

Norah Jones, KFC and forgiveness

We had been waiting almost an hour. An hour is a long time to wait. You start playing weird games in your head. I will count to thirty. When the big hands gets to the five, I am definitely out of here. You also silently seethe.

 By [Damon Stapleton](#) 1 May 2019



Image via [Damon's Brain](#)

Actually, it wasn't that silent. By now, the crowd had started slow hand-clapping. There was no communication. Where was the support band? Where the f#ck was the actual band? People had got babysitters who were getting paid by the hour. People who have gotten babysitters are not people you want to mess with.

Suddenly, a tall, blonde comedian called Melanie Bracewell walked onstage and said the immortal words,

“Hello, I am not Norah Jones.”

Now, I am pretty sure she wasn't the support band. It almost felt like somebody had made phone calls that included the words: “Please, get me somebody,” and “I have a problem.” The crowd's silent response was “You're damn right you are not Norah Jones. Go and bloody get her. We have been waiting an hour.”



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To Melanie's credit, she hung in there. In the beginning, it was painful viewing. It was like watching somebody trying to move a cement block of anger. There was this underlying feeling of hostility in the audience. People laughed to be polite.

But slowly, she got a few laughs. Genuine laughs. And you could feel the room change. Suddenly, there was a little bit of forgiveness in the crowd's heart. She had charmed them with her bravery, creativity and humor. Her humanness (my new word) had won the day.

A couple of minutes later, Norah Jones walked onstage and all the anger evaporated as she began to play. Nobody was thinking about injustice, writing to the papers or worrying about millionaire babysitters. Everything was forgiven.

“*Forgiveness. Brands don't talk about it much. Charm is not a word you hear that often, either. Efficiency and effectiveness is where it's at. The quest for zero defect. We get it 100% right, every time. These are worthy and important goals. Something to always be striving for. A perfect brand. A brand that doesn't make mistakes. That would be great. But that isn't how life works is it? Those pesky bloody human beings.*”

Sometimes rock stars are late or the wrong time was printed on the ticket. With many brands you only have to call a call centre to experience imperfection. Endless Pan-pipe music and being put through to the wrong department. Or, being asked for a pin number you didn't know you had. OK that last one might just be me.

Like I said, things don't always go according to plan. Ask KFC.



WE'RE SORRY

A chicken restaurant without any chicken. It's not ideal. Huge apologies to our customers, especially those who travelled out of their way to find we were closed. And endless thanks to our KFC team members and our franchise partners for working tirelessly to improve the situation. It's been a hell of a week, but we're making progress, and every day more and more fresh chicken is being delivered to our restaurants. Thank you for bearing with us.

Visit kfc.co.uk/crossed-the-road for details about your local restaurant.

KFC's apology ad.

For years, I have had the same conversation. Almost everybody knows what their brand should look like. They also know what they want the brand to do. However, a lot less know how they want their brand to feel. This is what creativity can do.

It can give a brand a personality that is interesting, entertaining and resilient. This creates immeasurable value for a brand especially when it makes a mistake or has to have a tough conversation with the world.



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And, if you think about how brands are having a stronger perspective on the world, *a la* Nike with Colin Kaepernick, these days it becomes a necessity.

Creativity understands how to work with tension and vulnerability. It understands how to work with imperfection.

So, whether you start your comedy set with, “Hello, I am not Norah Jones.” Or, you create an ad for a KFC that starts with the line – A chicken restaurant without any chicken. It’s not ideal.



PR & COMMUNICATIONS

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Vulnerability, a bit of charm and humour can go a long way. In fact, it is vital. These days a lot of advertising is all about what you’re going to say and how all the bits connect together. A lot of people shouldn’t forget, how you say it is just as important.

It can be the difference between disaster and forgiveness. It is the difference between being charming and tedious.

“It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.” – Oscar Wilde

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 Clio, 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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