

It's early morning on Tuesday 8th May, raining in Dublin and the roads are jammed with slow-moving traffic. Despite this over 100 people arrive at The Project Arts Centre in Temple Bar to hear Dutch Agency KesselsKramer share their view on how brand owners can *"Get the Best from their Agency"*.

After a hearty granola, yogurt and pastry breakfast, Creative Director Richard Walker and Managing Director & Partner Engin Celikbas share their recommendations for generating memorable, effective creative work by outlining personal stories about how great and not so great client-agency relationships impacted on their company's creative output.

The KesselsKramer (KK) tips for brand owners are:

1. "Saying No is always easier than saying Yes"

When a proposal lands on a desk it can often be tempting to make amendments, water down creativity or give an outright "no" rather than to take on board everything proposed. By short-cutting the communication channels in KK, clients talk directly with the planners, creative or project manager/producers. This appears to help clear briefing and proposals to be accepted in full.

2. "Tell the truth and tell it well"

Not every product is brilliant and not everything about a product is different. Sometimes the opportunity to stand-out is to talk about the unexpected and to tell the truth in a novel way.

The 1 star Hans Brinker Hotel was used as a comical example by showing extreme before and after pictures of their supposed customers and images of luxury hotel rooms with asterisks pointing to all the features that are excluded.

A search for the hotel on travel-sites reveals glowing reports from those the hotel targets, a 4.7/5 star rating and growing bank balance as a direct result from the creative campaign.

3. "Don't choose an Agency choose a Business Partner"

Being open to potential led to a new business model being created between KK and the "Citizen M" hotel chain. KK were originally approached by a company wanting to provide international hotels with premium services at affordable price to mobile international travellers. At that time the hotel had no brand name, nor refined brand positioning and in point of fact the company had insufficient funds to pay KK for all of the work they required.

The consequential agreement was that KK would create effective advertising and branding work and get paid based on the results. Royalties now are earned by the agency as the hotel company grows and increases its network. Without this open-minded approach to the account neither company would have benefited from the work opportunity.

4. "Let your agency challenge your briefs"

Red Stripe Beer Jamaica Lager allowed KK to challenge their opening brief which related to using the cliché of Jamaican culture as being laid back and relaxed. In reality it's a hardworking culture

with people often making items from scratch and being highly creative. And when Jamaicans make things happen, they often do so with attitude.

This heritage of a DIY culture was encapsulated by Red Stripe Lager at the time of Notting Hill Carnival with a challenge to “make something from nothing”. In conjunction with Sound Artist Yuri Suzuki a loud speaker system was created directly from lager cans and used during the event.

5. “Too many cooks spoil the broth”

Encouraging Talisker, a whisky brand from the Isle of Sky, to sponsor the Atlantic Rowing Challenge coupled with clever storytelling across a range of media channels, steered the work to win a global award for a campaign reaching viral proportions on a very small budget. In addition, the entire campaign was dreamt up, planned and executed within 6 weeks. When the event came around the following year there was a much inflated team of people, the timeline was extended to 9 months, budget multiplied and all the complications that go with that sort of set up. The learning from this project was to keep it simple with only a core group running a project.

This last tip is a bit of a rule for KK itself in the way they structure their business and their working. They try to keep their working pods small and tight. Since its inception in 1996 the agency has chosen to build their organisation around what they view as the 3 most important disciplines to create and produce work: strategic planning, creative and production.

“The KK way of thinking holds that creativity is more important than profit because it is creativity that puts bread on our tables” explains Engin. By developing additional small work pods as expansion is required, the agency has grown organically to have teams in Holland, UK and the US. They also believe that it is only by staying independent that they can continue to focus on creativity instead of becoming sucked into being producers of “visual wallpaper”.

A lively Q+A session ensued covering topics of remuneration, job roles, pitching, how both client and agency know when to walk away from a relationship, scope creep and creative stimulus practices. During this interactive Q+A time an interesting belief, or indeed a piece of advice, emerged from KesselsKramer - **“Be Nice to People”**. This probably defines the agency’s character and their view on client-agency relationships. Similarly this thought probably defines the character of the client portfolio who choose to work with this agency. Richard Walker closed by saying that ultimately, it is the client that signs off on the advertising but that the process is best when it is very collaborative.