

THE NEXT
50 YEARS
OF PLANNING

THE EVOLVING CONNECTION BETWEEN
BRANDS AND CONSUMERS

4's / STRATFEST 2018

OCTOBER 9 - 11, 2018 | #4AsSTRATFEST



STRATFEST 2018

From the inner workings of the brain to outer space, a lot of ground was covered at this year's sold-out StratFest conference, which took place from October 9 to 11 in New York City. Marking the 50th anniversary of the planning discipline's first introduction into the advertising industry, StratFest brought together influential leaders and industry strategists and planners to look at the next 50 years of planning and the evolving connection between brands and consumers.

Event highlights included presentations from luminaries such as Faris Yakob and Rosie Yakob of Genius/Steals, Sarah DaVanzo of L'Oréal, CMO Consultant and Global Marketer Eliza Esquivel, and Tom Morton and Richard Ting of R/GA, as well as 14 hands-on learning workshops. The program kicked off on Tuesday, October 9, with the members-only Leadership Forum and a welcome reception that included a presentation of the Jay Chiat Awards.

Hot topics at this year's conference included:

- The future of planning
- Business transformation & the changing relationship between consumers and brands
- What about the machines? The importance of AI, Voice and Technology
- The 22nd annual Jay Chiat Awards for Strategic Excellence
- Hands-on learning workshops
- Leadership in turbulent times – the Leadership Forum & Small Agency Planner Parley



THE FUTURE OF PLANNING

Kicking off the 2018 StratFest conference was an energizing talk on the Gemini Agenda: A Playbook for the Future, presented by Faris Yakob and Rosie Yakob, co-founders of Genius/Steals. Citing an AAR study that says the number one thing clients want is integration, the Yakobs described the transformation happening now as “The Great Blur,” a blurring of disciplines that puts everyone into competition. “It’s not about a specialist or a generalist; it’s time for the multiplist,” they remarked.

The Yakobs stressed that creatives should focus on the outputs, and strategists and planners should instead be focused on outcomes, stressing that cost + time business models that incentivize long hours and high production budgets don’t necessarily grow business. To subscribe to the Genius Steals newsletter, please visit: <http://geniussteals.co/subscribe>.

In her Future of Planning 2030 presentation, Sarah DaVanzo, L’Oréal Group’s Chief Curiosity Officer of Innovation, Insights & Foresight, offered up her own perspective. Having taken a recent trip to Space Camp, DaVanzo drew on parallels between being an astronaut and being a planner: you need to move quickly, work with a lot of distractions and stay cool under pressure. “As strategic planners and as astronauts, you set the path,” she said.

DaVanzo also offered that ours is currently a world of exponential change and critical transition. DaVanzo described one megatrend that has occurred over the past decade as “culture is squealing,” which happens when you have extreme polarity and bifurcation right before an ecosystem collapses.

She also discussed the increasing indifference and lack of curiosity among Americans. She coined the term *#mehpandemic*, citing that 36% of Americans don’t care about anything. The upshot is that there is a lot of change disrupting the brand and marketing industries, and the possibility of new ecosystems is emerging.





In referencing some general trends we expect to see by 2030 – like the impact of a declining birth rate, the emergence of new markets and the continued move toward the gig economy – DaVanzo offered some new career direction for planners, with job titles like Edge Mancer, Curiosity Coach, Moodstage Neuro-Marketer and Blockchain Behaviorist.

Bringing things back down to earth, Eliza Esquivel, CMO Consultant and Global Marketer, cited the World Economic Forum on three critical skills needed in 2040: complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity – which is where planners will have the biggest role to play in helping corporations.

In her thoughtful presentation on the Altered States of Planning, Esquivel said, “We have overindexed on analytical thinking and not recognized and celebrated a key factor in our jobs – intuition.”

Like DaVanzo, Esquivel believes that change is coming quickly. “The revolution will be structural; the mass infrastructures that control our institutions are crumbling,” she said. “In the next five years, we’ll see new players and alliances. Different kinds of industries and ecosystems will be coming together in new ways.”





BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION & THE CHANGING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSUMERS AND BRANDS

"Companies don't want ads, they want growth." – Genius/Steals

The most valuable role for creative and strategy today is enabling brands to transform. R/GA's Head of Strategy, Tom Morton, and EVP & Global Chief Design Officer, Richard Ting, provided a look at transformation, and how to create transformative work at a marketing, experience and business level.

"Time spent in ad-supported media is at an all time low (44%). We need to transform in the face of these forces: company, context, consumer, connection, and apply thinking at a different altitude," said Morton.

As we see more brands establishing and bringing agencies in house, Amazon's Global GM of Marketing and Advertising Claudine Cheever discussed why she "loves and needs her agency partners." Cheever argued that the term in-house agency is a total paradox, and in-house capability does not equal in-house agency.

"We need that outside provocation and perspective to create work that is brave and bold from our agency partners. Agencies are masters at storytelling."

The sentiment was echoed by Eliza Esquivel, who said, "Creativity cannot truly exist inside corporations unless they change their structure – they are closed systems. Corporations only want outsider perspectives to help them connect with the outside world. They need creativity desperately, but their closed system just doesn't have it."

"Strategy is about power. Planning is about powerful art; it inspires art; it inspires creation."

– Eliza Esquivel, CMO Consultant and Global Marketer



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Marsha Lindsay, Chair & Chief Strategist at Lindsay, Stone & Briggs, offered a look at the brain and its real emotional impact on brand and business growth. Citing studies, she said, "Campaigns that evoked strong emotional benefit yielded biggest long-term profits." You need to stick with it (at least three years), however, to drive best results, and profit growth.

"The best stories are when you can show an emotional benefit that feeds people's self concept or who they aspire to be...All great decision-making begins and ends with emotion."

– Marsha Lindsay, Chair & Chief Strategist, Lindsay, Stone & Briggs

Discussing the deceptive relationships that consumers have with social influencers, Eliza Esquivel commented on how social media takes advantage of a "glitch in the human system." She said, "We all live in a parasocial hell."

One of the biggest concerns on the minds of brands and agencies is how politics and social issues intentionally and unintentionally play a part in campaign development.

Suresh Nair, Global Chief Strategy Officer at Grey New York, presented proprietary findings of Grey's brand study on the Culture & Business of Togetherness in the session titled "Can Brands Create Common Ground in a Divided World?"

The study found that 63% of people are upset by divisiveness. Of respondents, 60% think brands should try to bring people together, while 50% believe they shouldn't be political, but action matters as much as talk. He discussed several brands that weren't necessarily courting people around specific issues were still finding themselves pulled into public discourse.

Nair said, "You can't sit this debate out. You have to have a point of view, at least ready, for crisis management."





Tips to overcome divisiveness:

- Acknowledge difficulty
- Underscore urgency
- Make hate the enemy.

“The best brands are the ones that are building big tents for belonging, bringing more people in.” – Suresh Nair, Global Chief Strategy Officer at Grey New York.

“I don’t agree with my neighbor about everything, but my kid is still going to go trick-or-treating at his house. You find the small things that connect us together,” Nair said.

WHAT ABOUT THE MACHINES? THE IMPORTANCE OF AI, VOICE AND TECHNOLOGY

StratFest took a close look at the emerging technologies shaping the landscape, with particular focus on AI. A panel, including Bethann Cregg of IBM Watson Advertising, Ed DeCaria of Nucleal, Kendra Clarke of Sparks & Honey, and Ben Royce of Google and Columbia University, explored AI’s usefulness today and what it would mean for planning in the future.

DeCaria said, “AI is not going to eat brand planners. However, there will be a fusion.” Cregg offered that with advancements in tools, there will be better personality insight and tone analysis and opportunities for improved research and segmentation. “AI will also enable people to work a lot smarter and faster than they could before,” she said.

Clarke noted that currently 93% of people state they would be trusting of AI to provide direction at work, but she cautioned on AI’s inherent bias, saying, “All data is history. And what happened is biased. We’re training our own biases into what we’re building.”





Royce, who spoke about AI's ability to reduce time to insight, presented examples of how AI can offer data around surprising consumer preferences in pre-roll ads. "The data can tell you what works, but not why. That's where you come in," he said.

In her own talk, Sarah DaVanzo stressed that there are four things humans do better than AI: we possess emotions and the ability to be truly empathetic, creative, insightful and novel.

CONDITIONING FOR A SCREENLESS FUTURE

Christopher Neff, Senior Director of Innovation at the community, predicts a 40% reduction in screens by 2028 as the reliance on phones decreases. The emergence of voice, computer vision, AI, ambient computing, cloud processing and all of the Rs: AR, VR, MR, XR are the technologies of the future that will contribute to that reduction in screen time.

Neff believes that going screenless will be a good thing, suggesting that that being tied to our mobile phones has caused humans to have lower attention spans. "How much do we think about the answer to a question before we Google it, and how much of that do we really absorb?" he asked. "It's our ability to be in this room and think and talk together that is our differentiation."

Neff noted that there are some obstacles to overcome before we realize the promise of these emerging technologies. Form factors and hardware need to be less clunky, and there needs to be some semblance of fashion for there to be widespread adoption, referencing that Google Glass was a great introduction to the market, but people didn't want to wear them. We still haven't seen the potentially biggest player in the market – Apple – make their move, suggesting it's not ready for prime time until they've fully bought in.





THE 22ND ANNUAL JAY CHIAT AWARDS FOR STRATEGIC EXCELLENCE

Congratulations to the winners of the 2018 Jay Chiat Awards, including McCann Worldgroup India, winner of the Grand Prix and inaugural Agency of the Year. In addition to the awards, which were presented at a reception on the first night of StratFest, winning case studies for inspired campaigns were presented throughout the conference. For all of this year's winners, and case studies click here: <http://stratfest.aaa.org/2018-winners/>





HANDS-ON LEARNING WORKSHOPS

Over the two day event, StratFest hosted 14 hands-on learning workshops. Some popular workshops included Creative Brainstorming Techniques from the UCB Writers Room; The Future Planner's Toolkit; With the Power of Storytelling, Data Can Become Kryptonite for Any Barrier You Face; Magical Instinct: Going Beyond Logic and Reason for Insight; and Smart and Scrappy: The Research Hustle to Making Work that Matters.





LEADERSHIP IN TURBULENT TIMES:

THE LEADERSHIP FORUM & SMALL AGENCY PLANNER PARLEY

The members-only Leadership Forum took place October 9, where heads of planning came together to discuss roles of strategists in leading change in their agencies and for their clients. The session was led by Bree Groff, CEO of NOBL Collective, with a presentation on the Future of Strategy by Eva Kasten, President of WARC Americas.

4A's also hosted its first Small Agency Planner Parley during StratFest. Hosted by John Roberts, Chief Strategy Officer/Founder at Truth Collective, the full-house gathering focused on the forces shaping the industry, and how being small can be big.



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