

The future of marketing according to Neil Hart

By [Neil Hart](#), issued by [Boomtown](#)

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Multi-industry creativity

In 2010 the International IBM CEO survey came out with a surprise finding: that creativity was the number one characteristic that businesses looked for in their leadership. That's a big deal! The ad industry gets excited about that quickly, but hold your horses! It's not the same thing we punt every day, putting our 20-something trained creatives at the front of the pitch.

Creativity in the future of marketing and advertising is a far more intelligent form of creativity. If I had to let our industry down for a moment with one comment it would be this: our level of creativity is myopically focused on communication - specifically only communication channels that we are 'OK' with. We're OK with TV, press, radio etc. We're OK with design as communication, and very recently we became OK with digital platforms as communication. But are we OK with creativity for new business directions, expanded product offerings, accessing data to uncover deep customer insights that lead to innovation, etc.? Are we OK with creativity for technology, creativity for HR, creativity for leadership matters, creativity for bio-fuels?



Neil Hart

These latter forms of creativity need one thing that we are so reticent to do: think outside of our paradigms. Creative people don't like to think outside of their creative boxes! That may sound like a contradiction of terms but it's so real. I've worked with enough highly talented creative people for over 20 years to know that they can be brilliantly creative within their areas of communication expertise, and miserably uncreative when pushed outside of them.

So here's the kicker - can our highly gifted creative people in the ad industry start to stretch their ability into new realms? Because this is what business needs today and into the future. Let's call it multi-industry creativity. I believe that the ad industry has the best grouping of employees to solve some of businesses biggest challenges, if only we will be bold enough to tackle them, smart enough to learn again, resilient enough to push through our boundaries, and crazy enough to maybe, just maybe, tack the forefront of where our 21st century marketplace is headed.

Strategically-led companies

Since the beginning of time (ok, just the ad industry timeline) our types of companies have been led by creative minds. Actually let me qualify that a little - I think that there have been very insightful, even strategic thinkers in all the most successful companies since the 60s but they have never been refereed by any other classification except creative. So we have not highly prized strategists until five or so years ago.

The result of the past 40-50 years is that agencies and advertising as an industry has been creative-led. Creativity and creative awards are the heroes in our companies. But here is the difference heading into the next 40 years: we will see more and more strategic-led agencies and eventually we will start to breed strategists who love and value creativity. At the moment there is still a rub between strategists and creatives, it's a natural thing because a generation of strategists have not emerged who have worked long enough in creative environments to tune themselves into how creatives 'work'. So creatives do not really value strategists (I am generalising to make the point clear) but it's true in most cases.

The demand for trained strategists will cause a new breed of agency person to emerge, not only in the rank and file, but at leadership level, CEO's who are strategy-led who in turn will shift our entire industry towards this. These future-orientated advertising agencies will be known by another name. They will come from the ad industry, but they will rename this industry to the alarm of the creatives. What will these new companies be called, and what will our industry eventually become known

as? I doubt it will be called the strat industry, but surely new names and titles will come to the fore that will add value to the global marketplace and breathe life into diverse companies and certainly...way beyond communication.

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