

Who runs the world? – An article for International Womens Day

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You will no doubt have noticed that today (depending on when you are reading this) is International Women's Day. Each year, the 8th March stands as a day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievement of women. A day not to alienate or discriminate, but to support and push for gender parity.

Some of you may be thinking "Yeah, yeah – we know. Women are held back, paid less yada yada yada" or "it's a fad!", or maybe even "wow, not another feminist article". The good news is that this is not that (that said I would have some less than kindly words for anyone who still tried to argue that the gender pay gap wasn't really a thing!), rather, I thought I would have a look at just a few of the brands who are doing something to support

the cause.

If 2016 was the year that momentum over the gender pay gap really started then 2017 was the year that women started confronting the darker and more damning side to the inequality argument from suppression of opportunity through to sexual assault. Over the last year, we have seen mass scale global conversation such as the #MeToo, #TimesUp and #GrammySoMale rise up and rapidly gain traction and support, therefore it is no surprise to see that many big brands are keen to join in.

Whilst there is a lot of talk in Hollywood around the demeaning way women have been treated it has opened the door for the discussion about inclusion, opportunity and equality and we are starting to see more opportunities for female directors and female led stories coming through.

Following the controversy at the Grammy's, Smirnoff and Spotify have paired up to give exposure to female artists through the 'Equalizing Music' campaign, where Spotify listeners can utilize a tool that provides a percentage breakdown of the number of men versus women artists they have listened to in the past six months. For those whose listening preferences skew male, the Equalizer tool provides users with an "equalized" playlist tailored to their music tastes.

Meanwhile Vodafone and Code: First Girls (a not-for profit social enterprise) have announced that they will provide free coding training for 1,000 14-18-year-old girls across 26 countries, giving them the skills to thrive in predominantly male STEM industries.

Even within the ad industry, there is an appetite for change. The 'Free The Bid' initiative is trying to tackle the gender gap by ensuring that at least one female director is put forward for any creative bids. Currently, just 7% of directors are female and only 9% of commercials are directed by women. The initiative was set up in 2016 and has the backing of marketers from brands such as HP, Visa, Coca-Cola, Airbnb, Levi's and most recently drinks giant Diageo.

And within our agency, there is movement towards a more gender balanced management

structure, as two of our own leading ladies joined the board last year.

But what does all of this mean to me? Truthfully, I see the injustices around the world and within lots of industries. But so far, I have been lucky enough not to feel them myself. They exist (and I'm almost sure I'm jinxing myself by saying this) but really, I have been lucky in life and in work that I haven't necessarily experienced them first hand. Regardless, any movement that makes a more united and non-discriminant world is one worthy of our support

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