

Creativity. The truth is not enough

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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The Oscars used to be about look how good we are at making movies. Now, it's just look at how good we are. I recently read this line in a story in *The New York Times*. The fallout in terms of viewers has been astonishing. There has been a 59% drop in viewers since last year according to Nielsen. Or, to put it more plainly, last year just over 23 million viewers watched the Oscars. This year, just under 10 million people watched the same show.



There are probably all sorts of reasons for this. Covid. The changing nature of how, what and where people watch entertainment. Maybe, how the world feels about awards in a difficult world. But, it did get me thinking about how you may have something you want to say but is it what the audience wants to hear? Or perhaps, more accurately, how they want to hear it.

It made me think about about how Ricky Gervais hosted the Golden Globes (a show that is also in jeopardy now) for five years in a row. If we are honest, he is all you probably remember from any of those shows. Last years monologue has been watched 35 million times on YouTube alone. So, I am sure he didn't hurt the ratings but most importantly he was funny while telling a truth his audience wanted to hear. Namely, Hollywood is full of massive egos, d*ckheads and incredible vanity. The truth we were all thinking and were delighted somebody said out loud with skill, timing and humour. He embodied the phrase many a true word spoken in jest. He didn't preach. He entertained. This made his truth palatable and interesting. Rather than simply true.

Having a message is one thing but how you deliver it is quite another. People often mistake their truth for the world's interesting.

Let's all remember nobody gives a sh*t and they want to have a good time. Especially the good time part.

It's the first lesson in advertising. If you want people's time and attention, you better give them something in return. A laugh, a feeling, a perspective, an idea. But you better have something. Without that, you won't be noticed and what's worse you could be actively disliked.

Recently, I judged an advertising award show and I saw something quite similar happening. Case study after case study were full of worthy causes. All of these causes were an indictment on the world. They showed unpalatable truths that need to be addressed.

There was just one problem. There was no idea at the centre. The subject had become the idea. It was a documentary without creativity. The story was way stronger than the solution.

It was a good reminder that there is a big difference between saying you are funny and telling a joke. In the latter you have to do the work. You have to have an idea. You have to consider your audience. You have to make people feel what you are saying.

And, feeling the truth is way more powerful than the truth just being said. Because, that is when the truth becomes yours. That is when it starts to matter.

It is also the difference between reaching millions and talking to nobody.

It is understanding that your truth becomes the truth only when somebody is listening.

“ *There is nothing as boring as the truth. - Charles Bukowski* ”

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Olio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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