

Penny Verbe joins CreativeDrive as head of content UK & EMEA



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

19 Mar 2021

Now part of Accenture Interactive, CreativeDrive, a global creative content production company, has appointed Penny Verbe, global strategic consultant and co-founder of Smoke & Mirrors, as Head of Content for the UK and EMEA.



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Verbe's appointment comes at a pivotal time in CreativeDrive's evolution – six months after the business was acquired by Accenture Interactive to complement its existing content, digital marketing, media and commerce offerings. CreativeDrive helps brands meet the ever-increasing pace of digital and commerce channel activation.

■ ***Congrats on being appointed to the role of Head of Content UK & EMEA at CreativeDrive. How do you feel about it?***

Thank you! I'm over the moon to be honest - I've been looking for a role like this to get my teeth into for a long time. There's so much potential here, it's incredible. I haven't been this excited since we set up Smoke & Mirrors which was a very, very long time ago!

■ ***How and when did this come about? When do you take up this position?***

Towards the end of 2020, I joined in February of this year. Myles Peacock the global CEO had been in touch as we knew each other via the wonderful Jillian Gibbs, CEO of APR. Also, separately the Head of HR at London CreativeDrive had contacted me via LinkedIn and Luke Hammersley (my predecessor) and I had been in conversation for the past year as I'd long admired what CD were doing. Given I'd been chatting to all three different people at the same company, without either of them being aware of it, it all seemed very serendipitous. Plus I'd long been watching what Accenture Interactive were doing in the marketplace so when I knew they were in play, my interest was hugely magnified!

■ ***What will your new role entail?***

My title is Head of Content for UK & EMEA for CreativeDrive. We are a fantastic content production agency recently acquired by Accenture Interactive, with 25,000² ft of studios and facilities in Notting Hill, London. I'm helming the ship, so overseeing all growth, development, performance and success for what once we would call EMEA and now sadly we have to add the UK to, not being part of Europe anymore.

■ ***You have over three decades of experience. What are some of your notable achievements?***

Being a young and hungry VFX producer for 007 film *Goldeneye* when none of us knew what we were doing and working out how to bring an impossible scene to life. That cemented my relationship with Sean and Mark who went onto be my co-directors at Smoke & Mirrors. Working out how to fund the business using our houses as collateral in 1995 when no one would lend us money.

Also working with some of the best directors and producers on the planet including Jon Glazer, Danny Kleinman, Chris Palmer, Frank Budgen, Stuart Douglas, Anthea Benton, Vaughan Arnell, Jake Scott, and way too many more to mention.

Buying a building in London, setting up in New York, surviving numerous recessions. Executive producing a film about the life of legendary cinematographer Jack Cardiff and going to the Oscars in 2001 to see him receive an honorary Oscar, in the same year my husband at the time got his Oscar for *Gladiator*. Selling to Tag and staying on a further six years to take it to the next level, setting up in Shanghai when it really was the wild, wild East.

■ ***What do you love most about your career, the industry and what you do?***

That someone like me who didn't go to university and was from a working class background from Yorkshire and knew absolutely no one in the industry, got to do what I did.

“ Our industry welcomes people from any background, class, ethnicity; if you are good at what you do, work hard and are nice to people you can get anywhere. ”

Every day is different, and I relish that I get to work with the most brilliant hearts, minds and souls!

■ ***In your career, you've founded and managed several media companies. What's your recipe for 'success'?***

Basically work hard, play hard, be nice to people and treat them how you would want to be treated. And if you mess up, own it and apologise.

“ You learn more from your mistakes than your successes - never be afraid to look stupid ”

. The most intelligent people I know are both humble and also always ask questions. There are no stupid questions as they

say.

■ ***Innovation and creativity is key, especially in the time of Covid-19. What can organisations no longer ignore when it comes to strategy?***

Our shared humanity. People are suffering, have lost families, friends, faith, homes, livelihoods. We should be doing all we can to help in whatever way we can.

“ *This is a real life reset to remind us the importance of looking after each other, working in different ways to accommodate a better work/life balance or providing support and reassurance in such uncertain times.* ”

People are always going to want to consume goods, but now it's more important than ever they can trust who is selling them and know they are not a faceless, inhumane corporation. Understanding and humility finally have a chance to come to the forefront in business which I think can only be a good thing.

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