

A Question of Talent: Whole- Brained Thinking for the New Decade



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KATE ROWLINSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, UK 29 JAN 2020

The roaring '20s have well and truly arrived, and this January I had the pleasure of kicking off the new decade by taking part in the latest [Campaign Breakfast Briefing](#).

Themed around change and growth, this was the perfect forum for some of the industry's senior leaders to share their insights on how the events of the 2010's have shaped the opportunities of next ten years.

It was a pleasure to sit alongside my industry peers – including Sam Tomlinson of PwC and Ali Hanan, the chief executive and founder of Creative Equals –and talk about some of the most pressing issues we're currently facing. For my own part, the discussion was incredibly enlightening, and provided valuable lessons on how organisations can ensure they have access to the talent and skills needed for the decade ahead.

Happily, it gave me the chance to talk about one of the most important mindset shifts that our industry will make: the move to “whole-brained” thinking.

For those of you unfamiliar with the term, “whole-brained” thinking is about taking a holistic approach to business management – embracing it as both a science *and* an art.

And the best place to apply it is in the use of data. Now we know that having access to good data is a business essential – but where many organisations go wrong is in prioritising data collection over analysis. Too often you hear under performing companies complaining: “If only we had better data and analytics, we would be okay!”

Sadly, this isn’t the case. The secret – and where high-growth organisations differ – is not to go looking for more data but to get more *out* of the data you already have.

Achieving this is its own challenge. One that needs a very potent combinations of skills, a pairing of data analysis with creative thinking. Organisations can’t sit back, collect data and expect patterns to present themselves. They need to get their hands dirty in the data – hiring talent that can interrogate the information, that can look deeper into the numbers to draw out the lateral-insights that will fuel imaginations.

Of course, the best way to achieve this is to hire and develop talent that is fluent in analysis and ideation: otherwise known as whole-brained thinkers.

Finding the people who can fit the bill is tough. And it will come as no surprise to those who know both myself and MediaCom when I tell you that part of the solution lies in diversity and inclusion!

Whole-brained thinking is a relatively new skill and as such the formulaic CVs simply can’t tell us whether a candidate has what it takes.

We’ve known this for a while – which is why we made the decision to ditch CVs. We have both graduate programmes and apprenticeship schemes for school-leavers; we tailored our

application process to remove bias wherever possible; and we aim to test the candidate on their potential rather than their experience. We prioritise face-to-face interviews through our selection days, getting to know candidates on a personal level and learning far more about them than we could ever get from a single piece of paper.

The result is that at MediaCom we are now a far more diverse agency. And we've never been stronger. My fellow panellist Sam Thomlinson put into words something that many forward-thinking organisations have known for a long time: "diversity is not simply a moral imperative but a business one".

If I could leave you with one thing from the debate, it would be this: data is a tool and what it delivers depends entirely on who is using it. No matter what technology trends the new decade delivers, people and culture will always be key.

I'd love to hear your thoughts so please feel free to share your comments below...

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