

Did Publicis dumping the Cannes Lions come as a surprise to you?

 By [Walter Pike](#)

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Advertising, branding and marketing has been a part of my life for over 30 years.

I started in advertising in 1986, running huge advertising budgets for multinational motor companies, in client service and in strategy in top agencies, as an academic head of faculty, no less, at the AAA School of Advertising. I have never been to the Loeries nor have I ever been to the Cannes Lions. Never.



Arthur Sadoun

Why do I feel the need to tell you this? Well, I'm sure that you all have seen the announcement made by Publicis' new CEO, Arthur Sadoun, who has been in the job under a month, when he pulled out of the Cannes Lions saying that the money would be spent instead on artificial intelligence technology. Certainly this is a huge blow to the egos of the people in creative departments around the world, and their CVs, but if we aren't one of them, should we care?



Publicis Groupe shifts spend on award shows, other events to AI initiative

Jessica Tennant 21 Jun 2017



There was a time when the type of creativity celebrated at advertising awards ceremonies was crucial for the success of advertising campaigns. That was when just about the most important job in advertising was to flag down people doing stuff like watching rugby, a movie or the Miss World pageant or even driving down the road, with a commercial message that had to be creative or it wouldn't be noticed. It was right that creativity was celebrated although there have always been skeptics like me who were never convinced that panels of creatives were the best way of judging this and that effectiveness was the sole credible judge.

In the digital and social era, the celebration of these artifacts are even less important. I'm not judging, by the way, the value of networking for the delegates nor the quality of talks that delegates attend although we could definitely debate the cost and whether this is the best way to spread these ideas into the industry. In the digital age the need for flagging down or interrupting the audience with creativity takes a very much smaller role. One of the agency groups I once worked in DDB Needham used a measure called ROI, short for 'relevance, originality and impact' to judge advertising. Today relevance outweighs the other two massively.

Creating relevance is the business model of major social networks such as Facebook, by creating incredibly granulated target markets and by digital advertising networks such as Google to deliver advertising precisely to people who prove by their interest by their search behaviour or what they write about in emails or what they read or view while online. Google Ads may be heavily optimised, but they don't display this classic Lion's creativity and can certainly be judged by actual results and there is no need at all for a panel of judges.

I still see a need for industry get-togethers to share knowledge and for the network opportunities but quite frankly think that Publicis will be followed by others just because its key output, the recognition of advertising creativity, is just not as important as it once was in the race for advertising agencies to remain relevant and so the alternative investment into artificial intelligence, big data, social network analysis and other technologies is a far better way to spend agency money. It will be interesting to see what happens and whether the focus will lead to more cost-effective and inclusive ways to spread advertising, marketing and digital ideas.

ABOUT WALTER PIKE

Walter has decades long experience in advertising, PR, digital marketing and social media both as a practitioner and as an academic. As a public speaker; Speaks on the future of advertising in the post - broadcast era. As an activist; works in an intersection of feminism & racism. He has devised an intervention in unpacking whiteness for white people. As an educator; upskilling programs in marketing comms, advertising & social in South, West and East Africa. Social crisis management consultant & educator. Ideaorgy founder

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