

A VIEW FROM SUE UNERMAN

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# What Spielberg teaches us about better ideas

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Want better ideas for problem solving in 2018? You will need to get outside your comfort zone, just like Steven Spielberg.

Creative problem solving is crucial to everyone's job now. Innovation is part of the day job.

Sometimes that means doing new things in new ways. Sometimes that means new things in old ways or old things in new ways.

There are two dominant schools of thought on innovation in media. The first is professionals who believe that not enough has changed and are sure that there's radical change in reaching people in the right way, with the right message and at the right time, which will grow brands and drive more effective work using new tech.

Others pour scorn on the digital utopia and suggest that the market will swing back to traditional brand building techniques.

The media landscape has been made less navigable by these contrasting orthodoxies.

The truth lies in between.

Because it depends: on the brand, on the category, on the audience and on the timescales of effectiveness.

We need a stream of better ideas about how to solve new problems.

The movie mogul Steven Spielberg has been making blockbuster films for decades. Everyone reading this blog loves one of his films, at least: Jaws, Jurassic Park, Schindler's List, Raiders of The Lost Ark... et al. It is interesting and useful to know that he doesn't rest on tried and trusted techniques and ways of working despite his amazing body of work and the army of adoring fans and strong critical acclaim.

Spielberg could rest on his laurels. He doesn't. With 40+ years of experience he has turned his camera to a new genre of movie, one that is spot on for the current zeitgeist of questionable news and a woman brave enough to speak truth to power.

The Post opens this week. It tells the story of The Pentagon Papers, documents that revealed that the US government had been lying about the Vietnam War. The documents were initially leaked to The New York Times but President Nixon's lawyers shut down their ability to publish. The Washington Post got hold of them and published. It was a high-risk thing to do, one that could have landed the owner and editor in jail. The owner, Katherine Graham, stood up for truth in the face of the full force of the government shut down.

Spielberg [says](#) it's his first political thriller. He says he likes new challenges because he gets all his best ideas when he doesn't know exactly what he is doing: "I get better ideas when I am standing on my heels, not on the flat of my soles. It's because I don't want to fall,

and I need to regain my balance... it's scary but healthy.”

Want better ideas for problem solving in 2018? You will need them. Get outside your comfort zone. Keep the knowledge and experience that you've earned but don't over-rely on them. Get on your toes.

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