

Highlights from Advertising Week 2013 (#AWX)



By [Mark Zeller](#)

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What it's all about? 'The psychiatrists say that everybody should have a hobby. The hobby I recommend is advertising...'

This is just one of David Ogilvy's many inspiring quotes, which propelled me to combine a vacation with a passion. I was ecstatic when I got the opportunity to attend the 10th Anniversary of [Advertising Week](#) a few weeks ago. Besides some of the industry's brightest minds sharing their ideas and insights with us, the conference took place in New York City, home to many global agencies and clients. With around 90,000 delegates and more than 700 speakers from around the world descending on Times Square, it was a great chance to network.

For four full days, the Times Centre, Hard Rock Café, Liberty Theatre and B.B. Kings Club all hosted back-to-back panels, followed by nightly networking events, dinners with global colleagues and packed parties - some presented by top brands such as Microsoft and featuring acclaimed artists; including a private performance by Avicii. As to be expected, sleep did not feature high on the agenda and Starbucks coffee became a morning staple.

The sessions were interesting, engaging and entertaining and there were plenty of insights for agencies (and clients) to take away until next year. Here are a few highlights I brought home with me:

Top of Mad Minds

The two biggest conversations were around data (which we all know is the future of marketing) and storytelling (which seems to be gaining importance daily) - both being used to better and increase the level of customer-focus and engagement. As Founder and CEO of BuzzFeed, Jonah Peretti, put it, "We're returning back to the 'Mad Men' era."

I believe this to be true. Take a look at some recent award-winning work, such as "[Beauty Sketches](#)" for Dove or "[A Ticket to Visit Mum](#)" for British Airways - both were featured at #AWX a couple of times and used data/insights and great digital storytelling to create authentic and emotional pieces (cue the teary eyes).

The combination of the two, used effectively, can ultimately create more powerful messaging for a brand to its consumer base. However, with that, came the question of "What's Missing in Big Data?"

In a panel hosted by Ogilvy & Mather, MD of [OgilvyOne Worldwide](#), New York, [Dimitri Maex](#), pointed out that more insights and data are needed to test big ideas, because "quantitative testing methodologies" inhibit really great work. The panel also spoke about new talent in this fast paced industry: while we can rely on specialised departments to help us understand how to use data, we all need to become savvy at understanding it and using it creatively.

I fell in love with the way [R/GA](#), which also hosted a session, has combined technology and creativity to create incredible experiences. The digital production company showed how the [Nike+ FuelBand](#) was designed to change consumer behaviour. The sports brand effectively converted from being a product-focused company to a product services system, which has become part of consumers' everyday lives. R/GA Founder, Chairman and CEO, Bob Greenberg, showed practical examples of the "functional integration business model", one that Apple, Amazon and Google are already using, to engage and market to customers through jointly connected touch points. It's fascinating.

The CMO, CIO & CTO threesome

While data and storytelling is fundamental in today's marketing, it became quite clear at #AWX that marketers need to get more involved with the partners in their organisations. They need to get closer to Chief Information & Technology Officers (CMOs), because, as most panellists agreed, the CMOs and their teams are critical to understanding and driving their organisations into the future.

My five favourite quotes from #AWX

1. "Aspirations without allocations are meaningless." - [Jonah Peretti](#), Founder & CEO, BuzzFeed
2. There are three principals for making great stories: insights; social; fearless (not reckless). [Scott Donaton](#), Global Chief Content Officer, Universal McCann
3. "Young talent should be creating content, not doing spreadsheets." - <https://twitter.com/nhhill> Nancy Hill]], President & CEO, 4A's
4. "You can be really strong if you use data to inform your marketing decisions." - Martine Reardon, CMO, [Macy's](#).
5. "Talent in advertising now needs to be multi-talented; able to bring creativity, data and technology together." - [Tim Cadogen](#), CEO, OpenX

On a lighter note

Before I end, there was one session that I was fortunate enough to be told about by the O&M NY Business Development team and it concluded the week on a lighter note: The "Are You Calling Me a Liar?" game show, hosted by [Digiday](#), where two teams had to guess which stories by their counterparts were true or false. Ogilvy & Mather's Worldwide CMO, [Lauren Crampsie](#), was one of the four competing executives.

Did she really make out with Eminem? To find out (as well as to watch all of the other videos from the week), [click here](#).

Bring on #AWXI.

ABOUT MARK ZELLER

Mark Zeller (@markzella) is the Marketing & Communications Manager at Ogilvy & Mather South Africa (@OgilvySA). He loves big ideas & business development; he is curious about the world and is obsessed with Veblen goods.

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