

A VIEW FROM JOSH KRICHEFSKI

# Social anthropology, or why I got into advertising

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JOSH KRICHEFSKI, CEO, UK 09 JUN 2017

I will admit right now that, at 18, I didn't dream of becoming CEO of a media agency. But I also admit that the media, advertising specifically, interested me from a very young age.

Not to age myself too much here but the creative back then was better – the concepts were clever but not confusing and the execution was usually fantastic. And of course, on-demand didn't exist and there were fewer channels, so to be frank, you had to actually watch adverts because there wasn't much else to skip to.

But for a long time, that was as far as my interest went. At no point did I think it was going to be the industry I'd build a career in. What I did know is that people are fascinating. It was really as simple as that. Humans are confusing, contradictory, passionate and unpredictable. We can never be truly understood and I find that idea both captivating and frustrating. I wanted to understand why we act the way we do, what drives us and what

develops our opinions – so I went off and studied social anthropology at university.

Looking back now, I can very clearly see that my degree not only helped define who I am as a person, but also who I'd become as a CEO. At a basic level, anthropology is about training yourself to never accept the norm, not applying your own value system to things you learn about in other places.

That means I question everything I'm told and then when I'm told the answer, I question that too – it's probably annoying but it's genuinely helped me throughout my career. I also think that this curiosity and desire to question things is a hugely important trait for anyone in advertising.

### **Audience is everything**

As we hear every day from clients, colleagues, partners and all in between, everything we do is, or should be, about the audience. Even before we start the creative process, we collect data, analyse it, speak to clients about their target audience and develop insights which will be the cornerstone for that campaign.

From there, we develop a creative or concept which will speak to that audience. Once that's in place, we plan the campaign to ensure we reach that audience. Every layer of this process requires different skillsets but the one constant is the need to understand the audience and question whether the work we're producing is going to engage them.

Developing and executing a brilliant campaign is a long process and it's very easy to lose focus. Adding to this challenge is that there are a constantly growing number of platforms on which to place content – from Snapchat ads to on-demand video ads that speak the name of a viewer. All this means the need to keep “audience” front and centre is even more vital.

### **Embracing change**

We must question every decision being made – is social the right platform, is a TV ad going to connect to the right age group, is this media owner really able to direct our content

to the right people? And once we've figured that out for one campaign, the entire process needs to start again for the next one.

Because as human beings, we are constantly changing. Content that grabs our attention today will irritate us tomorrow. Brands that seem innovative today seem boring a year later. It's the nature of things. But our job here is to evolve with that and be constantly curious, asking the questions that will turn a solid campaign into a groundbreaking one.

Understanding people and never assuming I'm right about what I think is what attracted me to the advertising industry – my main piece of advice to people in the same world is to question everything, assume nothing and then do it all again next time.

Josh recently spoke with Jess Davies, UK editor of DIGIDAY about his career and life as UK CEO of MediaCom – you can read the article [here](#)

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