

Fear and loving at the Loeries Seminar of Creativity

 By [Terry Levin](#)

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Part 1... At the Loerie International Seminar of Creativity on Friday 20 September 2013, some of the world's most esteemed advertising practitioners, currently lending their expertise in judging the award-worthiness of our region, provided a snapshot of the state of the global creative industry.

Among other things, almost all of the presenters spoke of the need for courage, bravery, and boldness required to allay client and agency fears of the risks involved in creating work of globally recognised standards.

Some of the new areas where a bold approach will pay off:

- Agencies needing to create breakthrough content that extends brand engagement through new digital channels and generates PR worthy stories for clients and agency
- Ideas combined with technology effectively align brand awareness with good causes such as education, health and economic enablement

Debbi Vandeven_ "What would you do if you weren't afraid?"



(Image: Terry Levine)

Kansas-based VML, CCO, Debbi Vandeven - employed a Wizard of Oz theme in her presentation (Kansas, Wizard of Oz? Geddit?), drawing the metaphor of how the Lion in the Wiz of Oz was searching for a heart and courage, to illustrate some examples of how brave thinking has changed the fortunes of many of her agency's clients and partners.

#PretzelLoveSongs_ "People love to share what they love"

A landmark case study of how a courageous approach imbued a potentially dull fast-food promotion with blast of fresh life is #PretzelLoveSongs.

To launch a humble new offering, dubbed the pretzel bacon cheeseburger, fast-food chain Wendy's invited people to share their comments about the product on Twitter and Facebook, using the hashtag #PretzelLoveSongs. The tweets were then performed by well known singers as somewhat cheesy love songs, albeit with very high production values. The risks lay in the fact that if the necessary production values had not been met, the campaign would probably never have achieved its objectives of generating millions of views and the necessary PR-worthy stories. <http://bacontoday.com/love-songs-to-wendys-pretzel-bacon-cheeseburger/>. As it is, the campaign generated a frenzy of YouTube action, demonstrating, as Vandeven observes, the simple contemporary consumer reality that "people love to share what they love".

In addition [CNBC's Madmoney stock show](#) cited Wendy's, previously the poor relation behind MacDonald's and Burger King, as up-and-coming stock to buy! And to think if they had not faced the unknown, they would probably have just made a window poster!

Social media meets social issues

Vandeven also showed how social media has been used to address the issue that in the US a teen drops out of school every 26 seconds. To try to reach some of the most-at-risk kids, the [MINDDRIVE](#) initiative saw mentors employed to teach them to build a functional electric car, which was then driven across the country from KC to DC to petition legislation and awareness around educational issues.

Here's the risky bit - the car's battery was customised to run on the tweets, posts, shares, and likes generated around the initiative - social fuel literally powered not only the car, but also the much needed global awareness around educational issues. See more at [MINDDRIVE](#).

Local VML brother outfit, [Native's Exchange activation](#), in which retail transactions were exchanged for pledges of organ donation is a concept which demonstrates just the right kind of fusion of bricks-and-clicks thinking for good, which could be rolled out globally to make a difference. (I backed this one for a big Loerie Award)

Goetz Ulmer - Great ideas are always new

Also mentioning the fear factor more than once, is rock star creative, Goetz Ulmer [no really, as well as being Creative Director of Germany's most awarded agency, [Jung von Matt](#), he is also a drummer of a heavy metal band].

The technical and other logistical challenges of their brief-defying case study - to conduct 100 musicians across 50 locations as a solution to increasing the attendance to the Hamburg Philharmonic orchestra performances, is not one for the faint-hearted and one that was not initially met with enthusiasm by clients, sponsors, TV channel or indeed the musicians themselves,

Ulmer's presentation clearly illustrates that for creatives it is the battling of the naysayers and the overcoming of the inevitable immense technological challenges, that requires new kinds of courage. Believing in and protecting an idea, seeing it through is now as much part of the creative agency's function than merely coming up with award winning ideas. See why it was worth the effort:



Another such case of driving home a great idea against the odds, is the [Mercedes A-class Invisible car](#). To illustrate its f-cell hydrogen tech, zero-emission impact on the environment, the car was clad in 35,000 LED foils, connected to a camera, to render it all-but "invisible" on the road.

The resulting jaw-dropping content garnered an Outdoor Grand Prix at Cannes and ±10 million YouTube hits. Goetz comments that the industry is changing so fast you have to be able to convince clients to experiment, to try new channels.

Have a single-minded marketing objective

What is noteworthy about the above cases is their simplicity of purpose. Sell a burger, sell a zero-emission car, increase attendance. It has become somewhat of a cliché, but "Make viral content" is not a brief that is likely to yield much reward - it is the relevance to purpose that makes for award winning work.

What the speakers demonstrated was that great creative work takes courage from both client and creative sides and a need for them to go hand-in-hand as partners rather than previous us and them client/agency models, in pursuit of new great and meaningful creative solutions for our region.

ABOUT TERRY LEVIN

Brand and Culture Strategy consulting | Bizcommunity.com COO at large. Email terry@offtheshelf.co.za, Twitter [@terrylevin](#), Instagram, LinkedIn.
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