

Inside the mind of a creative activist

Mike Schalit, Executive Creative Director of Net#work Naledi BBDO, says, "Ideas are all about action. Anybody can be creative in theory."



By [Richard Clarke](#) 11 Dec 2002

Being the creative activist also means maintaining tight parameters for ideas so that people stay focused. "There is no use in becoming too indulgent."

"Working with an idea or creating an image has to be translated into the business situation. At the end of the day we are involved in working with clients to solve specific business problems."

A couple of years back Net#work withdrew from the Loeries making a statement about too much emphasis on awards in the local industry. They spent money on sending staff to different countries to learn more about advertising in the rest of the world.

It was a move that was guaranteed to elicit negative comments from rivals but the benefits were crucial to the creative approach within the agency.

"We were acting from a position of strength as we had won quite a bit the year before but the message we wanted to get across is that we are not a creative boutique."

"We are looking at solving briefs and achieving solutions for specific clients. Awards can be effective and overlap with the brief but they can also get in the way."

Simplicity is a word that crops up many times in conversation. Solve the problem contained in the brief sounds like a back to basics call. Keeping the idea simple means that the target market can also understand without too much thought.

"True creativity has no precedent, it is an inexact science measured via hindsight," says Schalit. But if one can only look backwards creatively then the chances of an idea working decrease exponentially.

Net#work is an agency that has built an environment where employees find it difficult to rely on precedent. There is also a constant process in place to eradicate the fear of failure.

"There is a crucial element of gut feel in this business and experience also counts. What we work with is instilling a culture of accepting uncertainty and working with it," adds Schalit.

For the novice in the world of generating ideas there are no formulas put forward here and there are no definitive criteria for judging creativity.

That seems to come across as devastating to someone looking for some guidance but Schalit ends by saying, "Being idealistic and naïve is something we never want to lose. Kids are great to learn from because they don't know what they can't do."

ABOUT RICHARD CLARKE

Richard Clarke founded Just Ideas, an ideas factory and implementation unit. He specialises in spotting opportunities, building ideas and watching them fly. Richard is also a freelance writer.

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