling the greatest effects of the challenges outlined by the UN’s sustainable development goals – for example climate action. So it would be wise for us to listen to them when they confirm that creativity is the most valuable contribution our industry can make towards tackling some of the world’s biggest problems. Marketers in the **Middle East and Africa** also stand out in terms of seeing the value of people in terms of becoming more creative – both internally (with colleagues) and externally (with agency partners).

Agree that creativity is the most valuable contribution marketing can make towards tackling the world’s problems (for example in the UN’s sustainable development goals)



Talent (agency side) is very important in terms of the client becoming a more creative organisation



Beyond these regional results we also see, of course, that perceptions and actions also differ by market. For a more detailed dive into national perceptions, please speak with the WFA national advertiser association in your market¹⁰.

Conclusions: differentiation in a sea of sameness

We need to see creativity for what it is:

a business superpower

Google the number of advertising messages we received 15 years ago or so and you'll see that whilst figures inevitably differ, the consensus is that the average person saw about 5000 messages a day. Fast forward to 2022 and you'll find figures as high as 10,000 plus per day.

Regardless of how robust these figures are, the point is that we are inundated with messaging and ignoring a staggering amount of it.

Not only is that appallingly wasteful of much needed budgets, it's also detrimental to the environment when you consider the wasted energy used in producing ineffective comms.

Given this it has never been more important to revisit the need for creativity and what it can deliver both emotionally and physically in terms of benefits of your product over those of your competitors.

For Oatly's John Schoolcraft (Global Chief Creative Officer), creativity offers brands an unfair competitive advantage over their rivals: **"Everyone has the same data. So, if you're looking at the problem with the same datasets, you're probably going to come up with the same answers. So, creativity is the only thing out there that can massively change the prospect of the business."**



Conclusions: differentiation in a sea of sameness

Below are seven considerations that may help you to do just that

- 1. Better briefing.** You are never going to get great work without a great brief. It doesn't need to be long (agencies love being able to work on 'tight' briefs) but it does need to be well thought through and written in the context of trust and transparency between the client and their collaborators.
- 2. Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.** Park prejudice – does the work deliver against the brief provided? Does it move your brand forward? Will it connect with consumers and encourage them to act even though the execution may be pushing your comfort levels? Start getting this right and you can start to move the dial on that in-built tendency to risk aversion.
- 3. Strong culture, better capabilities.** Training and mentoring can help solve the many issues surrounding the above. Improving core capabilities in briefing and creative evaluation means that results will be quickly realised both in terms of your agencies' outputs and time taken to 'get it right'.
- 4. Think brand value.** Whilst pressure mounts to deliver short term results this can be to the detriment of the brand longer term. Regardless of how long CMO's are in place in an organisation, they have a duty of care over the brand they are overseeing. Set KPI's to monitor not only short-term activities but long-term brand perceptions. Align these with (internal and external) other stakeholders.
- 5. Alignment can be the death of creativity.** Over layering in decision making is guaranteed to slow down outputs and water down their differentiation. Look to put a simplified RACI in place within your teams and be clear who the ultimate decision maker is.
- 6. Don't dismiss awards.** Cynics may think awards are self-serving and make no difference (unless they are on stage to collect one themselves!). But evidence suggests highly awarded creative outperforms as a driver of growth. Awards certainly matter to your partners.
- 7. Better client, better work.** Strive to be the brand that creatives fight to work on. Work collaboratively with your agencies and build mutual trust. Present business challenges, not just deliverables. Co-create briefs (though make sure you remain sufficiently objective when evaluating responses). Agencies are not 'suppliers' – they're vital partners that enhance your marketing mix.

Adopt some (if not all) of this thinking and you should see the quality of creativity improving. And with it your bottom line.



“If you engage and embrace creativity, you will have a much more vibrant organization. An organization that will withstand competitive pressure and will create greater return for your shareholders. Creativity is absolutely essential.”

Sir John Hegarty
Co-Founder and
Creative Director

the
GARAGE
SOHO

Thank you to our partners

This project was made possible thanks to the following national advertiser associations. We look forward to further collaboration around actions which will emanate from the knowledge we have gained together.



About WFA

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) is the voice of marketers worldwide, representing 90% of global marketing communications spend – roughly US\$900 billion per annum through a unique, global network of the world's biggest markets and biggest marketers. WFA champions responsible and effective marketing communications worldwide.

If you would like more information on this report or WFA's subsequent actions, please contact:

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About the Observatory International

The Observatory International is the leading global management consultancy dedicated to helping companies drive brand growth by transforming their marketing and communications resources.

We bring global and local perspectives to marketers and procurement along with the knowledge required to overcome the challenges associated with managing communications agencies in these dynamic times.

With over 15 years of experience working with many of the world's leading brands and agencies, our casebook is full of best practice on how to get the best from your marketing resources.

To learn more, visit: observatoryinternational.com

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About Contagious

Contagious provides creative and strategic intelligence for marketers and agencies, via its editorial platform and advisory services. The company's mission is to inspire and enable contagious creativity by championing excellence and innovation in marketing.

To learn more visit contagious.com

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Competition compliance policy

The purpose of the WFA is to represent the interests of advertisers and to act as a forum for legitimate contacts between members of the advertising industry. It is obviously the policy of the WFA that it will not be used by any company to further any anti-competitive or collusive conduct, or to engage in other activities that could violate any antitrust or competition law, regulation, rule or directives of any country or otherwise impair full and fair competition. The WFA carries out regular checks to make sure that this policy is being strictly adhered to.

As a condition of membership, members of the WFA acknowledge that their membership of the WFA is subject to the competition law rules and they agree to comply fully with those laws. Members agree that they will not use the WFA, directly or indirectly, (a) to reach or attempt to reach agreements or understandings with one or more of their competitors, (b) to obtain or attempt to obtain, or exchange or attempt to exchange, confidential or proprietary information regarding any other company other than in the context of a bona fide business or (c) to further any anti-competitive or collusive conduct, or to engage in other activities that could violate any antitrust or competition law, regulation, rule or directives of any country or otherwise.

Please note that the recommendations included in this document are merely meant as suggestions or proposals. They are not binding in any way whatsoever and members are free to depart from them.