

# We need to leave the gardens of Versailles

 By [Damon Stapleton](#) 19 Apr 2017

Charles Maurice de Talleyrand, French foreign minister, was a fascinating character.



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Depending on how you look at him, he was a womaniser, liar and utterly immoral or he cared far more about France than people he served.

One thing you can say about him was that he was a survivor. Here was a man who managed to survive and thrive through reigns of Louis the XIV, Napoleon and the madness of the French Revolution.

He did this by being incredibly shrewd, a master of diplomacy and knowing what people were saying on the streets. While the Sun King and his court were entertaining each other in the insular gardens of Versailles, Talleyrand was listening to the streets.

This fact certainly would have helped in him escaping to England days before the efficiency of the guillotine became more popular than sliced baguette.

This might seem like a *non sequitur* but stay with me. Last year, I was invited to enter my agency's work into thirty award shows. Thirty. That is over two a month. Think about that for a second.

## Should creativity be a numbers game?

I think creativity is far more important than awards. [Dave Trott](#) speaks about advertising people doing ads for other advertising people. Thirty shows a year I think proves this.

Now, I am not here to bash awards. I have tried just as hard as the next man or woman to win them. They have helped me my career. They have helped me get noticed and often pushed me forward. And there are some that mean a lot to me. So you could level the accusation I am being a hypocrite for writing this now. I'll take that on the chin. However, when you start to find it hard to remember what won last year because there were so many, there is an issue.

If you think I am being ridiculous, name what won the Grand Prix in either film, outdoor or digital in any of the main ad shows last year – and, if you can miraculously do that, try the year before.

Rarity creates value. Abundance in our world creates endless publicity. So much publicity. But how much substance or memorability?

It feels like we are inside a walled, shiny garden entertaining each other. This is making awards have less value, not more.

everybody is a multi award-winning creative, then nobody is a multi award-winning creative. Perhaps awards should stop being a numbers game and become a creative game again. If the industry asked creatives, and perhaps it should, what awards they truly value, there would only be a handful. Certainly not 30 shows a year. So, ask yourself, why are there so many? Who really benefits?

I think it was Mr Trott who said **we are talking about ourselves to ourselves**. I couldn't agree more.

We need to walk out of this endless garden and find a new one. Ridiculously, as an industry, we need to remember what we do is not for us.

It's for the consumer.

*"I know where there is more wisdom than is found in Napoleon, Voltaire, or all the ministers present and to come – in public opinion."* – Charles Maurice de Talleyrand.

## ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and group ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clios, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...  
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