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A GRAND FINALE WITH DISTINCTION

The last day of the congress will always be a time to remember, it created a pedestal where creativity and interaction ruled supreme.

Words fail to give credit to the distinguished speakers, who hailed, from around the globe, and whose contribution to the beautiful industry of ours, is a new weapon for us to take advantage of in order to promote our business.

Kevin Roberts mesmerised the delegates and dwarfed the magic of any Broadway show.

His fire, down to earth approach to the creativity electrified the hall, earned him a standing ovation and a place among the greats who have contributed to making the 38th congress a league of its own and the best ever.

The respected Shinji Fukukawa's presence among us was a great honour and a sign of confidence in the IAA, advertising and marketing and the performance and contribution of this part of the world to the communication industry.

The subjects varied and the speakers represented a versatile cream of our business. They included Lionel Stanbrook, Patrick Briggs, J.R. Stengel, Oliver Gray, Santosh Desai, Jacques Bille and the veteran Richard Corner.

Their contribution included, relationships: business to government, brands building on winning products, brands mean valued and relationship, lovemarks, globalisation & human development; Internet: profit and loss; preserving culture and roots; single markets: free flows v/s protection.

The president of the China Chapter of the IAA acquainted delegates with the vitality and dynamism of Southeast Asia advertising industry.

However, the piece de resistance was the live interviews with Jim Aitchison from Singapore with Nabil Issa. It was a first and in a nutshell emphasised where technology is taking us in the near future.

The Golden Tulip awards preceded the closing ceremony and the Gala dinner sponsored by the China Chapter left a lingering feeling of harmony, excellence and above all an Odyssey to overcome barriers erected to impede the progress of mankind.



Advertising conference delegates told: 'Think local, go global'

CEOs tell Beirut meet: Success starts at home but you must first get inspired

Saatchi & Saatchi CEO Kevin Roberts brought the crowd to their feet on the final morning of the International Advertising Association (IAA) conference, when he called on Lebanese businessmen to revolutionise the local industry.

"What Lebanon needs now more than ever is to get inspired," Roberts told hundreds of businessmen at the Beirut International Exhibition and Leisure Centre (BIEL). "The government isn't going to do it. You need to open the country up to inspiration again."

Roberts' speech struck a chord with media experts and advertisers gathered at the conference who were convinced that advertising in the Middle East could use some shaking up.

Possessing a wry sense of humour, an obsession with New Zealand and rugby football, a penchant for hip black outfits and a reputation for the outrageous, Roberts has become an icon of the unconventional in the media world.

He calls his five-year realm at the head of Saatchi & Saatchi, which represent 68 of the world's top 100 advertisers, a quest to create the "hottest ideas shop on the planet."

While his success is well documented, so is his tendency for extremes: When his Canadian Pepsi team blew away Coke to become No. 1 in the market, they celebrated by machine-gunning a Coke vending machine on a conference stage.

In Beirut, where businessmen have wearied of hearing about the damaged economy, it was Robert's brash, in-your-face attitude and belief that personal empowerment can overcome obstacles that resonated with the audience.

According to Roberts, advertising has been "hijacked and taken over," and the industry as a whole needs a major overhaul. They need to ask themselves what matters to themselves, and to their customers.

"Inspiration arouses people's long-term commitment to exceed their personal best," he said. "Not to exceed the performance measures, not the competition, but their personal best. Being a manager or even a leader is just another label. Step up to being an inspirer."

Brain-drain, war, and economic strains may have taken their toll on the regional advertising industry, but Roberts said what everyone at the IAA conference wanted to hear. With inspiration, country and the region, could make a comeback.

Roberts also emphasised that in the global economy, local advertisers could thrive by simply remaining Lebanese.

"Art, music, fashion, design, sport - all the stuff people are passionate about has taken place on the local with the new



Kevin Roberts



Ramsay Najjar

enthusiasm," he said. "The roster of great creative talent has surged outwards. Big surprise. We've circled the globe and found that the best work is inspired by what's in our backyards. Act local, go global."

As the 38th IAA Congress wound down, what was apparent, more than the networking or the gala dinners, is that businessmen in the Arab world want a piece of the global game, and are hungry for change. Savvy CEO's have become the flailing economy's post-war heroes.

While the former Miss India received a few well-wishers when she gave a presentation Thursday, Nissan CEO Carlos Ghosn brought standing room-only crowds when he spoke the same day.

Politicians speaking at the conference were listened to but when Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian economist, stood before the crowd and said that, economic advancement was dependent on government reform, the reaction was thunderous applause.

In the corridors, business leaders were courted by the press, followed by ordinary delegates with cameras, and congratulated by followers. Conference formalities were appreciated, but for most of the delegates, the CEOs were the business world's rock stars.

Also apparent was the unavoidable reality that, in the media as in the real world, things are different now. As *An-Nahar* daily's general manager, Ghassan Tueni said on the opening day: "The 11th of September has cataclysmic effects not on New York City or America alone, but on all the nations webbed together by the earnest desire to seek a better life, not a better death."

Sept. 11 was mentioned often, as was the conflict in the Middle East. It was also clear that globalisation had become a reality. Despite the fact that most of the audience came from the Middle East, the focus was on the global economy. Nearly all the speeches were in English.

Shinji Fukukawa, the CEO of the think tank Dentsu Institute of Human Studies, said in his speech Friday that globalisation will have dire consequences if it is not matched with an equal increase in human development.

Giving voice to what many have considered since Sept. 11, Fukukawa argued that countries can no longer afford to focus solely on economic development if human relationships degrade in response.

"I believe that the 20th century is the period when the economic and material progress was mainly emphasised," he said. "In the 21st century, we have to pay as much interest in humanity, which is the origin of human power."

"Relationships," between east and west; global and local, brand building and marketing were all hot topics.

Lionel Stanbrook, managing director of the PRM-European lobbyists, told the audience that integration and not domination must be the major issue when considering the impact of globalisation.

"A world power can no longer afford and is therefore



Shinji Fukukawa



Lionel Stanbrook

rendered unable to impose particular hegemonies, so beloved of past dictators from Ghengis Khan to Adolf Hitler," he said.

Above all, "change" and "adapt" became conference buzzwords. As Stanbrook told the crowd: "To be powerful, and certainly to be economically powerful, it is necessary first to be flexible, however determined and single-minded you are also supposed to be... The best companies - the biggest brands - of today and of the future will have to be flexible above almost all other considerations."