

Big News...

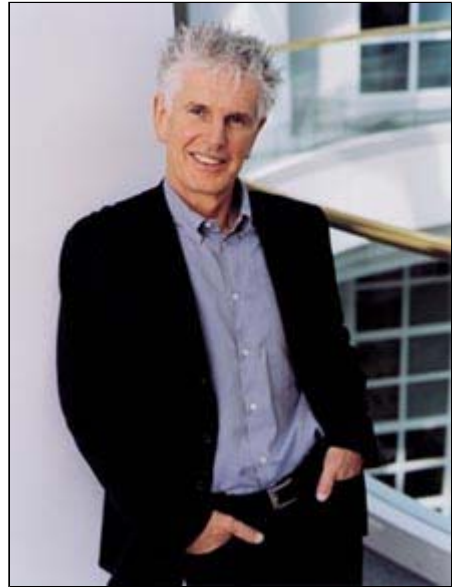
UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT: BOB ISHERWOOD

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BOB ISHERWOOD TALKS CANNES AND CREATIVITY.

Why is Cannes considered to be the top international festival, and indeed winning the Grand Prix the highest creative accolade possible?

Cannes is the most highly entered of the international award shows. The juries are generally comprised of around 23 judges from nearly as many countries. It is where creativity competes on the World stage. Why is that important you may ask? One answer is with globalisation, or more to the point global ads, it's no longer good enough to measure yourself against the guys across the street when in fact your creative competitor may be the guys across the ocean. For example, you might be doing some neat ads for Toyota in your market, until your BMW or Jeep competitor starts running big production numbers with lots of special effects your budgets can't run to. You need to be sure that the quality of your ideas outperform the competition. Cannes is a testing ground for that. Cannes is also a breeding ground for global ads. Which is one reason why the Grand Prix is so desirable. Grand Prix winning ads often go on to run beyond the markets they were originally designed for as the agency and client realize that an ad that works on 23 international judges probably has a wide appeal. A recent example was the 'Wassup' campaign for Budweiser. Within weeks of winning the Grand Prix at Cannes it was running across Europe. I'm sure that was not in the original marketing plan.



Do you feel that success at Cannes has a direct bearing winning new business and creating PICs?

Here's an interesting fact. In beer, finance, banking and entertainment the No 1 brands in the US are also the most creative at Cannes. From this you might safely say that the ability of an agency to be highly creative becomes a fundamental requirement for brand success and business growth.

What did you learn from your experiences as Festival president last year?

What did I learn from my experience as Festival President last year? I put it all into a book called the President's Log for the Festival to pass on to the incoming Presidents who will hopefully add their own learning. The contents of the log are meant to remain private between Presidents. One learning worth sharing is it's important to break a big task into projects. This was like running a marathon with hurdles. You can't think about the finish line, just what's in front of you. This is also part of PPO. The visualisation for the Australian crew who became the first to take the Americas Cup away from the NYC wasn't, 'win the cup', it was 'sail the boat as fast as you can'.

Clients often see success at winning awards having little to do with their commercial success; what do you think?

Here's an amazing fact. In two surveys, one global the other a recent European one, award winning ads were correlated with business building at 87%, which is more predictive than the P&G internal test called ARS. That fact was given to me by P&G.

What one thing do award judges look for in a winning piece of work?

I briefed both juries (Press/Poster and Film) to look for three things, in fact.

Is it original? I asked this because original ideas cut through and are more memorable than ordinary ones.

Is the idea relevant? In other words is it based on an insight into the product or the consumer?

Does it make an emotional connection with the target audience? I asked this because if there is no emotional connection the ad simply will not work. After that the judges factored the level of craft skill in production.

Do you feel that as a Network we are becoming more creative, or in other words, are we where you want us to be creatively?

Three years ago we were, as a result of our Lion tally at Cannes, ranked the No 4 most creative network in the world. Two years ago we ranked No 3, and last year we came equal first, with DDB. This year has been our best year ever. We use Cannes as the benchmark for ranking our creative ability to our clients and investors and I am so proud of how we have done this year.

Is there any particular market that you feel is becoming a new hot spot for creativity?

Before the Festival last year this was a question I was asked by many journalists. My answer was look to the East. Poland in Eastern

Europe and China in Asia. As it turned out Poland won a Lion last year and China this year. We have some very determined creatives there.

Do you feel that the credit for award winning work is shared fairly enough?

No. When I was working in Australia I argued for a number of years for account people and planners to be credited in the local Award book. Great work has to be sold and there is much skill in that. Rewards should be spread to encourage the team. What you want is the account people taking as much pride in selling better work than their peers just as the creatives do in producing it. You don't get to that when achievement isn't recognized.

Which personal award success are you most proud of?

The gold pencil at D&AD.

Do you think that this is a good time for creativity?

Not particularly. It's a time of financial recession and uncertainty. Having said that I've noticed reviewing work from around our network over the years that great creativity sometimes comes from places suffering much adversity. For example in Argentina where the economy is a disaster, our office there is producing some really great work and for the first time we have two Argentinean directors on the Saatchi & Saatchi New Directors' Showcase which we presented at Cannes this year.
