

THE EXPERIENTIALISTS

DESIGN, TECH & MARKETING IN THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY



THE INTERVIEW ISSUE #1

Editor's Letter

The underlying intention of The Experientialists is centered on finding inspiration.

It was inception during the depth of the pandemic and became my access to inspiring pivots and new ideas that were emerging in marketing and advertising.

Early readers were able to find mind-opening content, examples of modern creativity and philosophical communion in the midst of business carnage.

Since those uncertain and challenging times - and 13 issues later - the editorial mission of The Experientialists has remained focused on inspiring others.

In these pages, inspiration can come from learning about the latest innovation in web3 or being

intellectually challenged by in-depth thinking about experience design.

But what is most inspiring to me are the people.

The people who lend their energy to the Experience Economy.

The people who are at the top of their game and sharing their wisdom.

The people vulnerable enough to put it all out there.

The people who are leaders in community as well as creativity.

That's why this Interview Issue (the first one!) is truly special. It is an issue that is all about the people.

I hope that you are as inspired by them as I am.

And please peruse all the issues at experientialists.xyz.



@maxlenderman





B. JOSEPH PINE
ROB REILLY
KRISTA HANSEN
GALEN MCKAMY
AFDHEL AZIZ
NASYA KAMRAT
GEOFF RENAUD
JESSICA QUINEY
BRETT HYMAN
PAUL AARON
BLAKE HERDER
SCOTT BURNS
TERESA CESARIO
JOHN SOLOMON
CHRIS DOBSON
TREASURE NEAL
FARAH BRIGANTE
IAN MURRAY
BIG JOHN KRISHAK
FLYOD HAYES

THREE QUESTIONS:

B. JOSEPH PINE

The Godfather of the Experience Economy gets deep with The Experientialists.

For those of us who are brand experience providers (and proponents of the power of brands to foster a modicum of meaning in culture), against what forces should we rebel and against what temptations should we be vigilant?

First is to rebel against the forces of commoditization, which starve brands of power. Second is the mindset within companies that keep them close to what they've long done rather than enable them to find new ways of creating economic value.

A big temptation is to embrace so-called CX, or customer experience, and think that means they're "doing" experience. CX is great, but all it gets you is great service, not memorable experiences. It's all about being "nice, easy, and convenient" which are service characteristics. Being convenient, for example, is the antithesis of a remarkable, meaningful experience for it means getting in and out as quickly as possible, spending as little time with customers as possible. True, distinctive experiences are about customers valuing the time spent with the company, which must yield time well-spent, not time well-saved.

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We have a running thesis that from now on all brands must help and/or inspire people. Could you please poke holes in this theory?

The biggest hole of course lies in the word "all." Almost all (!) universal statements are false. There are brands (including but not limited to commodity/-ized products) that simply are, and shouldn't take on airs of inspiration.

The second hole centers around the word "help", which is nigh on tautological. If thought of expansively and economically, all economic offerings help people by creating more value for them (at least in customers' minds) than the amount of money they cost (out of their pockets), so in that sense all brands do help, but it doesn't necessarily mean much because they always have.

That said, you are certainly right directionally, and should keep working on it.

Thanks. Is the journey that culminates in transformation more likely driven by people expecting it from brands or by brands who are providing it to people?

Both happen, but I would guess the former predominates, as people are leading and pushing brands in helping them achieve their aspirations, which are very difficult to accomplish on their own. But brands should be leading the way, for people often do not know their aspirations nor where to begin. Brands can show them the way.



THE EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

B. Joseph Pine II
James H. Gilmore

With a New Preface by the Authors

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS

THREE QUESTIONS: ROB REILLY

Rob Reilly is the global chief creative officer at holding company juggernaut WPP. Prior to that he was global creative chairman at McCann Worldgroup and partner/global chief creative officer at CP+B. In those gigs he's been at the helm of some of the most iconic and groundbreaking creative work in advertising in the past 25 years. Can we say Fearless Girl, Field Trip to Mars, Mastercard True Name, I'm a PC, Subservient Chicken...we can go on and on. He's mentored a who's who in advertising and judged at every major award show. He is quite simply a legend in the biz.

You have done it all and won it all in advertising. What is left to do for you and what still gets your juices flowing?

I believe in personal and corporate impact. WPP has the size, scale and ambition to make a huge impact in the world. Governments fail because of lack of money or will. In the end, brands will have to step up and help fill the void.

Is there a creative campaign that you think is most representative of your ethos or philosophy?

Well, I think the Mastercard True Name Card idea (featured on p. 24) is the one I love the most. The idea for the card came from an amazing creative name Lucas. Through his life experiences he believed a credit card that featured your chosen name vs. your given name was something the community desperately needed. We brought the idea to Mastercard. They said yes and help secure a bank to issue the card. It was launched on Gay Pride Day during the parade on Gay Street in an innovative way. And then Bryan Buckley directed a moving film. Citibank eventually adopted the idea for the US and now it looks like it will go global. I like ideas that start with an idea we had for a product that could help people, promoted with award-winning work, that results in a better life for people.

What advice would you give to young agencies that want to be great agencies?

Follow the work, not the money. Easy to say but hard to resist accounts that help pay the bills at first. But frankly, the money will come if you have the work that makes other brands jealous.



THREE QUESTIONS: KRISTA HANSEN

Krista Hansen is Executive Creative Director at [GMR Marketing](#), a female creative leader in a field filled with mostly male creative leaders. This is a statement that needs to change. She has risen through the ranks for 18 years at one of the world's most prestigious and respected experiential agencies to become a leading voice of creativity and inclusion in her industry. If that is not enough, she is the first female president of [United Adworkers](#) in its 17-year history. She is a force of nature and a passionate team builder. We're lucky to have her in our ranks!

You've been a creative at GMR Marketing, arguably one of the world's best experiential agencies, for over 18 years. Congratulations! It's quite a feat. How have you seen the experiential industry change during that time and where do you see it heading?

It's not often you hear of someone staying with an agency so long, right? But there is a good reason for it. I've been afforded many fantastic opportunities to grow with my agency, trusted to build teams, create and shape disciplines, and establish industry-leading design expertise. In fact, my career is akin to the industry in a lot of ways. I started as a designer. Today I am exceptionally multi-faceted with extensive years of experience across every channel, building and leading creatives and clients. I can lead across any project typology that comes our way - from shaping the NFL's Super Bowl to building the employee strategies for the world's leading financial services brand.

Experiential marketing 20 years ago was simpler too - it was a world of tents, trucks, uniforms, coupons, samples. The fuel that we thrive on today has massively evolved. Our ability to meticulously curate an unforgettable experience with a brand is shaped by technology, rich environmental design, and human-centered

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*Let me be clear -
the industry only
changes if
EACH of us
does.*

experiences. "Experiential" today is simply just one channel we can leverage to shape an extraordinary, memorable experience between a brand and a human – not just physical but crossing into new digital worlds. And the talent and tools we have to do that are unlimited. Translate that to the future – the possibilities are truly endless.

Simply put, nothing is more measurable about the power of Unforgettable Experiences than being stripped of them for a year and a half during the pandemic. With vaccines rolling out everywhere, there is renewed energy, human desire, and momentum. Brands willing to embrace this moment and make stories with us will create connections and memories that last a lifetime.

You are also president of Milwaukee Adworkers. Do you think that secondary markets like Milwaukee are overlooked by clients. Recently, places like Knoxville or Boise are getting some agency heat. What is it about Milwaukee that needs to be known by the bigger players?

Overlooked, yes, I think the Milwaukee market can be. And here's why for clients that could be a mistake. We have superb talent in the Milwaukee market, which bring exceptional skill paired with a taste level that isn't over-zealous. It's a stunning combination. It's like a living room that looks as gorgeous as it is comfortable. The craftsmanship that comes out of this market is solid and beautiful, all while being accessible (translation, its street value isn't going to break your bank). Agencies here offer progressive work/life benefits that are unbeatable and industry-leading. If you know anyone here, you know that the Midwestern work ethic is real – we work with unwavering commitment, all in pursuit of incredible campaigns, experiences, and design. And we're known to have a helluva a lot of fun along the way.

We won't sugarcoat it; it seems that too many creative leaders in the experiential industry are men. More succinctly, white middle-aged men. You are not. Do you find our industry is behind the times in DEI efforts?

The game has finally started to change, and it's about damn time. We're making progress because the truth is, the future is female, Black, nonbinary, Hispanic, and more.

When I started in my role as a CD, then ECD, I was in "the 6%." That means that industry-wide 94% of my counterparts were male and likely white and even more likely middle-aged. Part of that achievement felt good, knowing I'd made it and cut through all the tape. But an even more significant part of that didn't feel good yet; the progress wasn't enough. Today that industry number hovers around 30%. As with most industries, it's still not an even playing field for women, and even worse for Black or Hispanic or Asian women. For the last 10 years, I

along with countless leaders, have been intentionally pushing towards continuous change in this space - working to elevate the women around us, share what we've learned, to grow our future. Having a diverse team brings perspective to the mix that's critically needed. This is not a discredit to the amazing male peers I've worked with over the years; it's just time to come to the table together. But there is one to be clear about - it's not exclusively on women's shoulders to lead this change.

The good news is, our industry is evolving - and I personally believe we're leading the path, leading the protest, leading the change we need. You see, as communication experts and creatives, we possess unique superpowers. We can use language and design, which can be universal, to impact and create this change. And that gift we have - well, it's time to give it back. But let me be clear - the industry only changes if EACH of us does. Small steps, positive micro actions, words with humanity at the core. We all have the responsibility to contribute to the change we desperately need to continue to see.



And today, I'm proud to work for GMR and am gratified by our efforts so far and our work has only begun. Our agency intentionally leads DEI efforts with Aliah Berman, GMR's Chief Diversity Officer, at the helm. Aliah is one of the best leaders I've ever had the pleasure to meet, let alone call a peer and work alongside. GMR has evolved. We're not perfect, but our future is certainly brighter. We get better every day.

Our leaders realize the importance of DEI and come to our teams with open, honest, exceptionally encouraging efforts. We believe it's not only our right but also our responsibility to break down the walls of social injustice and discrimination - to make the playing fields level and create an open environment for all. We're committed, we're changing, we're growing, and that mentality and action makes everyone better. Maybe it's the 'futurist' in me, but I see a better world in our future, and I couldn't be prouder to play a role in that.



THREE QUESTIONS: GALEN MCKAMY

Galen McKamy is pushing experiential into uncharted territory. As Executive Creative Director at [Superplastic](#), he is reshaping the physical-digital divide of synthetic celebrity, content creation, product and events.

His company represents a universe of virtual influencers who have entered partnership deals and collaborations with Fortnite, Gucci, J-Balvin, Steve Aoki, Rico Nasty, Complex, Christie's Auction House and more. Superplastic's talent reaches over 10 million engaged fans across social media.

Blending IRL and virtual, no one has entered the new experiential and content world with such love and gusto. We sat down with the maestro behind the magic.

Describe Superplastic.

Superplastic is Disney meets Supreme at a dive bar and they passionately make a love child while tripping on relatively strong acid.

[The Experientialist applauds!]

We're creating a universe of animated celebrities and each character created is placed in its own lane of pop culture that fits a niche or genre that they excel in. We are an entertainment company that owns all of our IP. We have a large in-house animation and creative team that allows us to make content at the speed of culture and make movies and TV shows without the help of major studios or giving up any IP. All of our characters are paid influencers that work with the world's best brands. We also make the best vinyl toys (IMO). Our characters actually design and collaborate with artists like OG Slick, Craola, Dalek, Ad Fuel, SEEN, Vince Staples, and more to make super limited edition product that sells out in seconds.

You were previously creative director at Kid Robot, a highly popular toy brand -- and then you became the creative lead for a massive experiential marketing group at Match Marketing. And now at Superplastic it almost seems like an amalgamation of the two, bringing pop culture characters to life in the real world but that real world is actually a hybrid of physical and digital.





Kid Robot was about product. It was about toy. It was lightly about experience and mostly about telling the stories of the artist and the reasons behind the collaboration. But the reality is it was really limited product that forces scarcity and rarity. People just want to buy it and that's that.

But what we're able to do at Superplastic is create ridiculously compelling stories and content for social media and new media marketing that's rooted in our characters lives, which are lived extremely wildly and for all to see. What makes us interesting and valuable is our creativity and the ability to tell stories that connect people to our universe.

Where does the creative authenticity lie for Superplastic?

I would say it lies top down. Paul Budnitz (CEO & Founder of Superplastic) is one of the most brilliant & creative businessmen I've met. Between our combined years of experience in pop culture, art, fashion and music we have a solid foundation. We also have amazingly creative, talented people all throughout our business.

We've also worked very hard to develop the methodology that drives the creative and our approach to storytelling. We strike a balance between content and output that we know will perform well based on A/B testing and analytics-meets insane storytelling. We scrutinize every little piece of creative that leaves our brand. If it's even slightly wack it gets gutted. If you put out wacky shit as a brand it's really hard to recover, so we're pretty dialed at all times.

Where do you see Superplastic in the metaverse?

I love this question!!! One of our major initiatives this year was defining ourselves in the NFT space. We were the first brand to drop NFTs via Nifty Gateway, very early on when the great NFT rush was happening. From there we had major collaborations with Matt Gondek, OG Slick and others where we produced NFTs that made millions of dollars. We just had a massive project with Christie's Auction House where we sold over 9,000 unique NFTs. Our characters and our model is the perfect example of a metaverse. We make digital goods that connect to physical good and experiences. We are in the process of tokenizing our world and it is now officially called "The Jankyverse." If you're on Discord go hit up the Jankyverse where you can talk directly to Janky and Guggimon (apologies in advance for what they say).



THREE QUESTIONS: AFDHEL AZIZ

The leading voice for purpose in business is an experiential marketer at heart.

The former director of experiential at Nokia and Absolut has pulled off amazing global campaigns in his career.

Can he now show the world the power and profitability of purpose as well as experience?

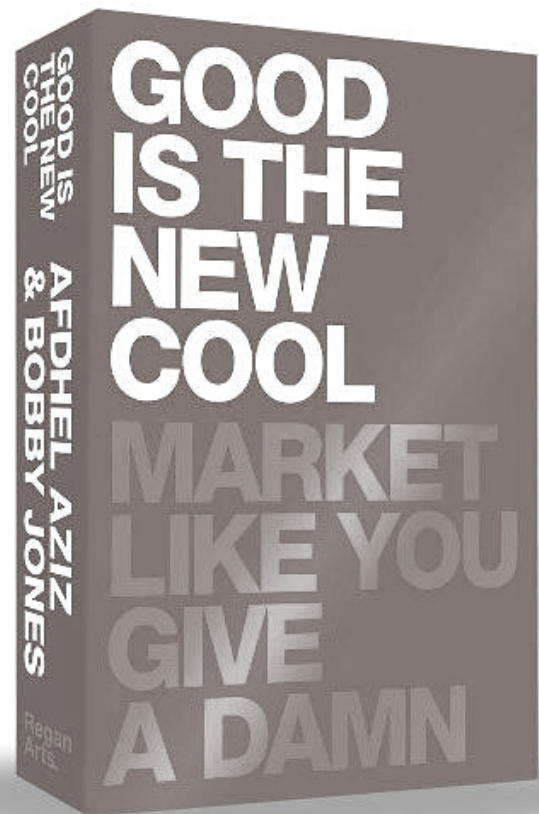
What made you shift your thinking from massive experiential campaigns to more purpose-led activities?

I think I realized the problem with all of those projects is that they didn't ladder up to something bigger than the experience itself. It wasn't cool in service of good it was just cool for cool sake. And it was fun. I had this realization a couple of weeks ago; I fulfilled my dream. I was a brown kid from Sri Lanka, who was obsessed with music and pop culture and I wanted to get inside the bubble. And I did it. I worked with amazing artists. I got a chance to experience incredible things. And so I'm in that lucky position of having fulfilled my dreams. But the strange thing that nobody tells you is what happens after you fulfilled those dreams, which is, what's next? How do you motivate yourself? How do you feel yourself? And so what I found was a new thing which was purpose and the idea of business as a force for good. What's fascinating is I'm now working on projects which combine that experience and the now putting cool in service of good.



How does experiential marketing evolve into more purpose-led and woke way of doing business?

There's always been a lot of good in experiential marketing. It's important to note that there was great things happening in the experiential space. The Paralympics is a massive global platform. If you look at sports, that charity marathons, right? That is a manifestation of doing good in sports. If you look at music and look at concerts like Live Aid and Global Citizen, there have been manifestations of people using cool in service of good. So it's not like these two things are separate. What's changing is the innovation you can bring to it. That's where we can now experiment with new models which didn't exist before. We have been massively disrupted and innovation follows disruption. What can we do to innovate in all of these different forms and go beyond the traditional kind of tired model for cause and philanthropy into building new models?



Like what? What are you seeing as the next intersection for experiential?

I'll tell you my kind of meta thesis which is this new tier of experience that is being created. And the way I kind of now dissect things is by drawing a continuum between pure experiential on one side -- which is live, physical, human contact -- and then pure digital on the other side, which is canned and it's not live. There's a digital interface, an intermediary. I think the third category is virtual. And virtual is the best of both. So, at its best it has the immediacy and the immersiveness of live but it has the scale and inclusiveness of digital. That is the art form that is being forced upon us right now. And I think this is going to remain after even we find the vaccines to COVID and as really interesting experiments pop up in different places. There's a third tier which we can we can create, because now we have the technology, we have the bandwidth, we have high resolution cameras, we have the ability to record and broadcast high definition experiences. But we also have the willingness in terms of the model of people to do it. People are saying, Yeah, I will do that \$5 yoga class online. Because I cannot physically go to my yoga class. But if the teacher is really good, and almost thinks of themselves as like a broadcaster, as opposed to just a yoga teacher, it actually reaps huge benefits. The benefit for the consumer is low barrier to entry and for the teacher it is massively expanded reach. So it's fascinating to see this new tier being formed and the people who are winning in that are the people who aren't focused on what we are losing, but rather embracing the freedom and possibilities that this new medium is giving us.

THREE QUESTIONS: NASYA KAMRAT

Nasya Kamrat is the Co-founder and CEO of [FACULTY](#), a certified women-owned spatial storytelling agency that creates human-centric experiences for global brands. As an award-winning creative strategist, she has been creating content that spans traditional, interactive, experiential and digital media for nearly 20 years. Nasya always searches for unique ways to create an authentic experience that people can connect with, whether it's in real life or online.

She recently founded [Komuna](#), a cooperative of independent BIPOC, women and LGBTQ+ led agencies. And she is a founding member of the [World Experience Organization](#). In short, she is a brilliant, intentional and future-facing leader in the Experience Economy.

As someone who is an early pioneer in experience-based marketing, what do you see as some fundamental shifts that are occurring in our industry?

Everything's changing all the time, right? But the pandemic has accelerated digital transformation and confirmed what we already knew - that the future is digital. And, simultaneously, that digital experiences alone will never be enough to satisfy our humanity. Hybrid models are already becoming standard practice for offices, and I think that this hybrid sentiment will appear more and more within experiential marketing. The intersection of two very distinct worlds, the blending of URL and IRL, will become stronger and more palpable as we seek to create experiences that are both accessible and visceral.

At the same time, we're seeing a massive shift in who is doing the work. We're at a pivotal moment for workers' rights and the eternal pursuit of the work/life balance. Employees know their worth and understand the power that they wield. They will (and should) continue demanding better for themselves. I think what will really make or break entities in the experiential marketing space is how they treat their employees and nurture talent. We're witnessing historic, institutional giants topple over in favor of smaller, more agile businesses that have their finger on the pulse as to what's next.

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What's going to stay the same is our insatiable search for humanity. Our love of stories. Our desire to experience the thrill of a narrative unfurling in front of us and to see ourselves in the lives of others. Those are constants. What's truly changing is whose stories are being told and the format in which they're being expressed.

Can you give readers the "why" for Komuna, what is your dream for its success and how can people help it?

Frankly, the "why" for Komuna is that we've reached the brink. Enough is enough. Every year we're inundated with countless splashy think pieces on how to "solve" widespread and deep-rooted diversity issues, how to "save" the industry, and flimsy arguments as to why the industry as we know it is even worth saving at all.



I think a reality that many of us in the marketing space have been hesitant to face is that it's over. Some things are beyond repair. Let's close this chapter, as cleanly as one can given the inherent mess of the situation, so that we may start a new chapter. A better one.

That's the spirit of Komuna: separating from that which no longer serves us (and how well did it ever serve us, really?) so that we can create something beautiful, fruitful and collaborative in its absence. There are a lot of talented people burnt out from the endless churn and soul-crushing nature of the marketing world, and Komuna hopes to serve as creative medicine and coax some life back into those who are feeling hopeless.

Komuna is a cooperative model that centers stories and the humans telling them. It's a collection of diverse, independent agencies with unburdened agility and a collaborative spirit. Our goal is to serve as an example for what's to come - effectively creating an industry free from the pointless obstacles that get in the way of delivering good, efficient work. All we want is to do good work and not kill ourselves or lose our sanity in the process. We want to reinfuse our work with the life it's been lacking.

Folks can help in a variety of ways - boost our message on social media, join the conversation surrounding the pitfalls of traditional agency life, apply to be part of the Komuna network. If you're working on the brand side, think about your own organization. Ask yourselves whether the work that is being done by a traditional agency, and how it's being done, still works for your brand in this pivotal moment in time. Ultimately, if we all make noise where we can, with what we have, we can keep this great ball rolling toward our inevitable (and brighter) future.

If you were to mind-read clients for a minute, what do you think they are now expecting from experience-led marketing agencies?

On the client side, I think they are realizing just how important it is to truly connect with the humans who are engaging with their brand. And I'm not talking about the number of impressions or likes. I'm talking about creating connected experiences that actually unite people. I'm talking about blending the analog with the digital in order to leave an emotional imprint. I'm talking about experiences that have the power to transform consumers into ambassadors because they finally feel seen. The brands and agencies who are going to win in this moment are the ones who are thinking about their consumers as people, not just personas.

THREE QUESTIONS: GEOFF RENAUD

Geoff Renaud is an unstoppable force. A multi-agency co-founder ([Invisible North & Noun](#), his two latest). He is an early innovator in Web3 and blockchain -- counting the likes of FTX, Ledger, Solana, Cyber and MetaPlex as clients -- and is a special projects guru at Coachella and a partner in SS Coachella.

Alongside his jump into the Web3 ecosystem, his expertise in the Experience Economy is vast. He was founder of Radar Entertainment and was an early co-founder of Magentic, two multinational shops that excelled at experiential marketing, large scale activations, live music and sponsored spaces. The list of award-winning campaigns would be too long to type out...so we at The Experientialists didn't. We have other stuff to do.

You've been working with blockchain, crypto and NFTs long before the hype began. What are some challenges you've encountered working with Web3 companies? And how do you see agencies responding? (Okay, that's two questions.)

I have more experience working with founding teams and I think that they share a lot of the same challenges: early communities, early companies with founders that have great tech and big ideas. You're talking about people that are coming out of Ivy League schools that are super-sharp, but they don't have branding experience, they don't have marketing experience. You have a lot of tech-forward, and brand-backward, projects.

And agencies have a barrier to entry into Web3. In the vernacular, or the language that you have to learn to be able to engage and understand all the nuances of Web3...let's just say there's a lack of people in agencies who are Web3 fluent.

There are really great agencies that can help launch Web3 projects like Serotonin and a couple of others that have been around a long time that help with growth hacking, influencer seeding and PR. But there are not a lot of brand-building agencies that are working on everything from visual identity to the tactics that we do at Invisible North like experiential or out-of-home or partnerships and content. You just didn't have a lot of people playing in that space.

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But we'll start to see agencies that may not be Web3-fluent but are Web3-savvy as NF Ts become more part of pop culture and people start actually engaging with the metaverse in a meaningful way. You have smart people on the marketing end that can pick up a new language or pick up a new skill, and this is happening pretty fast. But I don't see a lot of agencies engaging with native crypto brands. A lot of agencies are taking their brands into Web3 environments, but they are not picking up Web3 clients. Which is where I think Invisible North differs. We are not just box-checking the expected things. Our clients are Web3 leaders like Coinbase, FTX, Ledger, Solana and Avalanche. And we are working on their brand marketing, not just the typical Web3 growth-hacking stuff. And we're advising a lot of early-stage clients too -- working with a lot of founders on initial brand positioning, identity, website and community strategy. We help them build internal organizations and bring in external partners and vendor ecosystems. Which is a lot different from what other agencies are bringing to Web3.



Do Web3 projects need to find an agency that understands Web3 or can a traditional agency handle it?

It's imperative to know Web3. Imagine working with a spirits brand and not understanding liquor laws in every state. When we started hiring people eight or nine months ago, we were looking for natives and enthusiasts that had a base level of fluency.

There are some people that really know their stuff, but there's a big difference between understanding your two or three key metaverse environments and having a list of favorite NFT projects to really understanding Web3 holistically, understanding how the blockchain works, understanding the advantages to the different base layers and what sort of systems they run on, what sort of ecosystems projects are being built on, understanding where NFT utility is going, et cetera.

The beauty of working in Web3 is the amount of money that's already in the space, and the amount of money that's coming into the space means that there are well-capitalized businesses that are coming in. So your opportunity pipeline will always be ahead of your talent pipeline. The hard work is not in business development; the hard work is picking the right projects to work on and staffing them. The biggest challenge is building that team.

How are brands responding?

For the next couple years, the brands that are going to win in Web3 are the brands that are going to recognize that their audiences are moving into Web3-native environments, and they're going to find ways to engage them meaningfully and tap in and support communities or build their own communities and be part of communities. I think the brands that think that they're just going to do an NFT drop or show up in a metaverse environment and use it as a quick-hit tactic....we get a lot of calls for that and we've had we pass on most of it. A lot of brands are scared off by the onboarding elements of Web3 and especially the regulatory uncertainties that come with decentralized environments.

The brands that want to go in and do anything meaningful in decentralized environments....there's still a huge onramp barrier to doing that, especially from a regulatory perspective. There's still a lot of pending legislation and everything can change with a stroke of the pen. And if you are a brand that makes a lot of noise in Web3 and hyper-associates itself with a legal gray area, then it has a target on its back. That's why we have a stable of compliance experts and attorneys and accountants to make sure that any work we do with our Web3 clients is bulletproof. And that's something that isn't talked a lot about in the agency world. But you have securities concerns and tax concerns and jurisdiction concerns that are in flux. And these are big concerns for brands.

THREE QUESTIONS: JESSICA QUINEY

As GPJ A/NZ's new Director of Strategy, Jess sets a new tone as a leader. She made sense of the chaos of 2020 by not only educating her colleagues and clients about the value of creative strategy, but also continuously expanding the strategy offering and growing her department.

As an industry leader, she regularly contributes to research and publishes thought leadership pieces; last year, she co-authored an industry-leading report, exploring the challenges and obstacles that lie ahead in a post COVID-19 world. She's been named a young gun, Campaign Asia's Strategic/Brand Planner of the Year 2019 (A/NZ) and was recently shortlisted in B&T's soon to be announced Best of the Best Awards 2021.

You are one of the top strategists in Australia. What's your secret sauce?

Being curious is a prerequisite for most strategists. I am relentlessly so.

A constant desire to understand "why?" drives me to unpack thorny business challenges, unearth surprising and unexpected insights, and develop creative springboards that inspire ideation. Creative ideas without strategic foundations are simply window-dressing, but ideas born from an understanding of 'the why' are game-changing.

But my favorite question is actually "why not?". As a strategist, my role is to set my team up for success with robust strategic thinking, but to also be a sounding board, a devil's advocate, and a champion of the creative idea throughout the project.

Many experiential agencies give short-shrift to strategy and often just default to tactical executions (trucks, tents, pop-ups, street teams, etc.). Why do you think that is?

The roots of many experiential agencies lie in the world of event production. Ask their employees - and their day-to-day clients - what they do and you'll often hear



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We need to shift perception among talent at experiential agencies. Regardless of your role, the experiences we deliver are one of the most powerful tools in the marketing mix.

the words: "event professional." And herein lies the problem.

People who work for experiential agencies are 'marketers' but many don't identify with this term. These self-constructed limits allow tactical, production-led thinking to remain front and center.

We need to shift perception among talent at experiential agencies. Regardless of your role, the experiences we deliver are one of the most powerful tools in the marketing mix. Their ability to foster human connection, which in turn prompts action, is unparalleled.

Building on this foundation, the importance of strategy - a clear sense of what success looks like, coupled with interesting insights about the audience that we need to inspire to think, feel, or do something - is a no brainer.

Agencies are on a hiring spree. What character traits or characteristics do you look for in finding great strategists in the experiential space?

Good strategists are skilled storytellers who possess the ability to make the incredibly complex feel simple. The great strategists are the ones who can communicate this to different audiences and are able to express human truths in a way that is universally accessible, and yet still surprising and unexpected.

Personally, I think the best strategists are empathetic, highly logical, creative, and process-driven, all wrapped up in one.



FIVE QUESTIONS: BRETT HYMAN

Whereas many in the experiential marketing are playing checkers, Brett Hyman is moving chess pieces around the board. As the president and CEO of [NVE Experience Agency](#), he is on a mission to create the first "holding company" of experiential agencies. He's acquired the culture content brand [The Future Party](#), launched [Treehouse Fabrication & Scenic](#) and spun out a digital/interactive shop called [Cognition](#). We can see the chess pieces lining up.

The Experientialists sat down with Brett over Zoom for a wide-ranging conversation about disrupting old models, building an entirely new way of looking at experiential marketing and his roots in the industry. The full interview is on The Expers Discord, so check it out!

What is your philosophy for experiential and NVE?

I think that the concept of experiential marketing has been going through its own evolution over the past 20 or 30 years. I always say the mother and father, the Adam and Eve, of experiential were the auto show and in-bar liquor sampling. That started it all. You go to a bar and someone is like "try my shots" or you go to an auto show, you see a booth and you have a brand ambassador hawking something. I think that imprinted the format of what experiential meant for a very long time to a lot of people. So the DNA of experiential was this kind of physical real world in a confined space with one-to-one interaction.

The NVE story is just about the timing of when we showed up. I loved throwing parties in college so I came through from the perspective of hospitality and guest experience. You know, making that amazing memorable moment for people.

And then I backed that into thinking about how experiences can really make an impact and transform somebody's opinion of a brand or sentiment about a brand or purchase, intent or loyalty, etc. I started to push experiential to mean more than these confined activations by using emerging technology and continually asking myself: "how are we going to solve a problem or how are we going to make this experience



actually deliver a result and really make people into passionate fans of a brand?" And I realized that it's a lot more than that interaction.

There is a lot more under the hood in the world of experience than just that moment. There is what leads up to that moment. There's the context of that moment. There's the content of that moment. There is the culture. There are so many more ingredients that will shape whether or not that moment will be impactful. How can that moment lead to transformation, to change someone forever? It takes a more integrated, more holistic, more culturally focused approach to experiential that is far more than an activation or an execution.



What does transformation start to mean for you or what's the filter through which NVE looks at a challenge or an experience that needs to be provided?

I'll say it like this: transformational to me is both co-personal and co-creative experiences where the brand and the consumer both feel that they affect the outcome. The person experiencing it feels that they have influence over the world that they're operating in, and that could be because they're connected to the story in a different way. It could be because it's resonating or opening up their minds that fosters a better sense of belonging.

One big area we're very focused on is inclusiveness, and what does it actually mean to have an inclusive experience. Think of the experiences that are happening at SXSW where it's \$2000 a night for a hotel room. The people that can afford to go to that experience are probably not the full spectrum of fans for XYZ brand that's showing up there, so how do we make those experiences more accessible?

So is the notion of an “experiential agency” changing?

I don't think brands have fully recognized what they want and where experiential agencies fit in. One reason is that experiential means different things to different brands and to different agencies. You might be talking to an “experiential agency” and they really are a production or execution business or a tradeshow booth builder. Or the experiential agency may be a more creative, more digital, not so executional business.

And then you've got NVE, which represents just a massive spectrum of capabilities that include integrated marketing, experiential virtual experience, live production, integrated brand partnership management, interactive production, influencer and creator marketing and a content property like The Future Party, which has community-building and media capabilities. But we all call ourselves experiential companies. We're not all the same and I think it's confusing for brands to figure out who they should engage.

You bring up an amazing point in that, unless there's a clear-cut vernacular or definition of what an experiential agency is, it's hard to integrate fully into the IAT. How do you get a CMO or a senior brand manager to look at it beyond just vendor production, execution role, but more as an integral part of a brand's strategy?

We're extremely thankful that Diageo has been given us that opportunity on a whole bunch of brands in our portfolio

and we're part of the IAT and love working with other agencies. A lot of the work that we put out for Diageo -- for Ciroc, Kettle One, Tanqueray, Buchanan's, etc. -- is really that long-term, big-picture thinking about the multicultural perspective in particular. That's one core area of expertise that we're really invested in. But also related trade relationships and all sorts of different partnerships that we manage, etc.

But you're right, it's complicated to get brands to want to make the investment to keep that experiential agency around to do those things. So here are the steps that I have taken. First of all, I've begun preaching that experiential is "always on" and they have to understand that. And we've shifted away from even calling ourselves an experiential agency. We're really a brand experience agency, which also isn't necessarily a new term, but I do think that it gets a little step away from being treated like a production vendor.



I go back to saying [to clients], you have a PR agency that's on retainer that is ensuring that the image and content the brand puts out aligns with its narrative, but who's ensuring that the actions of the brand are always aligning with its narrative?

How is a brand showing up in the world and who is responsible for making sure that every action that the brand performs is aligned to their values and represents the culture and norms of that brand? Well, that should be our job. So we are evolving what used to be projects into longer-living relationships that sit between a project relationship and an AOR relationship where we are "always on" informally, but they are paying us in between. Or a relationship where we're where the campaign doesn't have an end date and we are just continuing to iterate. And we have several retainers that are paying for our cultural insights.

The Future Party is a cultural engine so you can engage NVE to be delivering you deep knowledge on how people are shaping culture and how the brand should show up. The Future Party provides a deeper understanding of who the consumer is and how do we gather that data on the cultural insight to show up authentically

Brands can get in big trouble if they don't know how to show up in big cultural moments, so The Future Party helps us shape that narrative and make sure that you know we can help.

How is Web3 starting to look like to you from the perspective of brand experience? What are you thinking about and what excites you about it?

In the end of 2020, we opened up a practice called Cognition, which is an interactive studio that operates under NVE but can also do work for other agencies. It is not necessarily completely Web3, but works with IRL experiences to create interactive and digital version of them -- whether it's AR lenses or unique gamified technology -- that are crafted on triggering the same feeling as what we would have done in real life but can be distributed and meet people wherever they are in the world, and obviously allows us to scale experiential. Now we can craft experiences that we can distribute to anybody with very creative interactive experiences.

But until there is a shared ecosystem, a meta-place that people go to,...I don't think you're going to see as many brands hire agencies like us to just build them these metaworlds. And to get into Roblox or Fortnite requires huge brand deals that most brands are not going to do yet. So I'm waiting for that shared world-building and ubiquity to happen before I'm focused on that.

However, blockchain and NFT and those types of Web3 components are very relevant. The biggest difference between Web2 and Web3 is the concept of ownership. If we tokenize an experience in a certain way or if we engage blockchain technology, the person experiencing it can have ownership in the experience in some way. They can be a member of the experience and owner of the experience. They can affect the outcome of the experience. And you can tokenize that relationship between the consumer and the brand. Now an experience can be passed out. It can be given. It can be sold or traded for access to a different experience. It could be rented. For consumer-facing experiences, we're going to be able to tokenize ownership and that will be truly exciting.

THREE QUESTIONS: PAUL AARON

Co-Founder & CEO, Attention

Paul Aaron is the quintessential creative technologist. Always at the crux of culture and technology, he's worked with some of the best in the industry including the past two of Ad Age's 'Agency of the Decade' and dozens of iconic brands from Coca-Cola to Google.

His latest venture is in AI. He's co-founded Attention, a marketing intelligence company that uses recent advances in AI and Data Science to help marketing teams discover new insights, automate workflows, and improve customer experiences.

What does Addition do and what's the secret sauce?

Addition helps teams accomplish incredible things with AI by training the latest models to work on your data, brand, and business. This approach enables us to do things with generative AI that go well beyond what you can do with AI models out of the box, such as synthesizing research, generating ideas and content in a brand's voice, or having an AI that can engage with customers as an expert on your products and services.

My co-founder and I combine decades of experience in advertising and marketing with decades of experience in AI and Silicon Valley. This has enabled us to approach AI from a marketer-centric angle while also being able to innovate and develop new use cases.

What would you say to an agency CEO or brand CMO who is hearing all this news about AI and talent replacement?

We've seen this happen before with other disruptive technologies, and there are always two sides to the coin. If you look back at the early web for example, there was a lot of concern that it would make things like journalism obsolete.



The changes brought by web technology were certainly disruptive. Many people lost their jobs and many news organizations from that era no longer exist. But these changes also forced many journalists and their employers to come up with new ways of doing their jobs. The net result is that journalism is more accessible and engaging than it was before the web. Generative AI will do similar things to marketing, advertising, sales, and customer service. It will disrupt these industries, while also making it easier to create content and engage consumers. If you're a CEO or CMO, it's in your interest to familiarize your organizations with the AI models and tools quickly so you can adapt and stay ahead of the curve.

"If you're a CEO or CMO, it's in your interest to familiarize your organizations with the AI models and tools quickly so you can adapt and stay ahead of the curve."

What do you see in a year's time for AI adoption for agencies and brands?

I think there are a few areas where AI is going to make an impact this year. One area will be from the bottom up, with individuals and increasingly teams and enterprises using AI to improve repetitive tasks related to research, creativity, and content creation.

Another area will be more top-down, with big brands and agencies looking to use AI to do new things that have never been done before and, therefore, can garner eyeballs and engage customers in new ways.

I think these two forces will have a complementary role in accelerating AI's adoption. And at the same time, the capabilities will continue to evolve rapidly, pushing into generative video and multi-modal models, bringing us closer to artificial general intelligence. So, that is to say: adoption will increase while the use cases simultaneously expand.

AI-Self Portraits: Training Stable Diffusion On Myself

A couple of weeks ago, someone asked me for a headshot for a speaking engagement. I didn't have one – at least not one that was recent – so I considered my options. Could I use AI to generate my new headshot?

AI image generation models like [DALLE-2](#) and Stable Diffusion have consumed an incredible amount of images from the web. But unless you're internet famous, these AI models will struggle to generate accurate pictures of you.

To get around this, researchers have learned how to train image models on new visual concepts. This technique is generally referred to as "Dream Booth." It was first published in a [research paper from Google](#) in August and has since been replicated by open-source developers using Stable Diffusion.

To get started we provide the model with a few dozen images of me, which we teach it to associate with a random keyword.

Once trained, the model can generate new images of me whenever we prompt it with my unique keyword. I can combine this keyword with a wide range of prompts enabling me to explore various styles.

Beyond solving my headshot problem, a wide range of commercial use cases will benefit from this technology as it continues to improve. For example:

- **Automotive companies that spend millions on 3D Renders may find more flexibility and creative possibilities training AI models to understand their new lineup of cars.**
- **Advertisers could generate personalized ads that show me products in the situations most likely to appeal to me.**
- **Future versions of this technology could be used to generate photo-realistic avatars of me within virtual environments like gaming and VR**

THREE QUESTIONS: BLAKE HERDER

Blake heads up sales and client services for [ATN Event Staffing](#) and [ATN Street Media](#). For more than 18 years, ATN Event Staffing has provided best-in-class custom staffing solutions for experiential marketing activations, promotional events, trade shows, corporate events and more.

Blake is also the voice behind the [Be Herd Podcast](#), which is dedicated to shedding light on work challenges, promoting good people, offering helpful tips and resources for staffing and deploying experiential marketing campaigns. Our favorite is the Good People Spotlight segment, featuring experiential and event pros who are "open to work" due to job loss during COVID. It's this kind of "give a shit" ethic that we applaud at The Experientialists!

Brand ambassadors have long been a "must have" for physical brand activations. How has the Zoom era changed the way that brand ambassadors are being used? Is the role evolving?

It's been a roller coaster of a ride. The Zoom era virtually killed the traditional brand ambassador role for those first few months of the pandemic. Unfortunately, there wasn't much if any demand for brand ambassadors in virtual settings. But the role has certainly adapted and evolved to meet the ever-changing needs of the industry.

For example, in July of 2020, when modified in-person activations started appearing, we had brand ambassadors working on contactless sampling programs, drive-thru and drive-in events, and smaller, grassroots activations. Then as more in-person events starting taking place, there was (and still is) a demand for brand ambassadors to also serve as safety ambassadors to assist with temperature checks, monitoring social distancing measures, enforcing mask-wearing where required, and going above and beyond to provide a safe and healthy experience. Over the past few months, the demand for brand ambassadors for in-person activations has been extremely high, and as hybrid



events take center stage for large-scale conferences and events, we expect to see the role evolve to meet those needs. As the industry evolves, the BA role evolves along with it.

Presumably, the summer months had opened up the floodgates for live activations and getting back out there. Are you seeing the recent news about Delta variant affecting clients' plans for the back-half of this year and into next?

We have been extremely busy this summer, and even with the news surrounding the Delta variant, we are still seeing an influx of requests for activations this fall and even into the early winter months. We have had a couple of clients cancel larger-scale, indoor events in August, but we are hopeful that these are far and few between.

I think it's important to note that the industry has ridden this wave for a year and a half, and during that time, we've learned that events, both large and small, can be executed safely as long as the proper precautionary measures are taken. That, coupled with the fact that we now have more resources available (accessible testing, rapid on-site testing, vaccinations/proof of vaccination) to execute large-scale events safely, seems to be enough to keep the momentum moving forward - Lollapalooza is a prime example.

The news is full of reports that there are more jobs available than people willing to take them. Have you found the way you recruit people to have changed and what is ATN doing to find more staffing resources?



When you think of the types of businesses that are suffering from staffing shortages, they are starting over from scratch and don't have the same massive networks and resources that we have to recruit from. Our years of experience in sourcing and recruiting staff under extreme pressure and/or conditions gives us an advantage and we're really targeting a niche group of people who do this type of work.

We went into the pandemic with a database of 370K+ staff nationwide and we continued to recruit and add to that throughout the pandemic to be fully prepared for the return of live events and that has served us well so far.

2020 also gave us a chance to take a step back and really dig in to see where we could make improvements to our methodology and how to better utilize our internal systems. We've made quite a few changes, and as a result, our recruiting and hiring processes are much more efficient.

THREE QUESTIONS: SCOTT BURNS

Scott Burns is SVP, Head of Creative at [George P. Johnson](#), one of the largest and most-respected event and experiential marketing agencies in the world with 30 offices around the globe. GPJ, as it is known, is part of the [Project Worldwide](#) agency network, an independent global network of wholly owned agencies with more than 2,000 full time employees. Scott is also a thoughtful and empathetic leader that serves both his clients and people with integrity, humanity and respect. Here are his thoughts for us.

As the creative leader at a shop that has delivered physical experiences for over 100 years, how has getting smart fast around virtual experiences affected the agency and the people in it?

Everything changed, and nothing changed. As events cancelled and we dove into the virtual space we were forced to recalibrate our teams and approach, but not necessarily our thinking. Overnight we pushed and shifted into UI and UX design, content creation, interactive production and broadcast. But because integrating digital engagements into our experience design has been happening for the last 10 years, it wasn't as big of a lift as one might expect.

Our biggest advantage, and stabilizer, has been our continued focus on experience. While virtual, digital and even advanced technologies like XR stages and immersive worlds are the mediums we now work in, our ability to hold the line with our teams and our clients to prioritize basic human needs for engagement and connection has served us well.

And as you know, the people make the work. We're blessed with great people who have embraced and exceeded in roles that didn't exist 12 months ago. It's been amazing to watch and be a part of.





Rather than race to the middle with something less than ideal, we learned and listened - then created something we feel fills a void for brands, marketers and their customers.

What are you trying to do with Ospre? What is its “why?”

There was a gap in the market for a virtual platform truly designed for experience. Most were merely a collection of feature-sets to choose from. So rather than race to the middle with something less than ideal, we learned and listened - then we created something we feel fills a void for brands, marketers and their customers. We needed something that could feel like a natural extension of a brand's digital ecosystem but was also simple and elegant enough to consistently deliver on the experience promise to the consumer. So we created Ospre.

That said, it didn't come from out of the blue. We've been collaborating with our sister-agency Wondersauce on platforms for amplifying experiences for some time. And there are still reasons to go with more bespoke solutions. But the collective experience of both agencies made this a no-brainer and gives our clients a brand-forward option to consider when discussing platforms.

What keeps you up at night?

Other than Everton's push to the Champions League? Ha! I'd say what keeps me up at night is what wakes me up in the morning: opportunity. There has never been a better time for any industry to redefine itself. Complacency is an issue. Events are coming back. Big events. And I've sensed a "let's be ready" mood around the industry for the last month. Can't have it. We need to go out and grab it.

We have the opportunity to define what these events and experiences will be and what they will mean. We can rewrite the rules of engagement. We can integrate teams, services, departments - whatever - in ways that work in service of the idea and the brand, not the space allocation or timeline. We can get out of whatever boxes we feel we've been in and lead in ways we've never been able to.

Listen, 2020 was terrible. I love having fun in my job and it was hard to find fun. But if you allow yourself to peek over the horizon, there is a world of opportunity to create, design and imagine like never before. And that's exciting.



THREE QUESTIONS: TERESA CESARIO

Teresa Cesario is Channel and Shopper Marketing Manager of Prestige at Pernod Ricard, which includes a portfolio of 55 high-end brands. She has been instrumental at launching and growing Absolut Elyx into an influencer powerhouse brand and has been a long-serving director of advocacy, celebrity and ambassador programs for Pernod, Bacardi and Southern Wine & Spirits. Her spirits marketing experience spans the gamut of experiential activations, field activations, e-commerce, influencer and commercial programs.

Before your current role you were the US Brand Activation Manager for Absolut Elyx, which grew considerably under your stewardship. What's changing?

Absolut Elyx operated as an incubation brand, which means that we had our own CEO, CMO and CFO and we were able to be extremely agile and make quick decisions based on the market's immediate needs. And we were less concerned about the longevity of the brand as I was to develop a brand that had fame associated with it. And it was doing great until COVID hit and the on-premise shut down. And that was a big learning opportunity for us because we were 90 percent on-premise and 10 percent off-premise. And if we learned anything from the pandemic, it was the need to diversify the different areas of business that we were in.

So when we pivoted during COVID, as everybody did, we went to 70 percent off-premise in e-commerce. But we were a brand that was being built in the on-premise and so we lost some momentum. The brand is now reconceptualizing. I'm still working with the brand because it falls into our luxury stock. Thank God it's my little baby.

But it is a time for us to realize that the way we are going to build brands in the future is forever changed because customers have changed.



“

The spirits industry has always kind of been the Wild West of marketing. We were able to play and be quick shooters based on opportunities. And now I think we're getting smarter.

Our data shows that 26 percent of all consumers intend on continuing their home entertainment patterns post-pandemic. So we've got more than a quarter of individuals that don't intend on returning to bars in the same frequency as they did in the past. However, as markets become open, we see 33 percent of consumers in the past two months saying that they will spend just as much in bars and restaurants, if not more, than they did pre-pandemic. So you've got some strong stats of people that when they're returning to normalcy, they're going to be spending, if not spending more, in the on-premise. But then you still have another bank of individuals that fully intend on keeping these new habits that they've created over the past 12 months. I think this is such an interesting dynamic because our habits have shifted so dramatically.

The trope for spirits brands has been that they are built in the on-premise. Now there's a shift to the off-premise. How do you square that? Is it a matter of budgets shifting or is it a of reconfiguring the way that spirits brand-building has been done so far?

I think that that is something that's being learned as we continue to evolve. We have a new CEO at Pernod that came from Frito-Lay and so we've adopted some behaviors from a traditional CPG company. And I think it's really been helpful because our plans are built on insights and analytics rather than good-old-fashioned experience and know-how thinking. In the past, we've operated as most spirits brands companies do: the people in the field see patterns firsthand and then modify brand plans to fit their base of accounts, whether it's fine dining, casual dining bars, restaurants or mixology bars.

Now we're going to more factual-based brand building. Pernod has done a lot of research during COVID to identify different behavioral tendencies for consumers and then identified the brands that fit within those behavioral tendencies. So whether ready-to-impress occasions, girls night out or dads happy hour, we can categorize our brands into these different key points of behavior and then build plans based around those occasions.



We've surveyed between 50,000 and 70,000 consumers per each brand and it's the most that our company has ever done that I know of since I've been here for the past seven years. So it's really going to be interesting in these next 24 months to see how these brands are received as our marketing techniques are radically changed from what we've done in the past.



The Target shopper shops much different than the Walmart shopper shops. And then the independent liquor shopper shops much differently than the grocery store shopper shops. And it's about having every point in the journey of this shopper to be a point of conversion. So the real question is how do we make sure that at these points of conversion we are offering the right brands at the right time?

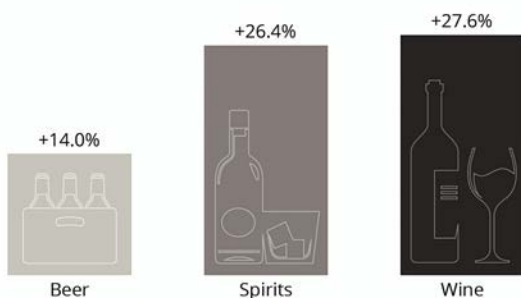
And most importantly is the right occasions. People shop brands based on occasions. So then how do we continue to expand and convert people from their day-to-day occasions into our brands. So it's meeting them at the point of a conversion within their ecosystems, like we need to understand our customers better so that we can adapt our brands to their needs and specific occasions.

Let's not forget about e-commerce. 76 percent of people are more inclined to purchase alcohol from an e-commerce site than they were in 2019. So, we've literally seen more than 75 percent adoption rate in the average consumer of their ability to purchase spirits in the e-commerce space.

It feels like the pandemic has really accelerated the discipline of marketing in the spirits industry. It's been resistant to change for a long time, and within a year, it really changed and became a lot more nuanced. It grew up.

Alcohol Sales Rise as Americans Brace for Lockdown

Year-over-year dollar sales growth of alcoholic beverages in the U.S. in the week ended Mar. 14, 2020*



* off-premise sales excl. sales in bars, restaurants, taprooms and tasting rooms
Source: Nielsen



statista

The spirits industry has always kind of been the Wild West of marketing. We were able to play and be quick shooters based on opportunities. And now I think we're getting smarter. And I think also one of the biggest things to change is so often spirit brands have been looked at as the scapegoat of sponsorships for so many things. Since the pandemic has happened, brands are more closely investigating the ROI on some of these sponsorship investments. We are asking does this really make an impact or is it a nice-to-have?

You'll see brands getting a lot more selective on where they associate their names and their brands with and if the brand's integrity is being upheld through their global plans. If hypothetically one of our brands always sponsored the Chicago Cubs but our global focus is music, we're not going to do that sponsorship.

THREE QUESTIONS: JOHN SOLOMON

CMO, Therabody

John Solomon is an engineer-turned-marketer who is behind the stratospheric rise of Beats by Dre -- which he helmed while at Apple. His work for that brand caught the attention of wellness super-brand Therabody, where he has led its rapid rise in prominence and sales.

Therabody, the maker of the Theragun hand-held massage device, is a cult favorite among athletes and celebrities like Kevin Hart and Karlie Kloss. It has recently launched eight new products including smart goggles to help relieve facial tension and headaches, a sound therapy bed as well as a new mini Theragun at a more accessible price-point.

How does Therabody approach experience marketing?

Experience is hugely important. What's different from other places I've been is the Therabody brand is something for your body. This is something that's very personal and intimate. The big part of the "why" of this product is trying it. If I were to take a \$50 knockoff on Amazon and you actually experience the difference, you would instantly understand my brand.

When we are the category creator and leader, and others are standing on our shoulders, I think it's even more important now that we drive trial. And for us a key metric of that trial is to show up in key cultural moments like Art Basel, Coachella, F1 and Fashion Week. We want to show how our products can help power culture creators like artists, athletes, fashion designers, dancers. We want to be their recovery partner. So it's important to show up where they are.

We also want to take experience into retail. We just launched a huge project at Best Buy where we put 43 Therabody shops in their stores for people to try our products. You can sit in our lounge within Best Buy and experience them firsthand. We see a huge impact on sales when people try us. So we try to think across the entire customer journey and create experiences throughout, like driving awareness at cultural events and all the way down to the retail environment. And now we are looking into doing things in virtual environments or with augmented reality. How can you



use these environments to educate people and talk them through the process and help them with their recovery?

Trial is hugely important to us. The statistics prove it. We know, for instance, that 70% of people will buy one of our products after trying it. And now that people want to get out there again and experience new things like travel, we are now thinking how we show up in those moments where people are actively getting out of their house. We've been in a big initiative this year to show up in more places and spaces.



For the record, this is not John Solomon.

Participating in experiences and creating your own by empowering culture must also open up new innovations and partnerships...

100%. From day one, the founder was in front of doctors, athletes, coaches and trainers to get feedback on the Theragun. When we were at Fashion Week this year, we launched a number of new products [like the TheraFace Pro] and we took Karlie Kloss behind the scenes to show her new, unreleased products and she loved some and didn't love others and gave us lots of feedback. We are constantly out there talking to people - obviously consumers and fans - but even more so from people who are on the bleeding edge. And we can take input from the bleeding edge to then bring the products into mass adoption and democratize the technology so that it is accessible to the masses.

It's really cool that you say that we're empowering the culture. If you watch the Billie Eilish documentary, she talks about her feet when she's touring and how much they hurt and she uses the Theragun. Or if you think about producers or modern musicians sitting behind the boards or chefs who are always on their feet, we are supporting them. It's an exciting new space for us, beyond just sports, performance and recovery. Being at these experiences and events lets us enter into a broader conversation and being able to impact a lot more people.

How are you thinking about loyalty and community for your brands?

We've invested a lot in our app and our content. We are creating exclusive content for our products and available only if you own one of our products. The app keeps people engaged and it's really important for us to continue to be out there getting people to try our products.

We also have 20 dedicated retail locations now, which provides for a more immersive space. We're using these spaces for community events - like meeting Doctor Jay [founder] - and experiences. Obviously, Apple did that really well. Our spaces are where people come to gather and learn from each other. Lifetime customer value is a very important metric for us.

Ultimately, we are helping people. Our new campaign is called "Keep Moving" and our products help people move through life better. We're providing an ecosystem of products and services that help people with their movement and their recovery. We are a wellness technology company, and our community is growing. We are changing lives.

I've always liked to be in spaces where you're creating new categories. Back in the day, people didn't wear big plastic headphones around their necks; that was something that we created at Beats. From a brand standpoint, we're creating a category that doesn't necessarily exist right now. I don't think anyone is really thinking holistically about how a brand or product like ours keeps you moving, how we can help people do more of the things they love.

THREE QUESTIONS: CHRIS DOBSON

Currently the Vice President of the [Retail Design Institute](#) (Hong Kong) and the Executive Principal at [Eight](#), Dobson is a deep-thinking leader in customer experience and strategic design. As both a long-serving Managing Director of Asia at [Imagination](#) and Managing Director at [The Labs](#), his career is steeped in “what’s next” and “why now” inquisitiveness. More to the point, he is a human experience specialist and his work is seen and felt all over the world by millions of people each day.

When will the retail/event/hospitality experience become predominantly contactless-driven? Five years, 10 years, 20 years, never?

It’s a really interesting question, and one that I think has a lot of nuance to it. It comes down to how we define contactless’. The one thing that won’t change is the need for physical contact – that’s a basic human need. And that’s what it all comes back to at the end of the day – the human need, and the human value you are designing the experience to create. Because if you create human value, you create business value. Simple as that.

To me, it will be important for companies not to rush into big, expensive, but ultimately tactical decisions that could have a very long, and very costly tail. We are still in the eye of the storm, but it will pass, and while it might not feel it right now, in the context of a lifetime it will be short.



The key thing for businesses right now is to think what they can do in the short-term to reduce the risk for their customers, users or visitors and to implement that. But at the same time, use this period to relook and rethink their entire existence. The crisis for brands today isn't just capital or product-driven, it's profoundly existential.

The way I see it, the big opportunity is to rethink your business at a really profound level. How do you make money? Is it the same way as you did 20 years ago? (if the answer to that is 'yes', then you should probably change it). Who are you? WHY do you exist? What human and social value are you there to create?

Once that is done then look at the take a look at the whole customer journey, rethink the role of technology within it, and get behind it from top to bottom. Most companies are already engaged in some kind of 'transformation program' but most fall well short of this kind of really profound, existential thinking. They are just about process optimisation. It's time for businesses to get brave - in this world 'wait and see' can mean 'wait and die'.

If we look at technology in the context of most businesses lifespan (tech companies aside, obviously) it's a really recent phenomena, and one that has been a real struggle to integrate into their operational structures; it's just things bolted or spot-welded onto other things. A digital veneer for an industrial or service economy business. Another slice of bread in the loaf. A new product or function that barely speaks to other parts of the business. Another point of customer friction.

So, coming back to your question - what excites me is the idea of experiences of all kinds removing 'contact' that is defined a point of friction - basically, anything on paper can be much better handled through the better application of technology. But then, once you've removed all these points of friction, think about how to re-introduce contact. Human contact. Think about what technology you can empower your people with to have better conversations, to provide better experiences. So in this sense, I can see the nature of contact changing.

I really believe the businesses that will succeed in the future will be the ones that are best able - and brave enough - to challenge some of these sacred cows about who you are, and how you make money.

Twenty years of change have just been thrust upon you in 6 months - how are you going to respond? My hope is that it will be by businesses becoming more human in their outlook, to pivot their businesses behind that, and to design journeys and experiences that create human and social value.

Time-wise, every business will be different, but no one will get a pass. If you don't adapt, you die. It's a time of economic Darwinism.

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How is spatial design changing (if it is) to accommodate the emerging human behaviors in post-COVID interactions?

I think it is, and it definitely needs to. When I say above that businesses need to take time to rethink who they are, and how they make money, architects, design and creative firms aren't excused from that. In a lot of ways, the stakes are even higher.

These firms were – largely – established to serve a world based on broadcast media, and distribution and fulfillment through a physical location. To survive, they need to be a part of the solution, not a symptom of the problem. While smashing firms together and cost reduction is a short term fix, it's not a long-term answer. They need to take a long, hard look at themselves, and rethink how they can focus on helping their clients create human value, not just to sell shit to people.

From a design point of view, we need to understand what these physical points of distribution mean in a connected world.

Having lots of distribution points that are 'close to the customer' didn't save Blockbuster from Netflix, and it isn't going to save anyone else, whether a bank, a retailer or car dealership from companies that think and act like digital natives in their sector.

So, if we move away from a lot of the post-COVID conversations that are taking place, which are very tactical and start to look at the problem with more clarity, we quickly get to something very exciting. So yes, I do think the way we design will be influenced by COVID, but probably not in the way that a lot of people are thinking. It won't be about spacing, or reducing physical contact, it will be much more profound than that. What does a bank branch need to do when 90% of services can exist online? That's a really interesting question we're working on at the moment – and again, you probably won't be surprised to here, it comes back to human and social interaction, and human and social value creation. The need for physical space isn't gone, and it isn't broken – the way we think about it is though. That will be the biggest design change to come out of COVID

Is the glass half-empty or half-full for the experiential marketing industry as a whole?

I genuinely feel for the many, many people who have been affected by the pandemic, both personally and professionally. I'm sure it's a time of tremendous hardship for so many, but I can't help but feel a huge level of optimism for the future.

People in the experiential industry 'get' what it means to create things that delight people at a deep-human level. They understand theatre, connectivity, storytelling, technology, music....they understand budget pressure, doing new and brave things in front of people, the list is almost endless. But the key thing is, these are all tools that will be essential in the future – for brands, for architects, for design firms, for technology companies.

So while I understand many people will feel despondent, I see a bright future. While the old world, and old business models might be burning, from that comes regeneration. I don't expect, or even want it, to look like the past.

We should be looking to the future with passion – yesterday has burned, we can design a future that is better, more equitable, diverse, connected, interesting... more creative. That's a journey I'm excited to be a part of.

THREE QUESTIONS:

FARAH BRIGANTE &
TREASURE NEAL

The creative duo at [Inspira Marketing](#) is behind some of the most creative and purposeful work for experience-led brands and activations, including Ex Grand Winning campaign for Jeep and the fun and tech-savvy "[Hole In the World](#)" campaign for Microsoft.

We wanted to learn more about them and more importantly, learn from them.

What do you believe led you to become a creative director at Inspira?

TREASURE: Prior to joining Inspira officially, I spent three and half years as Creative Director at Enthuse Marketing (Inspira's partner agency) working on Diageo business. But my path to the Inspira family was not your traditional or typical one. I feel like most creatives/marketers can tell you that they started at agency X, then jumped to agency Y, did some freelance and that lead to Z. I found my way by being entrepreneurial in my approach and creating my own work experiences (in large part because I had to), during challenging times, times when I felt like I wasn't being challenged/fulfilled or when opportunities were flat out not available to me. Over time, I built a portfolio that showcased who I was as a storyteller, a well-rounded creative professional, and self-starter. When I was introduced to Enthuse, the newly formed agency was a perfect fit for me (the self-proclaimed, self-starter) and me for it.

FARAH: I was at a very difference place in my career when Inspira happened. And it happened by chance. I had been at my previous agency going on 6+ years. We had merged with another Omnicom agency and there were budget cuts.





As a result, my job was eliminated. They didn't want high level creatives. Instead they wanted art directors to just do the work. It was becoming a churn-and-burn kind of place. I had it on my mind to start looking for other opportunities six months prior but my husband and I were planning on having our second child, so I stayed put. Ironically, the day I was laid off was the same day that I told them I was pregnant.

Here I was, in my second trimester, with a two-year-old at home, and no job. It was not easy. There were lots of stressful nights. But I was determined. I went on interview after interview but, at the same time, I started showing. I came to the realization that one was going to hire me.

Throughout my career, which spanned NYC to CT, I was lucky enough to have made amazing connections with co-workers who ended up becoming very good friends. These are the people, during tough times, who will go out of their way to help you.

That's why it's so important to never burn your bridges. One good friend was at Inspira and she was about to go on vacation for a week and needed coverage. She asked me to cover for her. This one little opportunity opened the door for me. I filled in on one new business pitch then found myself coming back again and again for more projects. A one-week gig turned into almost six months of freelance work. I was immediately introduced to Jeff [Snyder], our founder, as he was heading up these pitches. He became exposed to my work and loved the ideas we were pitching. He saw something in me that sparked the same "sell" that he has. He told me that hadn't come across another creative who could sell creative and engage a room like I did. I was humbled.

I've always been passionate about creative. It runs in my veins and I've had amazing teachers along the way. Jeff and I immediately connected, and he asked my one day what my deal was, what was I looking for? I told him my story. At the same time, I came to realize Inspira's mission. Why the agency was created in the first place, their mission of giving back to pediatric cancer, how much they care about the people that work here. The work we do has purpose driving it. All these things made me want to work here even more. It was an inspiring place that empowered you as a person and as a creative to think at your best. As the days neared to me giving birth to my son, Jeff made me a deal. He asked, when do you want to come back to work. And I told him, I'd want to take some time off to be home with my newborn. So, he said, when you are ready, you have a home here.

I knew at that moment that I had found an amazing place to work. A place that I thought never existed in this marketing world. Out of a tough time in my life, came something good. I have now been here for almost two years and love what I do, what I have accomplished and the amazing opportunities that I've been given.

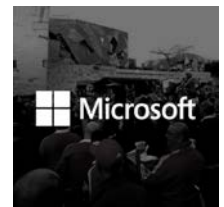
How has your personal purpose driven your creativity?

TREASURE: Purpose is the driver of the best work you could ever do. Purpose is a big part of the Inspira/Enthuse DNA. While at Enthuse, I helped to establish the Enthuse Foundation and position the women-owned agency and its non-profit arm that's firmly rooted in work around women entrepreneurs. Beyond that, purpose has always been a big driver for me. In 2012, I created a message campaign called Swim Brooklyn in collaboration with Olympian Lia Neal and USA Swimming which engaged the likes of Mike Tyson, Katie Couric and Spike Lee all in the name of water-safety for children in urban communities at the risk of drowning. And before that I was Creative Director & Co-Founder/Publisher for independent glossy publication call The Ave Magazine, which created a much-needed newsworthy voice for the hip-hop community - humanizing black stories and creating a space for socio-political discussion.



"At the end of a project I usually ask myself these five questions: Did I play my part Did I add value beyond what's expected? Does this work add value for me as a person? Did I try to push it? And lastly did I create a moment? Hopefully the answer is yes across the board, but if I can at least yes to three-out-of-five that's doing it the right way to me."

TREASURE NEAL, CD, INSPIRA



How do you know or measure if you are doing your job the right way?

FARAH: Being a Creative Director is a demanding job. There are lots of pressures. What's the next big idea? Is the client happy? Is the account team happy? Did you answer the brief? Did you meet that deadline? And so on. But for me, at the end of the day, it's the feeling of accomplishment that lets me measure if I'm doing my job right. And accomplishment at all levels from small too big. From helping someone on my team finish that last layout to get out to the client, presenting in a pitch and selling an idea I have so much heart for, checking the last box on my to-do list, mentoring, designing a logo, all the way to finding out that you won that pitch and now get to work on a brand you are super passionate about. All those, little to big things are measures of accomplishments to me that let me know that I have succeeded. And to always remember that those accomplishments come when you are emphatic, resilient, passionate and open.

ALIAS: Bebe, fifty-mile

MANTRA: Love what you do and do what you love

MY INSPIRATION: My father. His talent, drive in life and all that he accomplished will always push me further in everything that I do.

IF YOU KNOW ME: You know when I put my mind to something, I will make it happen! Heck, I climbed the highest mountain in Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro.



F A R A H
B R I G A N T E

T R E A S U R E
N E A L



ALIAS: Treas' or Dough Boy

MANTRA: A closed mouth don't get fed.

MY INSPIRATION: I'm inspired by moments; moments of societal progression, moments where I can affect people for the better, moments of epiphany, moments of growth and moments that make me feel good about what I'm doing. If I could string together a series of standout "moments" every day for the rest of my life, I would be at my happiest.

IF YOU KNOW ME: You'll know I love Carrot Cake and Indian food, I hate snow & cold weather, I frequent building supply stores, I'm a NY Knick fan, and I love my Kenzi.

THREE QUESTIONS: IAN MURRAY

The co-founder and partner of [House51](#) -- an award-winning research and strategy collective based in Glasgow and London -- Ian Murray is the co-author of seminal studies and papers that have shaken up the agency and insights business, particularly as the notion of brand purpose takes hold in corporate and media culture.

We featured [The Empathy Delusion](#) in issue [#5](#). It is, in our opinion, a must-read. We are honored to get three questions with Ian here. Enjoy the read.

The Empathy Delusion and The Aspiration Window are eye-openers and point to a fundamental disconnect in marketing and advertising. Do you have an opinion on how this gap can be bridged? Is it through practical steps like greater diversity and access or through more personal ones like greater self-awareness and less hubris?

In 'The Empathy Delusion' and 'The Aspiration Window' we argue that greater workplace diversity is key in bridging the cultural gaps between marketers and the mainstream. The evidence from psychology and behavioral science shows that building empathy at an individual level is much harder than marketers think. Humans are cognitive misers with limited capacity for effortful thought. So, in the work we have published so far, we conclude that it's unrealistic to assume the gap can be closed by individual marketers monitoring and challenging their own behavior when the science tells us that unconscious intuitions, social context and norms are such strong drivers of behavior. The marketing industry recruits from a very privileged strata of society. Career success then depends on

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assimilating a set of pervasive beliefs about society and culture. It's difficult for the individual marketer to transcend these institutional biases and put themselves in the shoes of people whose cultural and economic experiences diverge markedly from their own.

For these reasons we have argued that representing as many divergent perspectives as possible in our workplaces is the best way to increase fairness and effectiveness in marketing. However, the more I work in this area, the more I worry that the link we have made between diversity and empathy simply lets marketers off the hook. Sure, the science tells us that rational (System 2) thought and overcoming our biases is hard. But it's not impossible. And who said marketing was supposed to be easy? Marketers are paid to think! Beyond the explanations offered by cross-cultural psychology and behavioral science I suspect that the empathy gap also arises from a failure to apply basic skills and critical thinking. I'm often asked how I come up with the ideas for our research. It's quite simple. I read widely and take advantage of the wealth of freely available data that's at everyone's fingertips. Often, a few judicious searches on Google are all that is needed to bust some of the most pervasive myths in marketing.

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Social purpose marketing is about resolving the cognitive dissonance that marketers feel about devoting their professional lives to selling stuff and making them feel better about what they do for a living.

Experiential marketers have long struggled to measure the impact of an experience and default to quant-based metrics like impressions or attendance. We need a better way out. In your estimation, can empathy be measured by marketers? Do we need different KPIs to bridge the aforementioned gap?

I think we need to focus more on driving a cultural, rather than technological or methodological, transformation in marketing. There are many frameworks and methods for measuring empathy in the academic literature that could inform a better way out' for marketers (indeed, we have adapted some of them for 'The Empathy Delusion' and 'The Aspiration Window'.)

But new methods or KPI's alone won't bridge the gap. When marketing talk turns to methods, I'm often reminded of the famous line from David Ogilvy about marketing executives' relationship with research: 'They use it as drunkard uses a lamppost, for support rather than illumination'. A more contemporary reference is Eric Reis's description of vanity metrics' and 'success theatre': the action of "making people think that you are being successful rather than energy you could put into serving customers."

Too often, measurement frameworks in marketing are used to banish uncertainty and nuance and validate the prevailing mental model or latest big idea rather than confront marketers with the awkward and difficult "illumination" of people's 'real world' lives.

So, I think we need to focus on enabling marketers to develop more humility about what they do and don't know

and helping them find competitive advantage in nuance, complexity and falsification of our industry's most cherished beliefs about the role of brands in people's lives and what genuinely motivates people out there in the real world.

Do you think brand purpose or social impact marketing should be its own discipline like promotional marketing, digital marketing, CRM, etc.? Does it deserve this kind of distinction/silo or is it "bigger" than that?

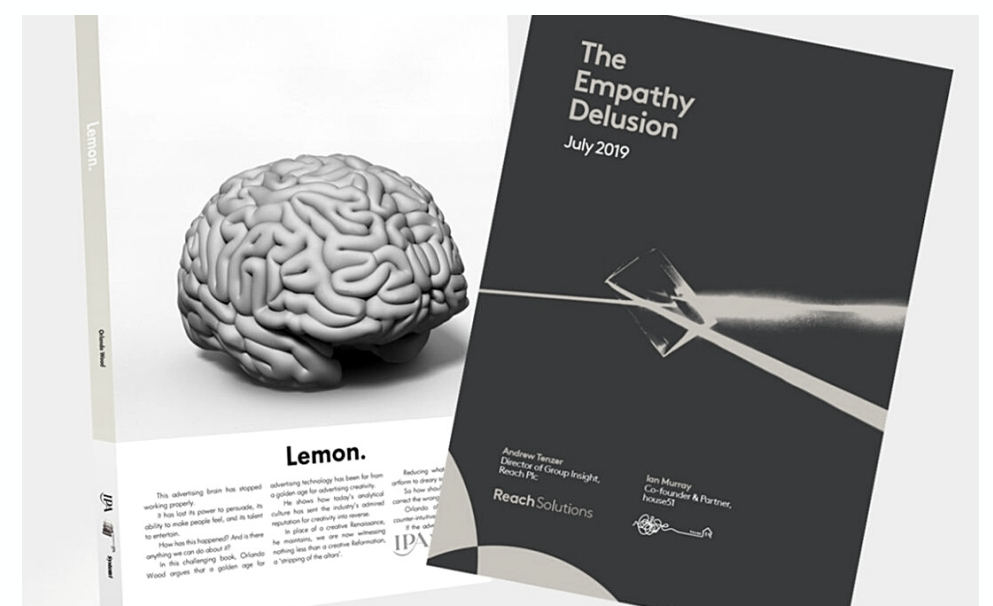
Firstly, we need to make a distinction between championing ethical business practices and what Andrew Tenser and I call 'social purpose marketing'. Clearly, there is massive headroom for business to become more ethical. There are myriad issues that need to be addressed including representation and diversity, the environmental impact of consumption and ending corporate tax avoidance as a legitimate business strategy. Ethics should be a top priority for any business.

However, I have many doubts about 'social purpose marketing'. This often reduces ethical business to nothing more than a shallow marketing tactic. But the biggest problem is that our data suggests that, contrary to the increasingly dominant orthodoxy in marketing, there is little demand for social purpose marketing in the general population. Our research shows that a brand's position on social issues is an exceptionally low priority for everyone (including marketers!) when making personal decisions about buying products or brands.

So, why is social purpose so dominant in our industry conversation? In 'The Aspiration Window' we conclude that it's more about the psychological and emotional needs of marketers. Social purpose marketing is about resolving the cognitive dissonance that marketers feel about devoting their professional lives to selling stuff and making them feel better about what they do for a living. Based on the evidence from our research it's difficult to advocate for the creation of a separate discipline devoted to social purpose.



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THREE QUESTIONS: BIG JOHN

Big John Krishack is a legend in the live music, touring and experiential marketing world. Not only is he the leader of XM shop [Beyond Experiential](#), he is also one of the hosts on [Eventspeak](#)'s podcast and content network.

Eventspeak is a renewed and important player in the XM industry, billing itself as the "voice of the event industry."

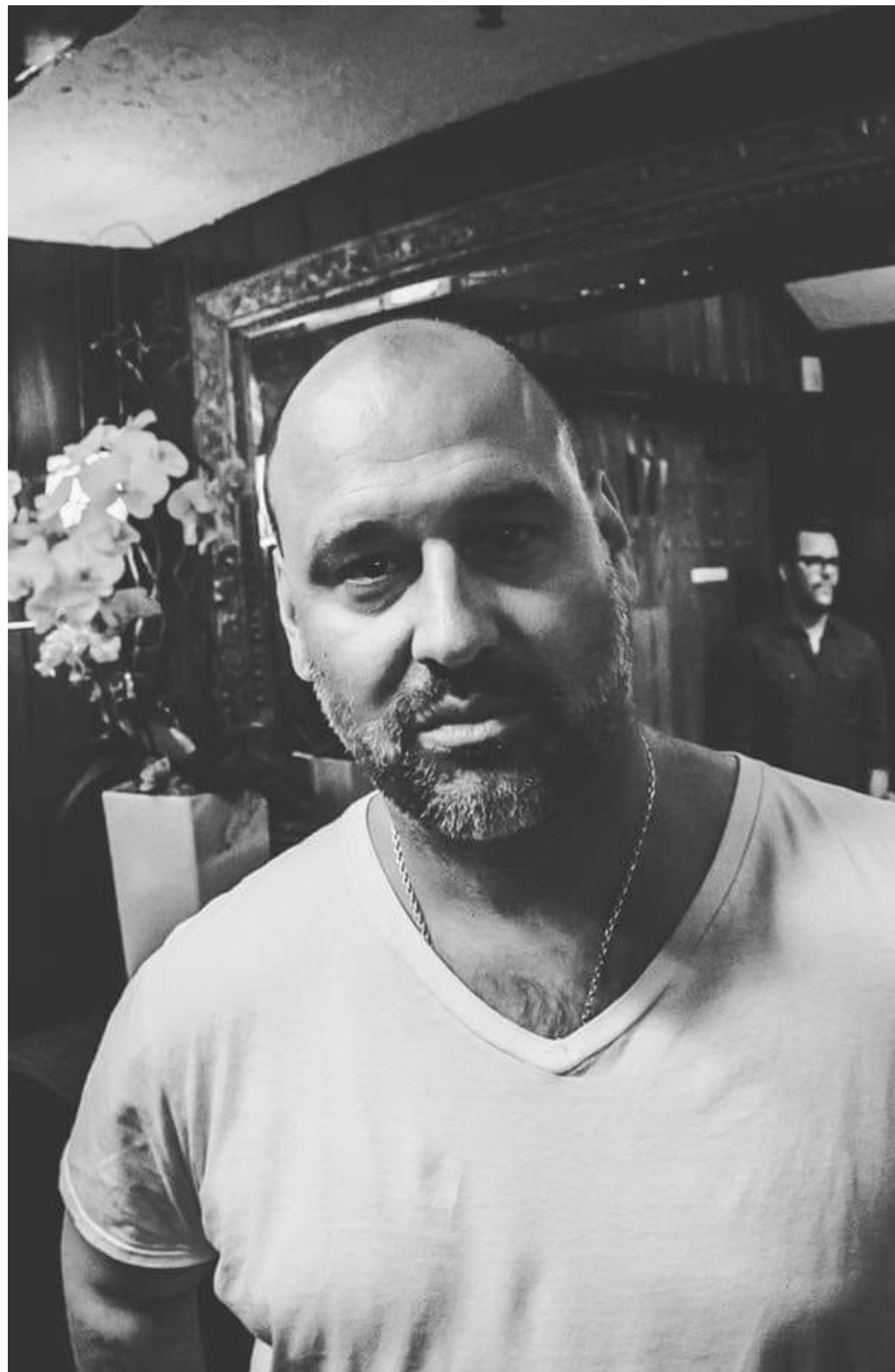
We got intrigued and asked three questions.

We think it's important for people to know about your vision and goals for EventSpeak. Can you give readers a quick rundown of what you are up to with it?

As anyone who comes from my class of the mobile marketing touring world (ie: 2005 -2010) knows that EventSpeak was the industry's go to source for all things Experiential/Mobile Marketing. Over time priorities shifted for James (founder of EventSpeak) and the launch of his agency Nebular and of course the advent of social media found EventSpeak on the backburner. In the light of the pandemic and all that happened and is happening in the world today we decided it was time to not only bring EventSpeak back it was time to reinvent it. My partners have a great relationship with James and approached me about getting involved.

As someone who used ES many times for many different resources I was happy to jump onboard. It quickly came to light that creating a visual resource directory for the all inclusive event industry ecosystem was the way to go. My show, [EventSpeak with Big John](#), is an interview show where we speak to event professionals from all over the world. We've had close to 40 different guests since launching last April and they span Experiential, Music, Movies, Magic, you name it ... We want to give people a place to come and have dialogue and find solidarity with each other. We truly are all in this

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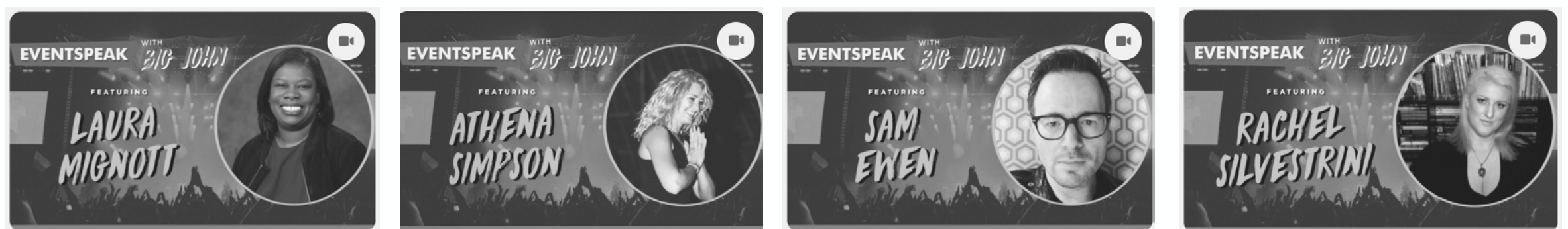
together and if we can be many in body but one in mind we can truly not only survive this unprecedented time we can prosper and create value in ways we may have never imagined before.

Imagine The EventSpeak Network as a new network completely dedicated to the event industry and everyone in it. You will be seeing us supporting, sponsoring events, conferences and festivals (virtual and eventually in person... remember when we could do that?). We plan to not only continue to shoot my show, we will also see our other programs like [Happy Hour with Amanda Younger](#) and [I love EventTech with Joel Martin](#) continue to grow and even be on the road eventually and we will also be adding new content very soon.



You have been in the live music and touring world for a long time and it seems like everyone in this experiential world knows you and you know them and it's more of like a family than a network. What is the glue that keeps this community together through thick and thin?

It has been nearly 20 years since my journey began and the countless amazing and wonderful people I've met and continue to meet never ceases to amaze me. I've prided myself on forging friendships with all those I would cross paths with whenever possible. I feel the glue is our shared love and passion for what we do. All of us have a different reason why we love this business so much and for myself and the amazing network I've collectively built we recognize that there is an ocean of opportunity out there and we need to work together and lead ourselves with integrity on and off the field and do undeniable good work together. When we do this, everyone succeeds.



Leaving a painful 2020 and entering an unknown 2021, what would be your mixtape playlist for the experiential industry?

NOFX, [The Decline](#)
State to State, [We Are the Reckless](#)
Bobby Darin, [Beyond The Sea](#)
Zach Brown, [Let it Go](#)

THREE QUESTIONS: FLOYD HAYES

This is the man behind some of the most innovative stunts and ideas the industry has seen. Ideas like [World's Fastest Agency](#) and [Emotional Support Beer](#), Floyd Hayes has been pushing boundaries and buttons for decades. Most recently, he launched his cannabis-focused agency called [Skunk Works](#) on 4/20 of this year. Timing is everything! We caught up with him in a few moments of calm when he wasn't disrupting the industry with brilliance. His work definitely [gets press!](#)

You've been a pioneer in experiential since your [Cunning Stunts](#) days (and prior). How have you seen the industry changed and what do you wish it to become?

I've been doing stunts and guerrilla since I was about 15 - graffiti and being in a band in which I loved to promote with weird local activations that cost nothing to make (I had no money).

Experiential seems to ebb and flow. I moved into it quite organically around the time of winning the Mini Cooper account. Our brief was "ideas everything, media anything" so event and experiences began to creep into the mix because they felt right for the brand and we were going to a lot of music festivals and clubs. We always wanted to "bring something to the party" and not just slap logos all over the place.

Then for a while it was all about digital and experience seems a little past it - but I still enjoyed this area, t's what I enjoy in life - real things, experiences. I think people realized that "digital" and content were crucial to the mix

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but you have to have something to create the content around - experiences provide that and much more besides.

I think I've managed to enjoy this industry for 20 years because of the actual work. The briefs and challenges are always inspiring. For a generalist it's a good industry - chocolate and booze one day, electric cars and hotels the next. It's never boring. Or to borrow a phrase from the play writer Noel Coward, "Work is more fun than fun."

In 2018/2019, "experiential" seemed to be hot again, good for me at the time. 2020 of course pulled the rug out from under my feet, then set it on fire. Right now, I'm getting busy again. The bigger brands are looking to plan ahead and have at least some experiences in their mix. Personally, I can't wait to get back out there and go to gigs, pubs, outdoor screenings and so on. I think experience will be huge this summer and into 2022.

As a creative who has touched so many varying industries and business challenges, where do you find inspiration? Has it changed over the course of your career?

Good question! For me, I used to be an avid reader and follower of "the industry" - it's kind of required of creative directors at agencies. When I started to work for myself, it occurred to me that trade stuff mostly bored me stiff. Most advertising is dreadful. Why does every experiential deck include a pop-up in a cargo container? I think the history has a habit of drinking from the same pool and therefore everything looks a bit samey. In order to be original, I think you need send your curiosity into areas other people may not be looking and bring back something fresh.

It's why musicians and artists create better work than our industry - not always - but more often than not. They are exploring the further reaches of their curiosity than people in a business environment are offend permitted to explore.

My inspiration comes from books, gaming, dreaming, being really silly, wondering what would actually turn people on. If somethings needs to be "engaging" and attract "earned media" then make it remarkable. It has to be new to be newsworthy. But the best inspiration is people! I've always loved people watching and still do. If I could have my time again I'd definitely like to explore anthropology.

You have created so many cool and thought-provoking "products" through your own volition (ie. side hustles). What are your favorites and describe your latest foray with the Emotional Support Beer idea?



Truth is I fail a lot more often than not.

My favorite of the last few years totally died on its ass. I had the idea to become the World's First Streaming Human Being. "Floydulu" would let clients pay a monthly fee for non-stop ideation. I thought it was a winner, had a nice logo made. Not one single person took note of it. Maybe I should have called it "floyd+."

Anyway, I always learn something while doing these things, and often make completely random and interesting connections with people. The Emotional Support Beer project was fun. I came up with at the start of 2020 and handled the PR (sent the story to about three people). It just caught on, and once Fox and the Mail on Sunday ran features it went bananas. Of course, being the consulate professional that I am, I hadn't "strategized monetization." In February I had a few calls and chats with MegaCorp Breweries but the stars wouldn't align - far too much red tape.

Then bang COVID and my experiential business died overnight. Lost my apartment in Brooklyn and just

thought: damn, well that was a good run while it lasted. I came upstate to Woodstock with my kid and just locked down like everyone else. In the summer I started to venture out to Woodstock Brewing and did some work for them. I mentioned the ESB stunt to the owner, Rick and within about 2 days we had a one-page agreement and a handshake.

The beer came out, got some nice media (Food and Wine, Trendhunter, Time Out etc.) and immediately sold out. Money was going to Operation At Ease which partners shelter dogs with veterans. So that was really cool. It proved to me yet again that you don't need all the clunky apparatus of legalese and 49 people on a Zoom call to just get stuff done and out the door.

Don't get me wrong, I do get involved in these vast Integrated Agency Team sessions and Fortune 100 clients - I get it - but I like fast and efficient.

So today, I launched a new thing I'm really excited about. It's too early to say whether it will meet its objectives or not but I'll share it here:

The Ten Million Dollar Pixel

Announcing the release of The Pixel, a radical new work of Non-Fungible Token (NFT) Digital Art.

The Pixel is a digital art piece and arguably the smallest. The arresting image of a single white pixel against a stark black background pays homage to the purest building block of every NFT art piece that follows.

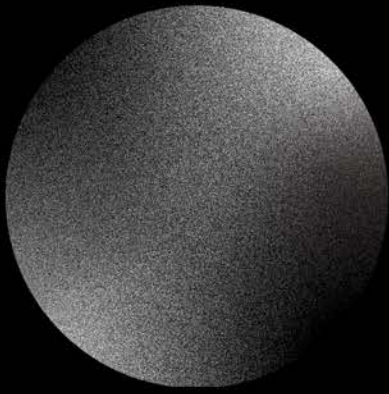
It's a perfect symbol for this thrilling new age of art, crypto-currency and media. A single pixel is the progenitor of every digital image on earth. I created The Pixel as a celebration and meditation on this fundamental building block of our digital reality. The Pixel is at once simple and minimal, yet represents infinite possibilities.

The Pixel is poised to make digital art history this week as it goes up for auction via leading NFT art market Rarible. Auction bidding begins this week with the buyout price set to 6000 Ethereum (\$10,000,000 USD)

View the work [here](#).



FIN.



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This PDF 'zine is the outcome of collaboration and knowledge-sharing among a community of experts working in the Experience Economy.

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