

BACK FOR THE FUTURE

Take a minute to think about slowing down to move forward. Hell, take two minutes.

By Marty Orzio

I want back. I realize that could be an inappropriate thing to say for a supposed forward-thinking, change-agent ad guy, but I want more time for our teams to work on assignments—not a lot of time, mind you, just another day or two. Kind of the way it used to be.

As a creative, I realize I may have a credibility problem. Some of us have asked for extensions that we may or may not have ignored since, say, the briefing. Some of us have spent days and days doodling despite nervous entreaties from account folks, then crammed all the work into the weekend before the meeting, and then—naturally—tried to draw sympathy on Monday. I, of course, have never resorted to any of that behavior, but even if I had, it's time we question how we set these deadlines.

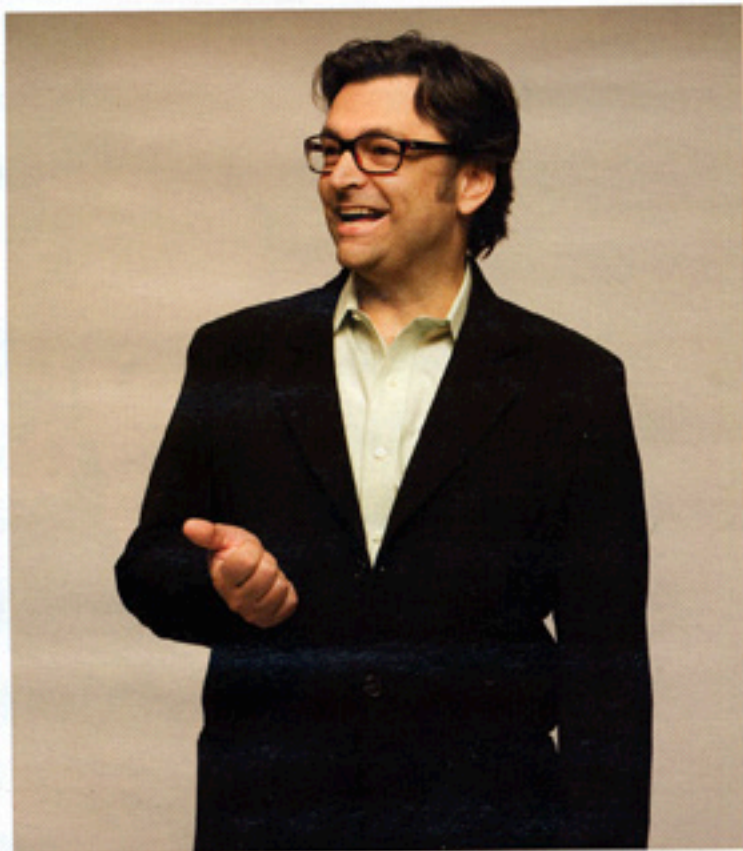
Generally speaking, throughout the industry, we're pushing it—too many fast turnarounds tend to not do the assignment, or our talent, justice. Even if the allotted time for creative development is reasonable, teams are juggling several briefs at a time. To hang on to any degree of craft seems a luxury.

Granted, we've got computers that enable us to spit the work out, make changes, try out different fonts—much more quickly than we used to. Granted, we now have planners, who do a lot of the thinking that creative and research and account services once trudged through without much expertise or individual accountability. And we have a deeper understanding of brands to help us set creative expectations.

So, OK, we don't need a month to turn around a print ad, and we have to acknowledge that fast turnarounds will always be a part of our business, particularly with retail accounts; we do, however, need more than a couple of days to regularly create something compelling.

Times have changed. For all the reasons that we hear about each day—our cynical or indifferent consumers and so on—it's getting increasingly harder to succeed with uninteresting communication (i.e., work that sucks). Strategy and media and integration are complex disciplines that demand additional consideration.

Here's another reason: these timelines and workloads necessitate way too much gang-banging. (Hey, if it were a good way of managing creatives, would we give it such a lovely name?) Truly creative people create their best work, I believe, out of desire, and that desire is proportional to the amount of responsibility they are given. It's like we're playing with mediocrity, because when we don't have enough time chances become greater that we



resort to formula. And when we don't depend on our skills but rather on our memory, we lose confidence in our imaginations. The anxiety breeds insecurity and fear. Hang out in the studio the night before a presentation. It feels like Fawcety Towers in high season.

Personally, I don't want to build an agency on fear or expediency or without any personal investment—an agency of creative directors who have no time to direct creative. I want CDs to energize talent; I don't want to build a sweatshop. I want to retain our best people and I want to keep them challenged and reward them when they exceed expectations. I want them to know that the organization has faith in them. I want time for them to fail—and begin again a little smarter. Especially while there are more and more outlets for creativity, besides advertising, that pay well.

Sure, I may be a little light in the left brain department, but it seems to make sense, business-wise. There are shelves of books about creativity and what makes fertile ground for it, like *A Technique for Producing Ideas* and *The Artist's Way at Work*, and it seems we're only getting further away from the ideal.

So I want back. I believe it would move us forward, too. ■

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