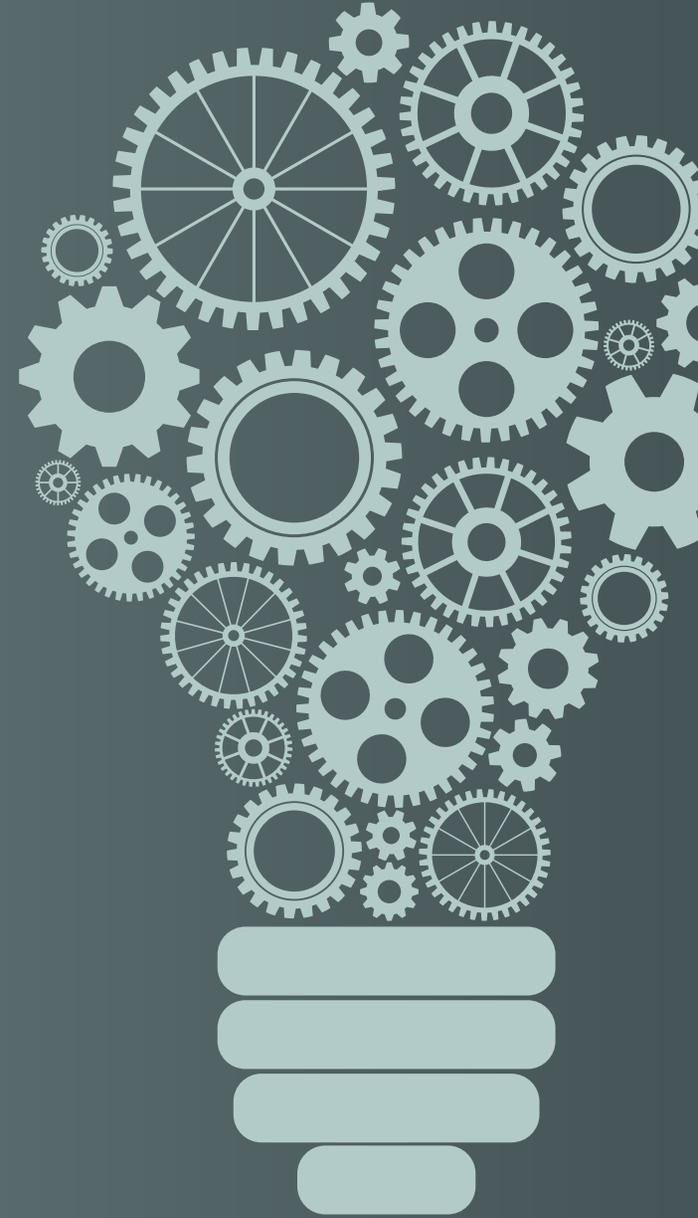




# BALANCING PROCESS, CREATIVITY & PRODUCTIVITY



18 Expert Creative Leaders  
Share Best Practices for How  
to Get the Best Out of Your  
Creative Team

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Foreword.....3**

**Introduction.....4**

## **Balancing Process, Creativity, and Productivity**

Balancing Freedom with Discipline to Inspire Great Work....5

Dispel the “Doing Nothing” Myth with Tangible Results.....6

Creativity and Process: Resetting the Balance.....8

Applying Just Enough Process with an Agile Approach....11

Leveraging Knowledge to Attain Creative Freedom.....12

Fostering Creativity in Your Team Through Ownership.....14

Nurture Creativity by Encouraging More Thinking.....16

Empowering Your Team by Cultivating Trust.....18

Keeping Your Creatives Happy by Providing Relief.....20

Creating a Fertile Environment for Potent Creativity.....23

Keep Your Project on the Right Path with the  
Right People.....25

Keeping Your Creatives Fresh and Your Clients Happy.....27

Great People Do Great Work.....29

Nurturing Your Creatives for Better Results.....30

Getting the Best out of Your Creative Team.....32

Encouraging Creativity Through Resource Rotation.....34

Putting the Focus on the Achievable.....36

Keep Calm and Carry On.....38

**About Workfront.....40**

# FOREWORD

Creative work is chaotic by nature.

Whether your creative agency serves internal or external clients, your team likely receives inordinate numbers of work requests that lead to an incredibly packed workload. Without the right structures in place, the chaos can easily take over any creative team, leading to missed deadlines, long hours at the office, frustrated clients, diminished creativity, and compromised quality.

At Workfront, we've studied and researched this struggle for many years, and our findings have taught us one important truth: the key to improved creativity is applying the right amount of structure. This is a delicate balance, though: too many processes, especially when disconnected, can add to the chaos while smothering creativity. The trick, we've found, is managing creative work through the end-to-end work life cycle, with structures and processes that function together to guide work from initial request to final on-time delivery. This holistic approach to creative work eliminates time wasters and distractions and allows creative teams to reclaim the time they need to focus on the part of work they love—the creative.

We hope that the wisdom of creative leaders collected in this e-book will inspire you with ideas for how to use the right balance of creativity and structure to get the most out of your creative team and improve productivity.



**Joe Staples**  
CMO, Workfront

# INTRODUCTION

It's often said that the creative process is a mystery. Many who are involved in creative endeavors, whether as members of a creative team or as project managers, would agree. Yet it's a fact that much in life depends on creative output directed toward accomplishing tangible objectives. How do you effectively manage a creative effort so that it remains genuinely creative while producing valuable output?

With the generous support of Workfront, we have attempted to find the answer by posing the following question to 18 seasoned creative professionals:

**Consistently and efficiently getting the best work out of your creative team can be tough. How have you created just enough process to enhance both creativity and productivity? Please share a personal story.**

In reading the experts' responses to this question, it's clear that there are many ways to build and manage creative teams. Striking a balance between process and creativity is essential, and these experts provide valuable insights into ways they define and sustain that balance throughout a creative endeavor.

I found their stories fascinating, and I'm sure anyone whose work depends on creative output will appreciate the experiences and wisdom of the creative professionals who have contributed to this e-book.



All the best,  
David Rogelberg  
Editor



## **Mighty Guides make you stronger.**

These authoritative and diverse guides provide a full view of a topic. They help you explore, compare, and contrast a variety of viewpoints so that you can determine what will work best for you. Reading a Mighty Guide is kind of like having your own team of experts. Each heartfelt and sincere piece of advice in this guide sits right next to the contributor's name, biography, and links so that you can learn more about their work. This background information gives you the proper context for each expert's independent perspective.

Credible advice from top experts helps you make strong decisions. Strong decisions make you mighty.

# BALANCING FREEDOM WITH DISCIPLINE TO INSPIRE GREAT WORK



## MICHAEL JACOBS

Managing Partner,  
Executive Creative Director,  
Our True North

Michael Jacobs is an internationally recognized creative director, digital strategist, writer, and entrepreneur who has extensive experience in agencies, start-ups, and major brands. His clients range from Kanye West and Jay-Z to MasterCard, Nikon, General Motors, and the US Army. He is currently managing partner and executive creative director at Our True North.



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Creativity is an ongoing process grounded in an innate curiosity about life and the world at large that requires a nimble, open mind regardless of whether you're a convergent or a divergent thinker. It's about conceiving and owning ideas from their inception through to their final execution. The most creative minds are driven to do this by an intense passion that comes to them as naturally as breathing. Creativity is not something you can use up: the more ideas you generate, the more you have. For me, creativity is not antithetical to either productivity or accountability. In fact, having constraints, whether they're timelines, budgets, or deliverables, actually forces you to become more creative in the way you solve problems. The key is to be able to balance freedom with discipline. There's a tension between the two that can act as a catalyst to inspire you to come up with some of the best work you'll ever do. The more focus you can apply to the work in front of you, the faster it will get done.

“ Having constraints, whether they're timelines, budgets, or deliverables, actually forces you to become more creative in how you solve problems. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 CREATIVITY IS NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN USE UP: THE MORE IDEAS YOU GENERATE, THE MORE YOU HAVE.
- 2 THE KEY IS TO BE ABLE TO BALANCE FREEDOM WITH DISCIPLINE.

# DISPEL THE “DOING NOTHING” MYTH WITH TANGIBLE RESULTS



## STEVE SUSI

Creative Director,  
Advertising,  
A major online retailer

After 18 years with New York’s premier interactive and traditional ad agencies, Steve Susi advances brands and leads teams by creating an example. An award-winning copywriter and published poet, with work in the permanent collections of The Smithsonian Institution and Library of Congress, his experience spans large-scale online creative development and campaigns; broadcast, print, and Web advertising; brand strategy; and corporate identity. Today, he’s advertising creative director for one of the world’s largest online retailers.



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Ah, the creative process: contradiction at best, illusion at worst. The suit-clad overlords’ thinly gauzed bullwhip designed to subjugate us and our scary ideas. The yin to the creative’s yang.

My first creative director taught me that the ideation process is always in danger of being perceived by onlookers as “doing nothing”—not unlike a cow you pass on the highway, standing in a field chewing grass. “It may not look like it, but she’s hard at work,” my boss smiled. “She’s making milk. That’s her job.” My job, she instilled, was to generate ad creative that dispels the “doing nothing” myth with tangible results. That’ll show ‘em.

Years on, I remind my team that this is not the National Endowment for the Arts. Our clients pay for, expect, and deserve those results. And just like our approach to handling great brands, the three C’s (clarity, consistency, constancy) are key to creativity at scale and help explain why a suitable measure of process is necessary to drive repeatable excellence. Clarity around campaign objectives can be found in a well-crafted brief; procuring one from your clients and internal partners requires, lo and behold, a dash of procedure.

“ The ideation process is always in danger of being perceived by onlookers as ‘doing nothing.’ ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 GENERATE AD CREATIVE THAT DISPELS THE “DOING NOTHING” MYTH WITH TANGIBLE RESULTS.
- 2 THE THREE C’S (CLARITY, CONSISTENCY, CONSTANCY) ARE KEY TO CREATIVITY AT SCALE AND HELP EXPLAIN WHY A SUITABLE MEASURE OF PROCESS IS NECESSARY TO DRIVE REPEATABLE EXCELLENCE.



# DISPEL THE “DOING NOTHING” MYTH WITH TANGIBLE RESULTS



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Consistency means establishing and sticking to a group communication framework—morning scrums, if you subscribe to the Agile methodology—to load-balance, maximize strategic thinking time, and eliminate the minutiae that sap energy and douse inspiration. Third, constancy: do it every day, just like the cow. You’ll be amazed at how quickly your team grasps the big picture (and oh, how the milk will flow).

I’ve always believed that the best creative leaders don’t direct creative, they direct *creatives*. It’s just another way of seeing the solution as not in the design and message (finite) but in the designer and writer (infinite). If your commitment to earning the best from your team’s minds is genuine and always on, then your first obligation is to remove ambiguity and tedium from their work lives and, by proxy, the final work itself. That doesn’t happen with good intentions, it happens with process. Let the suits go pick on somebody else.

“

I’ve always believed that the best creative leaders don’t direct creative they direct *creatives*.

”

# CREATIVITY AND PROCESS: RESETTING THE BALANCE



## COURTNEY SMITH

Co-founder/Executive  
Creative Director,  
PureMatter

Courtney Smith is the co-founder and executive creative director for PureMatter. Under her watch, PureMatter has received hundreds of ADDY, W3, and Webby awards. Her work has been featured in *Ad Age*, *PRINT International Design Annual*, *Logo Lounge*, and *Graphic Design Monthly*. She has juried more than 30 creative competitions, including Creativity International, the Adweek W3 Awards, and AAF ADDY and NSAC competitions. Her first screenplay is scheduled for production in 2015.



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Creativity is a funny concept. Not everyone believes he or she is creative. Some think it's something only "special" people have. But the truth is, everyone is creative at something. The trick is finding out what. Regardless of how you express an idea, you have to believe what you're saying.

Creativity takes inspiration; process takes dedication.

Putting your creativity to the test is where process is the champion. Brainstorming needs to be structured with guardrails to help team members focus their best thinking. At our agency, everyone is invited to these sessions because in our "flat governance" culture, great ideas can come from anyone. We make sure the team knows our client's goal and where we're starting. This creates a complex challenge, though not a complicated one. Complex challenges are never open ended or fuzzy. They're like planning a road trip; even when you know where you are and where you're going, the possibilities for getting there are almost endless. Does the client want to sightsee? Maybe taking scenic back roads is the best way to go. Does the client need to get there quickly? Recommend an airplane instead of driving, which could be more expensive but the faster route. This process helps us prioritize the best possible solutions based on our clients' specific needs. In the words of *Harvard Business Review*, "When you're in an Innovation Community, where participation is open and governance is flat, process is the best enabler to bring people together more quickly and achieve a common goal."

“Creativity takes inspiration;  
process takes dedication.”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 BRAINSTORMING NEEDS TO BE STRUCTURED WITH GUARDRAILS TO HELP TEAM MEMBERS FOCUS THEIR BEST THINKING.
- 2 INVITE PEOPLE FROM OUTSIDE THE CREATIVE TEAM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS AND EXERCISE THEIR CREATIVITY.



# CREATIVITY AND PROCESS: RESETTING THE BALANCE



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Co-founder/Executive  
Creative Director,  
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Last year, we ran a summer social campaign called *90DaystoEllen.com*. We challenged ourselves to see if we could convince Ellen DeGeneres to have lunch with our president, Bryan Kramer, and e-mail marketing guru, DJ Waldow, to prove one simple hypothesis: that social media can be used to create real friendships and make a powerful difference in the world. Our process during the campaign was the only thing that kept the campaign momentum building, because we didn't have a "real" client except ourselves. I'm not going lie: the experience almost killed me, trying to stay true to our "Quantity + Quality Content x Consistency = Success" formula for content marketing. We know there's no such thing as "one and done" in social content marketing, so keeping that going was a task of dedication, love—and, yes—tons of creativity.

At the end of the 90 days, not only did we *not* get lunch with Ellen, but we never even heard from her. To this day, we don't even know if she knew about the campaign. But we *did* prove our hypothesis—just in a completely different and unexpected way than we anticipated. We did make real friendships via social media, and we did make a powerful difference in the world. That 90 day effort raised awareness through more than 100 million impressions and \$1,500 for Feeding America and received the 2013 Content Marketing Campaign of the Year award from the Content Marketing Institute and Disqus.

“  
Creativity and  
process, when in  
balance, are your  
greatest allies.



# CREATIVITY AND PROCESS: RESETTING THE BALANCE



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Our philosophy of always learning from our work paid off, too. After analyzing the finished campaign, four secrets to why ideas are crowd worthy emerged:

- Have a simple concept.
- Have a solid plan.
- Invite people to the party.
- Apply the rules of improvisation.

We now apply these secrets to every campaign we create, and so far, it has proven true every time. If we didn't run our creativity through these filters, we would not be consistent in the quality of work we deliver. They help us be more creative, in fact, because we now know why an idea won't work, and it's not personal.

Creativity and process, when in balance, are your greatest allies. Just remember that we're all human and mistakes will occur, so if things don't turn out the way you thought they would, just reset the balance, learn, and start over.

# APPLYING JUST ENOUGH PROCESS WITH AN AGILE APPROACH



**DAVID LESUE**

Creative Director,  
Workfront

David Lesue has worked professionally as a graphic designer/art director/creative director/interaction designer/user experience designer for the last 15 years. He has worked for Omniture, RiSER, Brigham Young University, and Adobe. David currently leads the efforts of the creative services team (Web, print, and video) as the Creative Director for Workfront.



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## *We use Agile.*

I manage a small, in-house creative services team: three graphic designers, two video production specialists, and one illustrator. We produce all of Workfront’s corporate and marketing collateral, which includes e-books, white papers, demo videos, case studies, billboards, event booths, and signage. Because we manage a ton of jobs and have to answer to many clients and stakeholders, we realized pretty quickly that an ad hoc, “e-mails and a spreadsheet” process wasn’t going to work for us. Everyone on my team hates Process for The Sake of Process™ (and all of the insane inefficiency that comes with it), and we swore that we would *only* implement enough process to get our work *done efficiently—and no more*.

## Which led us to Agile.

We hold week-long sprints (aka, iterations) that kick off with a planning meeting first thing every Monday. During that meeting, we review our backlog—an auto-populated list of all the individual tasks that have been assigned to the team—and prioritize it. As a team, we then estimate the number of hours each task will take and commit to a full week’s worth of work. By that, I mean we take the highest-priority 180 hours of work (30 hours per week x six team members) and commit to completing it by week’s end.

We’ve been working Agile-y for just over a year now, and it has worked well for us. We hold far fewer time-wasting project status meetings and wade through much less e-mail. We’ve taken those hours back and given them to our real work.

“ We *only* implement enough process to get our work *done efficiently—and no more*. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 AVOID “PROCESS FOR THE SAKE OF PROCESS.”
- 2 HOLD WEEK-LONG SPRINTS THAT KICK OFF WITH A PLANNING MEETING FIRST THING EVERY MONDAY TO PRIORITIZE THE WEEK’S TASKS.

# LEVERAGING KNOWLEDGE TO ATTAIN CREATIVE FREEDOM



## BEN WOOD

Executive Creative Director,  
CAB Studios

Ben Wood is co-founder and executive creative director of CAB Studios, a UK Top 10 Elite agency. He has delivered game-changing and disruptive brands and campaigns across a multitude of industries and is the driver behind CAB's MAPP process for brand and marketing creation innovation. He is a hard-grafting right-brainer who has way too much adrenaline for one man.



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Is creativity actually under threat from our increasing obsession with data? We think it formulates robust and relevant briefs that are a precise blueprint for giving crafters creative freedom. At CAB Studios, we work tirelessly with clients to extract every bit of information from them about their business and customers by using our unique MAPP process. No good-sized project even gets close to a written brief until the creative director, head of technology, and strategy director have all collaborated on it. This meeting is gold dust, the bullet group where the strategy, creativity, and technology required are considered and structured into a targeted, insightful brief. This brief is the formula for creative freedom: the creatives have such an anchor to build on that the creativity improves through lack of frustration and confusion. They have a clear road to go crazy—as long as they stay on that road.

We run a tight ship. We use a traffic-management system that delivers a tight schedule. This process might seem too tight for any maneuverability, but it actually creates greater flexibility because we know what each crafter is working on and when, making it easy to move accordingly.

“ We think our obsession with data formulates robust and relevant briefs that are a precise blueprint for giving crafters creative freedom. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 EXTRACT ALL THE INFORMATION YOU CAN FROM YOUR CLIENTS, AND USE IT TO HELP CREATE THE BRIEF FROM WHICH YOUR CREATIVES WILL WORK.
- 2 THE BRIEF FORMS THE ANCHOR ON WHICH YOUR CREATIVES CAN BUILD AND A FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH THEY WORK.



# LEVERAGING KNOWLEDGE TO ATTAIN CREATIVE FREEDOM



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We believe that knowledge unites. It's our "why." Creative freedom—productivity freedom—all founded in knowledge. So, if you look at data as knowledge, which is what it is, how can knowledge ever threaten creativity? It fuels it, makes it more relevant, more rewarding, and more remarkable. It formulates an understanding so that work consistently excites minds without blowing business efficiency to bits. It takes a dedicated, inspirational team to fine-tune a process that consistently delivers award-winning work efficiently. We sell hours and hours alone, and we strive to be the best creative, technological, and strategic minds in the industry.

“

If you look at data as knowledge, which is what it is, how can knowledge ever threaten creativity?

”

# FOSTERING CREATIVITY IN YOUR TEAM THROUGH OWNERSHIP



## CLAUDIO GUGLIERI

Design Director,  
Fantasy Interactive

Claudio Guglieri is the design director of the international digital agency, Fantasy Interactive. He has created products for brands like Kayak, Nickelodeon, Google, and CNN and loves to talk about problem solving, side projects, pixel perfection, and space.



Managing a team of people is always challenging, regardless of the discipline. Your approach to it as a manager really depends on the individuals you are dealing with. You need to have an approximate idea of their goals and attitudes, how they approach problems, what makes them feel empowered, and what drives them to be creative. After considering these factors, the results have the potential to be great—but not if you fail to create the right environment.

That said, in my experience, your work as a manager should be guided by a simple principle: make yourself dispensable. Your mission should be to develop your team to a point where your guidance is unnecessary. The only way to do that is to give your team members ownership of their own work. Nothing improves productivity and creativity like the feeling of working on your own ideas. Take that as your final goal, and you'll only have to create a positive environment in which you and your team can work together to improve processes and ensure that their ideas are as good as they can be. Then, allow your team to present their own work and expose them to real critique.

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 NOTHING IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY AND CREATIVITY LIKE THE FEELING OF WORKING ON YOUR OWN IDEAS.
- 2 GIVE YOUR TEAM OWNERSHIP, AND LET THEM PRESENT THEIR OWN WORK.

“Your work as a manager should be guided by a simple principle: make yourself dispensable.”



# FOSTERING CREATIVITY IN YOUR TEAM THROUGH OWNERSHIP



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Of course, it all sounds easier than it really is. The two greatest risks at this point are micromanagement and failing to set goals high enough. If you fail to trust your team and begin to micromanage them, they will soon lose ownership of their work, and their productivity will decrease at the speed of light. If you fail to set the goals high enough, your team might feel an initial sense of comfort followed by long-term frustration.

**Key Takeaways.** Give your team ownership, let them present their own work, guide them through the process, and be firm with your feedback. Do *not* sugar-coat your comments.

“

The two greatest risks are micromanagement and failing to set goals high enough.

”

# NURTURE CREATIVITY BY ENCOURAGING MORE THINKING



## BOB LUKASIK

SVP Executive  
Creative Director,  
Wunderman NY

Bob Lukasik is a senior creative leader and pioneer in digital marketing who has more than 18 years of experience in the industry. Over the course of his career, he has led interactive programs for such clients as Land Rover, Levi's, Canon USA, Campbell's Soup, Nokia, CoverGirl, and Citibank. Bob is the senior vice president and executive creative director at Wunderman New York, where he works tirelessly to make sure the agency's digital solutions are smart, engaging, strategic, and true to each client's brand equities and marketing goals.



Website | Blog



We all know that regardless of the medium or platform, great work starts with a great idea, but great ideas rarely spring from the mind fully formed: they start out as the germ of something that, if they really are good, turn into something great after being explored, turned inside out, built on, and then pushed farther. Too often, particularly with younger creatives, the response to a brief is to kick around a few ideas, select one that seems like it has legs, and start executing against it. This process can lead to great work, but in my opinion, the odds aren't in favor of that happening. Not enough thinking will have gone into developing and stress-testing the ideas to be sure that they can meet the marketing objectives *and* surprise and delight the viewer.

As a creative director, one of the most effective strategies I use to circumvent this pitfall and keep the creative teams thinking is to prohibit them from designing anything for the first creative review. Pencil sketches are okay to help explain an idea, but no designed comps are allowed. At this point, I want to hear ideas, with the thinking, logic, and rationale that went into them. In this way, I have the opportunity to assess the concepts against the brief and provide solid direction on the most promising of them. If the creative team has really thought them through, they can back up the idea and answer questions about how they would develop and extend the idea, putting the team that much farther down the road toward timely execution.

“Regardless of the medium or platform, great work starts with a great idea.”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 PROHIBIT YOUR TEAMS FROM DESIGNING ANYTHING FOR THE FIRST CREATIVE REVIEW. INSTEAD, LISTEN TO IDEAS AND THE RATIONALE THAT WENT INTO THEM.
- 2 TO GET THE BEST WORK OUT OF A TEAM, MAKE SURE THEY CONTINUALLY FEEL OWNERSHIP OF THE IDEA.



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Website | Blog



I learned a long time ago that the key to getting the best work out of a team is to make sure they continually feel ownership of the idea. I've worked for creative directors who were incredibly prescriptive in their direction, dictating exactly what they wanted to the smallest detail and leaving little room for others' contributions. In that scenario, designers or copywriters aren't going to be particularly motivated to continue thinking about and developing the idea, and why should they? They don't own it anymore; they've been reduced to hired hands with a deadline.

I always work with what the team is doing, shaping it into what the work needs to be but letting the team members do the problem solving for how to get it there. Ownership, not accountability, engenders feelings of pride, enthusiasm, dedication, focus, and passion—all ingredients that lead to great work.

“

Ownership, not accountability, engenders feelings of pride, enthusiasm, dedication, focus, and passion.

”

# EMPOWERING YOUR TEAM BY CULTIVATING TRUST



## STEVE BABCOCK

Partner/Executive  
Creative Director,  
EVB

Steve Babcock is a partner and executive creative director (ECD) at EVB. Since joining the company in 2013, he has created several successful campaigns for such clients as JCPenney and Ferrara Candy. Prior to joining EVB, Steve was VP/ECD at Crispin Porter + Bogusky, where he worked on accounts for Volkswagen, Geek Squad, and Amex OPEN and managed *Guitar Hero*, Best Buy, Applebee's, and Domino's Pizza, for which he received several industry awards. Before joining CP + B in 2007, Steve was creative director at W Communications/Struck.



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Creativity simply cannot thrive in an organization of layers and processes, but at the same time, stuff needs to get done and it needs to get done right. So, how do you create an environment that has enough process to be effective but not so many that they stifle creativity?

The answer? Trust.

Trusting people is one of the most difficult parts of any management position. When applied, it can be the one thing that makes any management job better. I've found that the more I trust my team members to do the job I've hired them to do, the better they are at doing it. Sure, it means I have to be uncomfortable from time to time, because they'll sometimes do the job differently than I would have done. Ultimately, however, that's a small price to pay for the result.

“The more I trust my team members to do the job I've hired them to do, the better they are at doing it.”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 THE MORE TRUST THAT'S PRESENT, THE GREATER THE DESIRE TO COLLABORATE AND COMMUNICATE.
- 2 REPLACE CONSTANT CRITIQUING WITH TRUST TO CREATE A MORE FUN, HONEST, AND COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENT.



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As an executive creative director, I do not function as a layer in the process. I see my job as one of helper, inspirer, and *new-business bringer-inner*. I have hired talented creative directors to manage accounts, and I trust them to do just that. I am not constantly looking over their shoulders or second-guessing every decision they make. Instead, I empower them to do the job. I trust that they'll do it well, and I benefit from how quickly they grow and develop by having all the rope they need.

What I've found most interesting about trust in a creative department is that the more trust that's present, the greater the desire to collaborate and communicate. There's just something unpleasant about someone constantly critiquing your every move. The natural instinct is to avoid those situations. So, when you take that out of the equation and replace it with trust, suddenly the whole process is fun. It's more open, more honest, and definitely more collaborative. That, ultimately, is the key to finding great creative solutions.

“

As an executive creative director, I do not function as a layer in the process.

”

# KEEPING YOUR CREATIVES HAPPY BY PROVIDING RELIEF



## LUKE SULLIVAN

Chair of the Advertising Department, Savannah College of Art and Design

After 32 years in advertising at elite agencies like Fallon, The Martin Agency, and GSD&M, author and speaker Luke Sullivan is now chair of the advertising department at the Savannah College of Art and Design. He's the author of the popular advertising book *Hey Whipple, Squeeze This: A Guide to Creating Great Advertising*, and the blog [heywhipple.com](#). His new book, *Thirty Rooms to Hide In: Insanity, Addiction, and Rock 'n' Roll in the Shadow of the Mayo Clinic*, he describes as "like *The Shining* . . . only funnier."



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I think it's a shame that so many people, when they become creative directors, forget what it was like being a creative. Most of them seem to forget what it was they most needed back when they were working creatives. They forget what it was like. They forget what *they* were like.

Me? When I was a young copywriter, I was (among other things) insecure, arrogant, clueless, impatient, and *always* cynical. Cynics are difficult to lead because they don't believe a thing most managers have to say. And the thing managers do that cynics find most grating?

Cheerleading.

"Hey, it's not so bad we have to re-pitch this client! I just *know* you can come up with something better!"

Cynics *hate* cheerleading. Cynics don't want account people to beat around the bush. Just say, "Your campaign died because the client didn't get it. And yeah, it stinks." I'd counsel managers to share the creatives' pain, to share their frustration. They don't need you to come in and plop some whipped cream on a spoiled sandwich. In fact, when one of my teams was told they had to do something that was stupid, I said, "Hey, when you have to eat dirt, don't nibble."

“ My suggestion: fewer meetings, more conversations. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 THE SMART CREATIVE MANAGER WILL DO EVERYTHING HE OR SHE CAN TO STREAMLINE THE CORPORATE RED TAPE AND ACT AS A BUFFER AGAINST AGENCY BUREAUCRACY.
- 2 CREATIVES NEED TO SCORE A VICTORY EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE. IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE A HUGE WIN, JUST A LITTLE VICTORY AT THE RIGHT TIME CAN KEEP CREATIVES MOTIVATED.



# KEEPING YOUR CREATIVES HAPPY BY PROVIDING RELIEF



## LUKE SULLIVAN

Chair of the Advertising Department, Savannah College of Art and Design

After 32 years in advertising at elite agencies like Fallon, The Martin Agency, and GSD&M, author and speaker Luke Sullivan is now chair of the advertising department at the Savannah College of Art and Design. He's the author of the popular advertising book *Hey Whipple, Squeeze This: A Guide to Creating Great Advertising*, and the blog [heywhipple.com](#). His new book, *Thirty Rooms to Hide In: Insanity, Addiction, and Rock 'n' Roll in the Shadow of the Mayo Clinic*, he describes as "like *The Shining* . . . only funnier."



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Cynics hate pretty much everything about corporate structure: memos, time sheets, expense reports—all that human resources (HR) stuff. It bores and irritates them. The smart creative manager will do everything he or she can to streamline the corporate red tape and act as a buffer against agency bureaucracy.

Cynics hate meetings: they're a huge waste of time. Cynics think, "Why did we even *have* that meeting? You could have just leaned into my office and said it." My suggestion: fewer meetings, more conversations.

Here's another interesting thing about creatives: you'd be surprised how much torture we can take if you just tell us *why* we're being tortured. Creatives like transparency. They want to know what they're part of. They want know *why* they're being asked to do something, even if it's a dumb reason. Smart creative managers don't try to "protect" creatives from the bad news; in this business, it usually *is* bad news.

Another thing I wish I'd heard less of when I was a young creative? It usually comes during a creative meeting. Someone in the back of room puts down his doughnut to say, "Well, if I could just be the devil's advocate here for a sec . . ." Ideas are fragile. The bubble can pop so easily. Instead of being the devil's advocate, why not be the angel's advocate? Don't just blurt out what you don't like about something—anyone can do it. It's more difficult to find out what's *good* about the idea. The trick is finding that little coal, and then blowing on it until it's a flame.

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As Jay O'Callahan suggested, 'If our eyes are always looking for weakness, we begin to lose our intuition to notice beauty.'

”



# KEEPING YOUR CREATIVES HAPPY BY PROVIDING RELIEF



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I remember a quote from writing coach Jay O'Callahan: "It is strange that, in our culture, we are trained to look for weaknesses. When I work with people, they are often surprised when I point out the wonderful crucial details—the parts that are *alive*." He went on to suggest, "If our eyes are always looking for weakness, we begin to lose our intuition to notice beauty." I found this very same advice from a venture capitalist, David Sze of Greylock Partners: "Anyone can tell you why something's going to fail. The real trick is to find out why something will succeed."

I'll close with one last piece of advice from the late Mike Hughes of The Martin Agency. Mike said that rejection is a daily part of this business, so it's important to remember that creatives need to score a victory every once in a while. It doesn't have to be a huge win, just a little victory at the right time can keep creatives motivated. He said:

"[A creative director should help find] relief for the people with thankless jobs—the copywriter on the account that has a new direction every week, the account person who deals with the especially difficult client, the project manager on the project that can't be managed, the planner who's partnered with a not-very-good creative team.

"Sometimes that relief means the top people at the agency need to get involved with a problem client or account. Sometimes it means moving people into different positions—even if it makes everyone involved feel a little uncomfortable. Sometimes it means creating or investing in projects that have a high likelihood of meaningful success, even if that success isn't a financial one."

Oh, how I miss Mike.

# CREATING A FERTILE ENVIRONMENT FOR POTENT CREATIVITY



## NICOLAS ROOPE

Cross-disciplinary  
creative entrepreneur,  
POKE

Nicolas Roope has always looked beyond industry rhetoric to the inspiring truths of networked media and design, and this passion has driven his career for the past 18 years. Nicolas founded POKE, Antirom, Hulger, Plumen, and The Lovie Awards—all companies of note and all influential and innovative in their respective fields. Each of these endeavors has been recognized with international industry awards and critical acclaim.



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By the time I'm thinking about how to manage teams, a lot of the hard work is already done. I rely less on process as a means of achieving quality and more on decisions that occur much earlier in the chain. The first task is to establish a business and a brand that really stands for quality and creativity—talk to industry and peers about what creativity is, why it's so potent, but also why it's incredibly difficult to manage, sell, and shape. We try to prove again and again that we're committed to this never-ending ambition on every project and problem we solve every day. Our work, spanning 13 years, provides evidence that commitment, prospective creative, and employees of a certain quality really sync with our vision and want to join the fight, make better work, and learn. The best people we could hope to attract are passionate, ambitious, and autonomous—entrepreneurial, if you like—so they don't need management imposed on them but rather to have support and direction, where needed, to achieve the best they can achieve. Creativity isn't about right answers because creativity is additive, not reductive. Good ideas are good ideas: there are no "right ideas." So, we don't need to manage creativity like we're running a factory and paranoid about quality control.

“ Creativity isn't about right answers because creativity is additive, not reductive. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE IS TO WORK IN CROSS-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS WHERE EVERY CONTRIBUTOR AND CONTRIBUTION IS RESPECTED.
- 2 WHEN THERE'S HEALTHY COLLABORATION BASED ON MUTUAL RESPECT, THE BEST IDEAS AND APPROACHES ARE QUICKLY SUPPORTED, AND THEN THE WHOLE TEAM IS ON THE JOURNEY TOGETHER AND OPINIONS HAVE BEEN INCORPORATED.



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Getting to the best work is also a much bigger issue than simply motivating and inspiring creative teams. I don't believe that the best ideas emerge from creatives working in a vacuum—far from it. The best digital experiences I've had are incredibly well conceived as products, as experiences, as technologies, as designs, as philosophies, and as gestures. I don't know any creative teams capable of fine-tuning all of these layers alone. The only way to achieve excellence is to work in cross-disciplinary teams where every contributor and contribution is respected. If your creatives have higher status than your developers or user experience people, then the tendency of decision flows will be to knock the corners off useful input from other disciplines. At POKE, we keep it all flat and treat everyone with the same level of respect, whether founder or intern. It means that when we come together to solve problems, we're doing it as equals. It means that all voices can be heard. It might sound like having more voices would make decision making more difficult, but it doesn't. When there's healthy collaboration based on mutual respect, the best ideas and approaches are quickly supported, and then the whole team is on the journey together and opinions have been incorporated. Having given their input, team members are vested in success, which is good for everyone.

If you rely on process alone, you might make a great sausage factory but not a fertile environment for fresh, potent creativity.



Having given their input, team members are vested in success, which is good for everyone.



# KEEP YOUR PROJECT ON THE RIGHT PATH WITH THE RIGHT PEOPLE



## HARALDUR THORLEIFSSON

Creative Director,  
UENO.

Haraldur Thorleifsson is a creative director and designer of things that appear on screens. He has worked for Google, *The Economist*, Motorola, Asics, TiVo, Microsoft, YouTube, and Square. If you twist his arm, he'll tell you about the awards he's received, which include Webbys, FWA, and Awwwards.

Movie director John Huston used to say that directing is 90 percent casting. I think that applies to what we do, as well. Finding the right people is the most important part of any project. Different people bring different skills to a project, and you need to know who should be working on what because few people are great at multiple things. You must understand your team members' strengths and weaknesses, where and how to push them, and what role within the project they should have so they can deliver consistently.

Another key element is how you set boundaries for people. You need to give them the freedom to explore. If you smother them from the start, they're probably not going to produce anything great. You have to let them run with their own ideas and come to their own conclusions; you want them to own the issues and have control, but you also can't give them too long a leash, especially on large projects. So many things have to fit together, and if one person runs too far in one direction, he or she might derail the whole project.

### KEY LESSONS

- 1 SET DEADLINES AND MILESTONES.
- 2 COORDINATING TEAMS IS ESSENTIAL, ESPECIALLY WHEN TEAM MEMBERS ARE IN DIFFERENT LOCATIONS.

“ Finding the right people is the most important part of any project. ”



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Setting deadlines and milestones is important, as well. Without them, people tend to procrastinate or spin their wheels. Have a realistic but tight timeline that works for the project and for the team.

Coordinating the team is essential, especially when team members are in different locations. Most of the time, we assemble teams based on the project needs and tend not to let location be a driving factor when we source talent. That ultimately means that we can have people on four or five continents. As you can imagine, that presents logistical challenges—sometimes, you'll have to stay up late and wake up early—but it also means that project work can effectively be 24x7. In those cases, it's important to give the people involved as much context as possible so that they can complete their part of the project even when there isn't anyone around to answer questions. They need to understand what they're working on and why as well as what their part is, where they can experiment, and what is essentially off limits.

“

It's important to give the people involved as much context as possible so that they can complete their part of the project even when there isn't anyone around to answer questions.

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# KEEPING YOUR CREATIVES FRESH AND YOUR CLIENTS HAPPY



## DAVID MCMILLAN

Global Creative Director,  
Ogilvy & Mather

David McMillan is a 23-year advertising veteran who has worked on Madison Avenue and in small, artsy boutiques. His first television commercial featured Johnny Cash popping out of a guitar case. He went on to co-write and serve as voice talent for an award-winning radio campaign. A commercial he penned for a small office supply company was named one of TV's funniest and is a fixture in the Museum of Modern Art. Currently global creative director for Ogilvy & Mather, David's work has been recognized at Cannes, London International, and NY Festival.



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There's a famous scene in an *I Love Lucy* episode that I often reference when interviewing people who want to join my group. (Most of them look at me with an expression that reads, "Are you seriously referencing an *I Love Lucy* episode right now?") Nonetheless, I think it's a great analogy that illustrates the struggle most creative people find themselves dealing with these days.

The episode is called, "The Chocolate Factory." The irony is not lost on me that I work in a building on Eleventh Avenue with that very name, where I try to balance creativity and productivity every day. In the episode, Lucy is working on the factory floor of a candy manufacturer. Her job is to wrap the confections one by one as they roll past her on a conveyer belt. The scene that warrants the analogy is where Lucy begins to shove chocolates down her blouse and in her mouth so that none of the candy passes without being wrapped.

There's a point where Lucy's jaws are stretched as thin as some of the creative teams here at my own Chocolate Factory. The point I'm making? Sometimes, the rate at which projects come your way makes it impossible to "wrap" every one of them. Some just have to go by. And let's face it: some of the projects aren't delectable bonbons to begin with.

“ Sometimes, the rate at which projects come your way makes it impossible to 'wrap' every one of them. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 TO STRIKE THAT DELICATE BALANCE YOU SO TIRELESSLY SEEK, YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO RECOGNIZE TRUE OPPORTUNITY.
- 2 CREATIVITY TAKES THE INNATE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE OPPORTUNITY.



# KEEPING YOUR CREATIVES FRESH AND YOUR CLIENTS HAPPY



**DAVID MCMILLAN**

Global Creative Director,  
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To strike that delicate balance you so tirelessly seek, you have to be able recognize true opportunity—the chocolates that may reward you if you indulge in them a little more. Now, I am in no way suggesting that you sell out on any project. We get paid handsomely for applying our craft to create communications that are smart, evocative, and serve our clients' needs. However, if we try to make every project one that could win at Cannes, we'll reach burnout faster than a car commercial in December.

So, recognize when to take your shot, when to indulge, and—conversely—admit when the project is not going to reach the Titanium shortlist and do the solid job you're paid to do. Creativity takes the innate ability to recognize opportunity. Mastering that ability will keep you fresh and allow you to remain productive.



If we try to make every project one that could win at Cannes, we'll reach burnout faster than a car commercial in December.



# GREAT PEOPLE DO GREAT WORK



**DAVE SNYDER**

Vice President,  
Executive Creative Director,  
Firstborn

Designer.  
Skateboarder.  
Creative director.



Good creatives want to make things—great things. They want to make good things better. It's in their nature. They want to create. And the reward? The work itself. The trick is ensuring that the work is challenging enough—but not impossible. Certainly not easy or obvious. They must have enough time to get the work done—but not too much time nor too little.

Hire great talent. At firstborn (and anywhere I've worked) I go out of my way to find the best writers, designers, and the like. Spend more time sourcing talent—great talent. Build a team—a great team, a lean team. Selfishly, I would say find designers—great designers, designers who have great technical skill. An eye that makes everything better. Find designers who can write. They're worth everything.

If you spend more time hiring the right people, the great people—not the people who are, sadly, available—you will spend less time worrying about a process that you *hope* will create great work. At the end of the day, great people create great work.

“Creatives want to create. And the reward? The work itself. The trick is ensuring that the work is challenging enough.”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 CREATIVES MUST HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO GET THE WORK DONE—BUT NOT TOO MUCH TIME NOR TOO LITTLE.
- 2 FIND GREAT PEOPLE, BECAUSE AT THE END OF THE DAY, GREAT PEOPLE CREATE GREAT WORK.

# NURTURING YOUR CREATIVES FOR BETTER RESULTS



## MICHAEL ANCEVIC

Managing Partner/Chief  
Creative Officer,  
The Fantastical

Michael Ancevic is managing partner/chief creative officer of The Fantastical. He has built brands like Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, Google, TripAdvisor, Timberland, Olympus, Sam Adams, and The International Olympic Committee, and he's received awards from shows like Communication Arts, the FWA Website Awards, Cannes, the Shorty Social Media Awards, British D&AD, The One Show, and the Jay Chiat Awards. Previously, he was senior vice president and creative director at Mullen Boston, judged Communication Arts Advertising Annual, and served on two boards.



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The creative people in any organization need an environment in which they feel safe to explore and try new things free from judgment. It's important that they feel that they can explore the nooks and crannies of an idea without criticism from bosses or peers. For these creatives, too many processes and over-large groups stifle their productivity and dampen inspiration.

In large creative departments and “creative shoot-out” situations, creatives can feel an intimidating pressure to perform. Of course, you need them to perform, so how can you give these free thinkers what they need to succeed? In organizations that lack creative intimacy and trust among the group and who by their very nature have more process, I like to break groups into smaller teams. Having multiple creative teams is healthy for competition as well as for building on one another's ideas, but tread carefully: having too many teams has the opposite effect. You must strike the right balance to generate the best work possible.

“ Too many processes and over-large groups stifle productivity and dampen inspiration. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 CHECKING IN EARLY AND OFTEN WITH CREATIVE TEAMS IS HELPFUL FOR KEEPING EVERYONE GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
- 2 OCCASIONALLY GIVE INDIVIDUAL TEAMS A PROJECT THAT'S THEIRS ALONE—NO COMPETITION WITH OUTSIDE TEAMS.



# NURTURING YOUR CREATIVES FOR BETTER RESULTS



## MICHAEL ANCEVIC

Managing Partner/Chief  
Creative Officer,  
The Fantastical

Michael Ancevic is managing partner/chief creative officer of The Fantastical. He has built brands like Four Seasons Hotels & Resorts, Google, TripAdvisor, Timberland, Olympus, Sam Adams, and The International Olympic Committee, and he's received awards from shows like Communication Arts, the FWA Website Awards, Cannes, the Shorty Social Media Awards, British D&AD, The One Show, and the Jay Chiat Awards. Previously, he was senior vice president and creative director at Mullen Boston, judged Communication Arts Advertising Annual, and served on two boards.



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I also find that checking in early and often with creative teams is helpful for keeping everyone going in the right direction. Few things can make creatives feel the pressure like a blank page, so it helps to get things up on the board quickly. People get a sense of ease when there's a great idea on the table that works well; psychologically, they are then free to try new things in other directions. I also like to invite others (creative and account people alike) to add to current ideas, even if they didn't come up with the initial thought, and even tweak them as a group to increase group ownership, pressure check from a client perspective, and help teammates bond over an idea rather than see each other as competitors. It's amazing and wonderful to watch this dynamic happen. It also eventually gets everyone to a better place creatively.

Finally, I recommend occasionally giving individual teams a project that's just theirs to own, with no creative shoot-outs against other teams. This helps them to be comfortable knowing that they produced something that's all theirs—a solution, a campaign, a product. And they will know that you trust them, which is critical for the creative team-creative director relationship.

“

In organizations that lack creative intimacy and trust among the group and that by their very nature have more process, I like to break groups into smaller teams.

”

# GETTING THE BEST OUT OF YOUR CREATIVE TEAM



## DAVID NAVARRO

Digital Creative Director/  
Head of Design,  
JWT Amsterdam

A creative, art, and design director with more than 16 years of experience, David Navarro ran his own digital studio—Pixelinglife—in Spain for 11 years. After that, he joined Tribal DDB Amsterdam as design director, where he led digital campaigns for clients such as Volkswagen, Philips, and KLM Airlines. In 2013, David joined JWT Amsterdam as digital creative director/head of design. He plays an active role in digital advertising as an educator and a speaker.



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I've worked with established teams—and built some from scratch—quite a few times over my professional life, and I've learned that getting the best out of your team is not solely related to the talent levels of your team members. Many variables can change the way a project evolves: tight deadlines, internal reviews, client reviews, external partners—you know the circus that advertising and design can be.

The nature of creative projects varies so much that it's difficult to predict—much less control—what's going to happen. Therefore, getting the best out of a team is a matter of managing the tempo, size, and responsibilities; the ambition; and the ability to, when needed, embrace chaos.

Keeping things small—only those people who play an active role in the project—is the first step in getting the orchestra to play in tune. Avoiding long discussions and multiple opinions shortens decision time and dramatically increases productivity.

“Avoiding long discussions and multiple opinions shortens decision time and dramatically increases productivity.”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 GETTING THE BEST OUT OF YOUR TEAM IS NOT SOLELY RELATED TO THE TALENT LEVELS OF YOUR TEAM MEMBERS.
- 2 WHEN A PLAYER CAN CLAIM OWNERSHIP OF SOMETHING, HE OR SHE WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES TO GET TO THE NEXT LEVEL. ONLY THEN CAN THE TEAM RELY ON ITS MEMBERS AND GET THE BEST OUT OF THEM.



# GETTING THE BEST OUT OF YOUR CREATIVE TEAM



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When the team is just the right size, you can always identify the person in charge of each task and develop what, in my opinion, always made the difference in successful projects: a sense of ownership. When a player can claim ownership of something, he or she will do what it takes to get to the next level. Only then can the team rely on its members and get the best out of them.

But being prepared for the best should prepare us for the worst, as well. Things can go wrong; in fact, they invariably do. Embracing that situation, the uncertain, always helps you to rethink, redefine, and improve ideas. Nothing is set in stone, not even the perfect flow of a project: it can always come out better.

Getting the best out of a team ends with a simple gesture: recognition. Don't forget to give proper recognition to your team. Doing so sets the mood for the next challenge—a challenge that will never be the same as the previous one, and that's exciting.

“

Getting the best out of a team ends with a simple gesture: recognition.

”

# ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY THROUGH RESOURCE ROTATION



## DANIEL HARVEY

Director of Experience Design,  
SapientNitro

Daniel Harvey is director of Experience Design at SapientNitro, London. Previously, he was executive creative director at R/GA, New York. His clients include EE, HBO, and NatWest. His work has won awards at Cannes, *The One Show*, and the Webbys and been profiled in *Adweek*, *The Guardian*, and *Wired*. He has been interviewed for *The Drum*, *Campaign*, and *Marketing Magazine* and spoken at SXSW and IxDA. He's honored to be in the BIMA Hot 100 2014.



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It's a fact that talented creatives join agencies for the variety. Agencies afford a real opportunity to work on an array of brands, campaigns, products, and services. Unfortunately, some agencies complicate that reality by dedicating staff to a single account team.

The benefits for clients and agencies of dedicated staff are clear: committed resources mean less debate around resource allocation. Creatives know the brand and specific business concerns inside and out. Strong interpersonal relationships can build trust and earn permission to do great work.

The downsides of exclusivity are just as many but most often felt by the individual employee. People feel isolated from the broader agency culture and vision. They predict client feedback and produce “safe work,” which leads to high attrition and burnout.

The challenge, then, is to create a different model that balances the positives of account teams with the potent need for variety.

One way to achieve this is through account teams becoming stewards for specific ad hoc project work. These side projects should be with brands and present challenges that are different from the account work. A large telecommunications team could take on a small arts organization; a big-box retailer team could take on work for a college or university.

“ Staff who are exclusive to a contract predict client feedback and produce ‘safe work,’ which leads to high attrition and burnout. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 CREATE A WORK MODEL THAT BALANCES THE POSITIVES OF ACCOUNT TEAMS WITH THE NEED FOR VARIETY.
- 2 CREATE A SENSIBLE PLAN FOR STAFF ROTATION BETWEEN ACCOUNTS.



# ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY THROUGH RESOURCE ROTATION



## DANIEL HARVEY

Director of Experience Design,  
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This eases staffing and scheduling problems for smaller work. It also avoids forcing teams into subject matter expert “tribes” (e.g., “the consumer packaged goods group”) common in other models.

Another tactic is to create “pitch pools” or special projects teams. People can dive in and out of these teams as needed, with groups tackling a new design opportunity in four-week bursts. It’s important that these teams not become formalized. I can’t begin to tell you how many people I’ve seen recharged after going through these sorts of design sprints.

Having a sensible plan for staff rotation between accounts is fundamental, and it’s critical with junior talent. Young creative hone their craft by having fast cycles of experience across a plethora of projects. Exposure to a wide variety of industry sectors, customer segments, and channels is vital to learning.

Working in this sort of model, it’s easy to measure increases in productivity. Often, billable hours go up, and bench time goes down. What’s more difficult to measure is an increase in creativity, but talented leaders can spot the difference. Relevant insights can flow across projects, and improvements in working can filter through the agency faster.

Try it: you’ll love it.

“

I benefited tremendously from having fast cycles of experience across a plethora of projects as a young designer learning my craft.

”

# PUTTING THE FOCUS ON THE ACHIEVABLE



## JAMES COOPER

Head of creative,  
betaworks

James Cooper is the head of creative at betaworks, a digital startup studio in New York. Before that, he was a digital executive creative director across many ad agencies. He has also been a director and started his own ping-pong clothing company. James is one of few people to have received two Cannes Gold Lions (and a Bronze Lion) across different clients in the mobile sector. He *will* beat you at ping-pong.



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Blog

It's a funny old time. On the one hand, it has never been cheaper to make things. The means of production are there for anyone to use, and yet, less and less is being made because there are so many options. Spoiled for choice, we are currently facing a paralysis of production. On the other hand, creative departments are facing a massive "brain drain." Our best thinkers and doers are bored with the current scenario of paralysis, pitches, and nitpicking clients.

We are a community of dreamers and "what if" people. We have to be, because our job is to look at a tin of dog food and say, "what if?" 'What if this is not just dog food but a way to communicate with your dog? What if dogs could talk: Would this be the food they would ask for? But now, creatives look at other industries and say, "what if?" The best people have seen their contemporaries quit to launch start ups, make cool tech products, or just freelance. The people left are the dog food.

“ Creative departments are facing a massive 'brain drain.' Our best thinkers and doers are bored with the current scenario of paralysis, pitches, and nitpicking clients. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 THE KEY TO GOOD WORK IS NOT PROCESS BUT BEING REALISTIC. THE DAYS OF MILLION-DOLLAR BUDGETS ARE PAST.
- 2 WE ARE ALL CAPABLE OF DOING GREAT WORK IF THE GOALPOSTS DON'T MOVE.



# PUTTING THE FOCUS ON THE ACHIEVABLE



## JAMES COOPER

Head of creative,  
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If you were to read Kevin Kelly, he would say that the Internet has just begun. Nothing has happened yet. And Dave Droga thinks there's never been a better time to be a junior creative in advertising. For me, the key to good work is not process but being realistic. We are not going to create the next Nike Plus or Instagram. Million-dollar budgets are dead. Deal with it.

We need to look a client in the eye, get him or her to focus on one or two achievable projects, and stick to that. We are all capable of doing great work if the goalposts don't move.

I always want to give my creatives enough room to surprise me. Despite the above opening, I am an eternal optimist. There's nothing better than an unexpected idea. If you're too controlling, you can't be surprised. At the end of the day, all creative directors want is for someone to solve the brief; otherwise, those directors know they'll have to do it themselves.

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”

# KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON



## JASON MUSANTE

Executive Creative Director,  
Havas Worldwide

Jason Musante's work has been covered by every online technology column and by most major news outlets, including *Wired*, *Fast Company*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, CNN, and the BBC. He has received dozens of awards and was included in *Advertising Age's* "Top Work of the Past 20 Years." Currently, Jason serves as executive creative director at Havas Worldwide, where he created the agency's most innovative initiative to date: an Oculus Rift experience for Dos Equis.



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Many people may know that the now-ubiquitous phrase, "Keep Calm and Carry On," started out as a poster produced by the British government in 1939 to calm the nerves of a country at the brink of war. But what they may not realize is that the posters were never circulated. The British government was waiting for an especially traumatic event.

As an amateur historian, the irony was not lost on me as I stared bleary-eyed at the "Keep Calm and Carry On" poster tacked to the wall behind my designer's desk. It was a few years ago at 4:32 a.m., the day of a major client presentation. The team had been working nonstop for the previous three months getting ready for a make-or-break meeting with Google. Ours was a startup agency, so there wasn't much of a formal process to begin with. Any sort of process we did have had gone out the window long ago. But everyone continued to chip in, doing whatever he or she could in an effort to help the cause. We each took turns napping on the insanely uncomfortable modern furniture. We alternated running out for caffeine and cigarettes. Writers designed, art directors wrote. Finally, we had a 200-page deck by the deadline. We had done it.

“ The posters were never circulated. The British government was waiting for an especially traumatic event. ”

## KEY LESSONS

- 1 NURTURE A SENSE OF PANIC BY NOT PRETENDING IT DOESN'T EXIST.
- 2 WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET EVERYTHING DONE TO MEET YOUR DEADLINE, THROW THE PROCESS OUT THE WINDOW.



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As the others gathered their belongings to make the trek home, I took a moment and walked into the bathroom, where I splashed cool water on my face. "Keep calm and carry on." In an era when agencies are in a war for survival, "keep calm and carry on." At a time when we're all feeling overworked and underpaid, the responsibility falls on us to nurture the sense of panic—nurture the panic by not pretending it doesn't exist or that it's going away anytime soon. "Keep calm and carry on." As the demands pile up and resources dwindle and the waves of fear wash over us brought on by not knowing how we're going to get it all done—we actually need to throw the process out the window. Nurture the panic, and "keep calm and carry on."

“

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# MEET WORKFRONT



Workfront is a cloud-based Marketing Work Management solution that helps in-house creative teams, marketing departments, and agencies conquer the chaos of excessive email, redundant status meetings, constant rework, and tedious approval processes. Unlike other tools, Workfront Marketing Work Cloud is a centralized, easy-to-adopt solution for managing and collaborating on all creative work through the entire work lifecycle, which improves team productivity, credibility, and executive visibility. Workfront is trusted by thousands of enterprise marketing teams and agencies, like Adobe, Cisco, HBO, Covario, Ralph Lauren, SapientNitro, REI, Trek, Schneider Electric, Tommy Hilfiger, and ATB Financial. To learn more, visit [www.workfront.com/marketing](http://www.workfront.com/marketing) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

**To learn more about Workfront Marketing Work Management and how it can help your creative team or agency achieve balance between process, creativity, and productivity, please contact us at the following:**

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