

Creativity. Maybe Kanye isn't crazy

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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If I have learnt anything in this business it is that every couple of years somebody comes along with something that is seen as the new answer.



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I can remember it really beginning more than a decade ago. It would almost always happen at Cannes. You would see all these badly designed flyers being handed out by teenagers who had been paid in t-shirts. You would see a word or a phrase over and over. And this would be the new answer. This is where it was all going. This is it. This is the holy grail. If you did this it was all going to make sense.

In the good old days, it began with some classics. Words like mobile, digital, apps and then we moved on to the incomprehensible 'content'. Of course there was Vine and Google Glasses. After that, we got blindsided with 'purpose'.

Let's not forget VR and AR. And in the last couple of years, there was Big Data, AI, programmatic and this years favourite e-commerce.

Now, let me just say I am a much bigger fan of lego than communism. You could argue lego and communism are both systems. But I know which one is more creative and lets you come up with new ideas. We should see the lego blocks in the above paragraph as brilliant building blocks rather one of them ever being a complete answer or solution. Doing that lets us get to different answers rather than the same one over and over.

This then begs the question, with all these massive innovations how radically different is the work compared to 10 years ago? Have great ideas been replaced by anything else? Are they perhaps even more important because they are the glue for all these options and channels? It feels ridiculous to have to say this but the idea will always come first.

I mean a silly old print ad of a mouldy burger would never win a D&AD Black Pencil in 2020 surely. And yes, I know many marketers hate this work. But it does give us a little clue as to the issue with all these new solutions. And that is, without a distinctive point of view or an idea many of these buzzword saviours are generic and powerless. It would seem our industry often mistakes the car for the road.

But I digress. Ladies and gentleman, Kanye West.

Kanye West famously hates the colour blue.

That's why he decided to use it instead of his favourite colours for his new e-commerce platform Yeezy Supply. He and his creative director Nick Night used a counterintuitive process where they put down everything they thought was in bad taste and used that to create a new online shopping experience.

In a recent interview with Fast Company Nick Night gave this explanation: "We were trying to make the internet a more humane place. We've gotten used to the internet being a flat, two-dimensional place. But the internet is also this amazing tool that connects everybody in the world. What if we could use it to get to know the people we are looking at on the screen?"

Now, some of you may think this all sounds a little pretentious. Perhaps. But, in the middle of this lies the reason why creativity matters.

Kanye and Nick Night understand that most e-commerce platforms are generic. They are devoid of emotion and do very little to build a brand. In short, they are very boring. They might be efficient but they are still boring and functional. And they are very similar. Creativity can change that.

In a recent panel discussion I had with Professor Byron Sharp and Fatima Saliu from Facebook we spoke about e-commerce. What was said could be summed up in these few sentences. Sales don't mean brand building. E-commerce is a lot like a retail store. It might be where you get a product but it isn't where you build the brand.

In other words, inside e-commerce platforms there is a problem that needs to be solved. They are efficient but have very little personality. Creativity and Kanye come along and go maybe they can have a personality and build a brand. They ask what I call stupid, important questions. They say the word maybe. And maybe is an important word because it can change everything. Maybe an e-commerce platform that is interesting and fun could do a brand building job? It's a risk. They might be wrong. But, it's also how you change the game. You go where there is no data.

You may think Future President West is a little crazy. And you might be right. But, what isn't crazy is you can be damn sure at the very least his Yeezy Supply platform will be better and more memorable than 99% of the platforms out there. And that is the real issue, right?

What happens when everybody has what you have? What happens when everybody is extremely efficient? What do you do then? How do you get noticed? Where do you go?

You may have a great car. But you still have to find a different road.

Creativity is how you find that road.

Crazy is thinking you don't have to look for it.

"In order to be irreplaceable one must always be different." – Coco Chanel

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 global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Olios, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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