

Karen Blackett on being a Cannes Lions judge

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To win a Titanium or Integrated Lion, the work has to be brilliant in five key ways, says Karen Blackett

Some in the creative community were outraged that a media person could be on a creative jury, let alone on the ultimate creative jury.

Clearly there are some in our industry who are still stuck in the 1980s where media is reduced to a spreadsheet at the end of a “creative” presentation and who quite frankly need to exit left.

What’s lost on these poor relics is that that how, when, where and why your audience sees a piece of content is as important as the content itself. Everything is media, and the context in which the story is told is key.

That aside. I have learnt a huge amount sitting on a jury of the most brilliant, creative and modern minds for the past week:

1. Just because you can, it doesn't mean you should

This year saw a number of entries where entrants were excited to demonstrate their data prowess. Data muscles were flexed, but where entries fell short, the vital missing ingredient was the "why?".

We can do amazing things by harnessing the power of data but unless we are able to answer a genuine consumer need, we should leave well alone.

Data should not simply be a way to do cleverer but seemingly useless stuff. Data should be used to unlock those game changing consumer insights that will allow us to do things at scale and fast.

We saw this with MARS' Hungerithm entry, which saw the price of Snickers change based on consumer involvement. It was a great partnership with 7 Eleven and had cultural relevance.

2. Brands can grow and do good, the two do not have to be mutually exclusive

There is a lot of debate in our industry about "brands with purpose". Is it just a gimmick? I have seen amazing examples this week where brands genuinely care about their consumers. They have used their brand influence to help improve their lives.

Purpose is only a gimmick if the brand imposes their own story rather than reflecting their consumers' story, demonstrating a lack of understanding and, crucially, respect for their consumer.

Brands can grow and make a profit, but they really can do good along the way. They can make people feel like they belong.

3. Integrated is more than multi-media

The official definition for an Integrated Lion is: “Entries that demonstrate holistic excellence; that is work that has been executed across multiple media, incorporating an idea into diverse environments such that it is enriched by each.”

Our jury went further. True integration is where your brand can integrate into culture and society.

Yes, use multi-media. Yes, make sure the execution reflects the medium. Yes, make sure your content is feed ready and feed relevant, but go deep and aim to integrate into culture.

Again, Boost Mobile’s “Boost your voice” was a great example of this, inserting its retail outlets into a wider debate about voting rights in the US.

4. Burst the bubble

The work that took my breath away, was brilliantly defined and articulated by Chloe Gottlieb as “work that the world has heard”, and the jury needed to listen.

The work that has transcended our ad Industry bubble and has lived and breathed beyond the echo chamber of ad land is transformative work.

This work has made a difference to how we think and what we do. “Fearless girl” from State Street Global Advisors and their “She Fund” is game-changing and sets a template for the future.

5. We can entertain

There were genuine laugh-out-loud moments in the judging room, work that just made you really smile. Yes, the work led to increased basket size or repeat purchase or improved brand salience and awareness, but also left their audience with a smile on their faces.

Let’s face it, in the current climate we could all do with a few more laugh-out-loud moments.

Never forget how brands can bring joy. The Child Replacement Programme for Pedigree created by Mars NZ made me laugh out loud, as did The Cheetos Museum Campaign.

PS 50:50 juries work

It was a huge pleasure to judge the Titanium and Integrated Lions with some amazing, pioneering, talented and brave industry experts.

There were 10 people on the jury comprised of five women and five men: Tham Khai Meng; Gustavo Lauria; Nils Leonard; John Mescall; Nizan Guanaes; Chloe Gottlieb; Kate Stanners; Jaime Robinson; and Jane Lin-Baden.

There is no doubt that the men in the room are incredibly creative, smart, funny, thoughtful and with absolutely no ego.

What I also loved were the smart, strong, passionate and decisive women in the room. There was genuine respect in the room for the opinion of others. I have made new friends for life.

Our final list of winners was shaped by the inclusiveness I felt and saw in the room. It was powerful. I am humbled that I was part of it.

The 2017 Titanium & Integrated Jury, it has been a total blast.

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