
Inspiring Action: 7 Strategies for Prioritizing Creative Excellence

You don't do it by selling creative people on thinking like great marketers.

You do it by building the game around the creative people such that they are caught up in creating winning work and experiences naturally.

1 — Make It Visible.

I recently attend the annual sales convention of one of our clients. The Brand House was printed on cards and on every chair. The Customer Journey was printed up large and on both sidewalls of the huge auditorium. Every presentation from every department head showed, referenced and used brand materials. The effect on the creative people was palpable. These weren't ideas on a shelf somewhere. These were living commitments. These people were for real!

2 — Share Information.

Creative people hate relying on other people's interpretations and theories without access to the raw data. (Yes, they also hate the raw data — we'll get to that.) They want to absorb problems in all their complexity, soaking up details, feeling like they have the whole picture. It's out of those immersion baths that the bolts of brilliance fly.

3 — State the Obvious.

Great creatives hate to fail for having solved the wrong problem. Unfortunately, they know from experience that most of their time is spent doing just that. Perfection is impossible. Openness to the obvious solution makes all the difference. Our mobile work for one otherwise highly successful client was failing. We were stumped, until the CEO mentioned that their implementation of credit card acceptance had been delayed by three months. A \$350 million business that couldn't accept credit card payments! He agreed to get on a plane to Utah and fix it. Then he did. Then we were all heroes. Obvious, but brilliant!

4 — When You Talk About It, Show It.

Get creatives into the game of producing winning work by showing the work alongside the key performance indicators in ranked order, from top to bottom, from most effective to least effective. Always use pictures of the work. Always present it in the same way. Creative people will start to work to move their own work to the top of the top page.

5 — Be Decisive. Say Why.

Great creative people kill a lot of their own work, and they rely on their creative directors to kill most of the rest of the work. They know that the process of getting to a solution involves clearing out the less-than-brilliant solutions. When you reaffirm the standards, you inspire.

6 — Focus on the Positive.

This doesn't mean that if you don't have anything positive to say, you shouldn't say anything at all. Just be brief and blunt about what isn't working so that you can focus time and energy on what could work. It's sometimes enough to say, "Too expected." Or, "Would be better for our competitor." And leave it at that.

7 — Aim for Greatness.

If you seek and set a standard of greatness, you will never lack for lines of creatives vying to seek that standard with you. Deep inside, every one of us worth our salt wants to compete with the immortals. Our quiet prayer is to find a client who will expect it of us.



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