

Lindsay Manuel on diversity as success

By  Emily Stander

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Diversity in advertising is essential for success, according to strategist at M&C Saatchi Abel, Lindsay Manuel.



Lindsay Manuel

Besides her work at M&C Saatchi Abel, Manuel is also a dancer, youth leader, and mentor. Here, we find out more about her work, her views on women in advertising, and the best advice she can give...

■ Tell us more about your role as a strategist and what your day-to-day looks like.

Being a strategist is challenging yet so rewarding. No day is the same, but if I had to give you an idea of what my day-to-day consists of, it's solving problems strategically for brands through different shapes and forms; unlocking new insights, reframing old insights, chatting to people to broaden my perspective on things and working in a team to create simple and impactful solutions for the brands we work on.



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■ What do you love most about your work?

The thing I love most about my job is the people I get to work with and the brands I get to work on. Every single day I learn new things, gain new perspectives and together with a diverse group of people, create solutions for brands that not only benefit them but benefit their audience too.

▣ ***How important is diversity - in all aspects - in the advertising industry?***

Diversity is an integral part of achieving success in the advertising industry – and when I say success, I mean being able to relate and connect to your audience most authentic and genuine way possible.

An agency or brand can't expect to showcase diversity and inclusivity in the ads and projects unless they've embraced it internally first.

▣ ***How would it be possible to ensure that diversity is present?***

To truly embrace diversity in all aspects, it starts with who you hire. When an agency/company's culture is strongly rooted in diversity and inclusivity, the hiring process should align with that way of thinking.

Having a group of individuals who come from different walks of life; who all look different, think differently, and speak differently, be part of conversations that help broaden the way we all think about and see the world is integral to this idea. But even beyond being diverse in our thinking, we need to truly embrace the concept of 'inclusivity'.



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In the wise words of Verna Myers, "Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance.". This is about everyone at the table not just being present, but being able to feel comfortable to embrace their unique presence at that table too.

Only once we've achieved this, can we genuinely get brands to show up in ways that embrace the true spirit of inclusivity and diversity within their work.

▣ ***What is the advertising industry space currently like for women, in your opinion?***

I can't speak for every woman in the advertising industry, but from my personal experience, women tend to dominate in operational and relationship-based positions. I think there are still so many ideas and perspectives that women can potentially unlock from a strategic level.

The two biggest challenges the advertising industry faces are having to be agile in an ever-evolving world and bringing simplicity and clarity to a complex world.

Having agility as an agency/company means constantly evolve our thinking and approaches as quickly as our audience evolves. At M&C Saatchi Abel we call this "moving at the speed of culture". In this fast-paced world we find ourselves in,

things are moving in and out of culture so quickly. Traditions, standards, people's expectations are constantly changing and as agencies, we need to be able to recognise that and be agile enough to relate and resonate with people where they are at.

▣ ***How would you suggest these challenges are overcome?***

I think the best way to overcome these challenges is to understand and embrace the power of empathy. We need to stop being complacent about what we think we know about our audience and the world; but constantly find ways to keep learning and adapting to make the lives of our people, and the world they live in, better.



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▣ ***What is the best advice anybody has given you?***

The best advice I've received is that comparison is truly the thief of joy. When you start to compare yourself with others, insecurity breeds, but when you focus on and embrace what makes you unique, that's when you start walking and working in confidence in whatever you do.

▣ ***What advice would you give to women trying to enter the industry?***

My advice to others would be to know what you bring to the table. You will never be the greatest at everything, but you can be great at one thing and that one thing can make room for you in ways that go beyond your expectations. When you can truly own your thing, that's when you make your mark and become truly invaluable.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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