

AMSTERDAM WORLDWIDE

Stop worrying about the future of advertising and focus on relevance, Richard Gorodecky says

So what is the future of advertising? Well, I can say for sure that, in the future, it is highly likely we will continue to spend a great deal of time asking: "What is the future of advertising?" While we should be busy defining the future, we seem to be spending an awful lot of time trying to define it. We're obsessed. We read the articles, the books, the blogs, and sit through the lectures. We hang on to the latest behavioural buzzword like it's the last lifejacket, and we call "forward" in whichever direction the latest and greatest industry navel-gazer identifies. Why? Because as an industry, we're terrified.

It wasn't all that long ago when we used to wake up in the morning with a fairly accurate view of what the hell it was we actually did for a living. We didn't ponder the future much beyond "which director, photographer, type-face or sneaker brand?" But then things changed. We realised that the monologue could be a dialogue, and that technology freed us. Things had changed and it was great.

But then they changed again. Then they changed some more. And ever since then, change has continued to enjoy a prolonged period of change and has no intention of doing much else, thank you very much. And opportunity – great, wild, absolutely anything is possible, "why the hell wouldn't you build the Statue of Liberty out of chocolate and get Brian Eno to compose a symphony to go with it?" kind of opportunity, in its new, wholly indefinable, inconsistent, and often unrecognisable state, gave us a case of chronic uncertainty.

So, how to end this insecurity? Well, the best thing would be to clearly define what the future of advertising is. At Amsterdam Worldwide, we are proud to be able to tell you that we have absolutely no idea. None. Not a sausage. We would also like to add that anyone who claims that they do should be touting their wisdom from the sideshow stalls of a travelling circus, wearing silk scarves and lots of bracelets. It's probably worth ten minutes of your time and may be entertaining, but your money would be equally well spent on the bumper cars or the shooting range, and would probably give you an equally valid perspective. The wisest of us all may even be right, but they'll be right temporarily. At best, they'll have a snapshot, but there's no roadmap.

The real question isn't what will advertising be in the future. Advertising will be whatever it needs to be to connect brands to their customers, to be valid, welcome, relevant and successful. The only constant we can look forward to will be continual change. Advertising is not going to settle down and behave itself ever again. Really.

The definition of what we do and how we do it has been replaced with a



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At a glance

Founded 1999 as StrawberryFrog Amsterdam; rebranded in 2008 as Amsterdam Worldwide

Principals Brian Elliott, founder and chief executive; Richard Gorodecky, executive creative director; Jonathan Fletcher, strategy director; Hazel Livingstone, client services director; Nicolette Lazarus, business development director

Staff 40

Location Amsterdam

What's the best thing that will happen in 2009? We'll continue the success we experienced in 2008 and have more opportunities to use the number nine when writing the date

Describe the shape of your agency in 2015 We will travel to work with jet-packs, lunch will be a time-saving single pill and we will have greater understanding of client needs through "Mind Merging Technology"™

dotted line and an easy-wipe marker. The relevant question is, in fact: what will the advertising agency be in the future? But, due to the current velocity of change, I think the future may well have happened a week last Wednesday. In which case, the question that we now need to answer is: what can a successful advertising agency be today that allows it to be relevant tomorrow and for the entirely unforeseeable future?

For us, that means absolute dynamic flexibility. Or, to put it another way, to take full advantage of the opportunities that change provides, you need to be in a state of change yourself.

At Amsterdam Worldwide, we are structured – or perhaps unstructured – to go with, exploit and, whenever possible, create change. Whatever the client, the need and the opportunity, we can, in a very short period of time, shape-shift to suit that particular case. Amsterdam Worldwide

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is a core team of open-eyed, open-eared and open-minded visionaries, instigators and pilots.

Through association, partnership and collaboration, that team can tap into a vast, diverse skill-set anywhere in the world. An agency constantly shifting around need and opportunity.

Our Ideas Without Borders philosophy drives us to work outside of any restrictive parameters. For us, that simply means there is nothing we cannot do. The only thing to bear in mind is that just because you could, doesn't mean you should.

Perhaps that thought brings me to something that actually hasn't changed and will not change: you can only ever do great work with great clients. Yep. That's as true today as it will be tomorrow.

Richard Gorodecky is the executive creative director of Amsterdam Worldwide