

BRAVERY OR BUST.

Why being brave with your marketing is a must.

Question.

What's the worst thing a brand can do?

Embarrassing spellers in adverts?

Nope.

Sell out?

OK, that's not good, but it's not the worst. I could go on, but the answer is simpler than you might think.

Nothing.

Absolutely nothing.



CHRIS CASSELL
Managing Director

Do nothing and die.

A brand that does nothing dies. It fizzles out, fades, without even a whimper. But with so many unknowns, a constantly changing landscape and ever-increasing public scrutiny, it's easy to see why brands stall. What's needed is almost always the same.

Bravery.

Bravery makes things happen, it encourages you to try something new, to ask questions others wouldn't and to face issues others shy away from. It attracts an audience, people engage. Exciting things happen when clients genuinely push for brave thinking and when agencies build their culture around it.

The White Label way.

It's become something of a mantra here at White Label. When we like an idea or see a problem we drop everything and jump on it. It's what keeps us keenly focussed and driven.

But let's be clear about this. When we say bravery, we're not talking about controversy - and there's a big difference.

Too many people confuse being brave with being controversial. Yes, there can be a bit of overlap but if you confuse the two you're on dangerous ground.

The Fine Line.

You might have heard of a Mexican light beer brand called 'Tecate Light'. This is a good example of controversy well exploited. During the first presidential debate they released their TV commercial "[The Wall](#)". In it, they offered an alternative

to Trump's proposed Mexican border wall, suggesting a "beer wall" which brought people together rather than keeping them apart.

Controversial why? Because it was so political and potentially divisive. So why did it work? Well, it ticked the right boxes because it was well executed and consistent with their brand personality. And sure enough, the beer became the fastest growing light beer in the US soon after.

But Pepsi showed us the other side of the coin. And here's the danger in controversy. Their "[Live for Now](#)" campaign caused enough of it to see the ad being pulled the day after it first aired. The campaign was criticised for making light of serious issues and attempting to capitalise on images imitating iconic social protests.

Are you positive?

My point is this. Controversy can be positive or negative, good or bad if you like. But being *brave* always has a positive impact. At its essence, isn't bravery about jumping into the unknown? And when you think about it, isn't that the holy grail of marketing... differentiation?

OK, you say. So where's the bravery? Why don't we see more of it? What's getting in the way of brave work?

The answer is decision making by committee. The collective mind kills more great thinking than any other barrier. Too often there's a moment of absolute clarity, a beautiful idea that's slowly and unrelentingly morphed into something entirely different by layers of faceless bureaucracy.

What you're left with at the end of a long creative process doesn't even resemble the thing that everyone got excited about in the first place.

The role of the brave.

It's frustrating because the solution is so simple.

Here it is. Appoint a single person whose responsibility it is to protect the core of the idea. A nominated individual to explain it, champion it.

Someone brave.

Agree on what's sacrosanct and what's fundamental to the idea working before you open it up to stakeholder scrutiny. And then once you understand that, be brave enough to stick to it.

And if you're going to take anything away with you after this, remember; feedback and input are good, lowest common denominator ideas are bad.

The burden of proof weighs heavy.

More and more often the burden of proof rests with marketing teams. We're asked to prove that ideas will work before they're released. I'm not denying that robust strategy, consumer insights and constant evaluation are highly relevant. But if you rely on them too much, you'll never do anything. And not doing anything means... doing nothing.

Here's the problem with proof. Consumer research (the proof, if you will) favours the *established*. The more innovative the idea, the more potential it has to make an impact.

That means there's less foundation to prove that the impact made will be positive.

Doing something new demands bravery. Steve Jobs couldn't have put it better when he said "It's not the consumer's job to know what they want".

Be consistently consistent.

Being brave shouldn't be complicated. Being brave is about being consistent. The best brands have a strong view on the world. They're consistent and clear. You may not agree with them, but you'll more than likely have an opinion on them.

Brands should live their values in everything they do, and not just in this one print ad or that single TV campaign. The values that define your brand have to fit with everything that happens behind the scenes. You have to be brave enough to truly believe in yourself and your view of the world because if you don't, how the hell can you expect others to?

Without bravery, selling values is just virtue signalling and it opens you up to being attacked. There's no *depth* to anything you have to say. It's shallow. Just ask Pepsi about Kendall Jenner's ad. Ouch.

I can hear the excuses. But, but, there's too much to risk...

Yes, brands *will* ask "Won't it alienate some of our consumers?" or "Why bother getting involved in things we don't need to?"

Complacency is complicity.

It's not bravery if there's no risk involved. But times have changed and so have people's expectations of brand behaviour. For the first time, brands being complacent are seen as complicit.

Burying your head in the sand, not having opinions on issues that impact your world or your consumer's world builds a perception of your brand that you have no control over.

And if you still need convincing that there's no option other than being brave, you'd do well to remember that brands aren't what you tell people they are, they're what people tell people they are.

So Be Brave.
Believe in
the brand!
Believe in
the idea.