



## Let the magic flow!

Reading *Broadcast Dialogue* columns has always provided me with useful industry intelligence. I consistently find myself distilling common threads and clues to see how the future of the industry might look.

Recent articles discussing change, technology advance, ratings, audience requirement, vision in the context of tough times, etc., culminated in Trevor Shand's impactful article *The Digital Slaughterhouse* (*BD February 2009*) that underscored the importance of human excellence in securing the competitive edge.

Shand's simple message is that a great broadcaster will have the guts to ditch the safe overworked template, and will engage in original, daring and audience-capturing content. His refreshingly honest piece talks about "opening your mind" to innovative thinking and forces readers to assess whether or not they have an evolving or static mind-set: "Am I a leader or a follower?" "Do I understand that creativity is not a word to be mouthed, but rather a decision to put down something that has not been done before?"

My own work allows me to attest to the fact that Shand's approach runs much deeper than the appealing dude factor that inspires young audiences. Creative, free-thinking types are tired of safety and tired of being dumbed-down to the lowest common denominator.

They are hungry for magic!

As co-ordinator of the Canadian Women in Communications (CWC) Mentorship Program, I have first-hand experience of this reality. The stream of excellent women I meet, although hired for creative, strategic and visionary excellence, feel they have been thwarted in their attempts to innovate.

If what I hear is correct, tired global

business models are trotted out as the ultimate rationale. Short-term profit trumps creativity and audience satisfaction.

There is perhaps an unwritten belief that a workable template can be rolled out ad infinitum... of course with the added presumption that audiences will be too stupid to notice. Think, for example, of the plethora of so called "workable" themes we are exposed to in the television world: Medical, legal, forensic, psychic and mind/body-reading downloads infiltrate virtually every new offering... just because they worked elsewhere.

Perhaps our broadcast and media industries really do reflect entire generations that have been processed by a worn out "what works" cookie-cutter. Much is made of the tough global economic times we are now living. Yet how often do we hear any effort made to understand why this came about? Is it simplistic to say that closed, unthinking business minds blindly followed "what works" until "what worked" wore out?

In Canada we are further beset by the fallacy that U.S. validation of our output is a *sine qua non*. Perhaps we should look to the plucky Australians who have succeeded in evolving an independent, yet distinctly world-class, creative brand.

People tend only to adopt innovation when given permission to do so. Convergence technology, for example, has been touted for more than a decade,

yet it is youth-driven usage and demand that has forced the technology into mainstream industry practice. So much for leadership.

Our industry, more than others, should be leading by example, giving audiences permission to aim for greater heights across the board. On a flippant, yet relevant, note it seems such a desperate reality that front page media attention is able to give Obama-endorsed *Maple Leaf* cookies and *beaver* key chains overnight *must have* status, yet does little to empower free-thinking and originality.

Thank you Trevor Shand for giving us a kick where it was most needed. As you suggest, via original "fun and compelling" offerings and the use of technology rather as a means to an end, than an end in itself, our output will come alive. New and distinct ways of doing things will not only "knock audiences dead", but will guarantee ongoing industry relevance.

At the end of the day the competitiveness of any individual, company or organization is determined by how it differs from others. Does it not then make sense to build that individuality into something really special and magical?

*Rodger Harding is a business leadership and corporate intelligence awareness consultant. He may be reached by phone at (416) 962-6700 or by e-mail at staycool@web.ca.*

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