

If a tree falls in the forest... ...and no-one is there to see it, did it really happen?

Creativity unsung and without an audience is an illusion. In fact creativity itself is not that hard. Any fool can be creative, any fool can have an idea. Account man, media guy, copywriter, art director, CEO's PA, for God's sake, even the dispatch boy. But selling it is another story and another, yet vital, skill entirely.

The problem with all these above folks is that if you abandon your 'ideas' when challenged then you are not fully creative. It is the easiest job in the world to play devil's advocate, whether internally or externally, to level negative criticism at a nascent idea; most advertisers have this mindset surgically implanted at birth. That's why



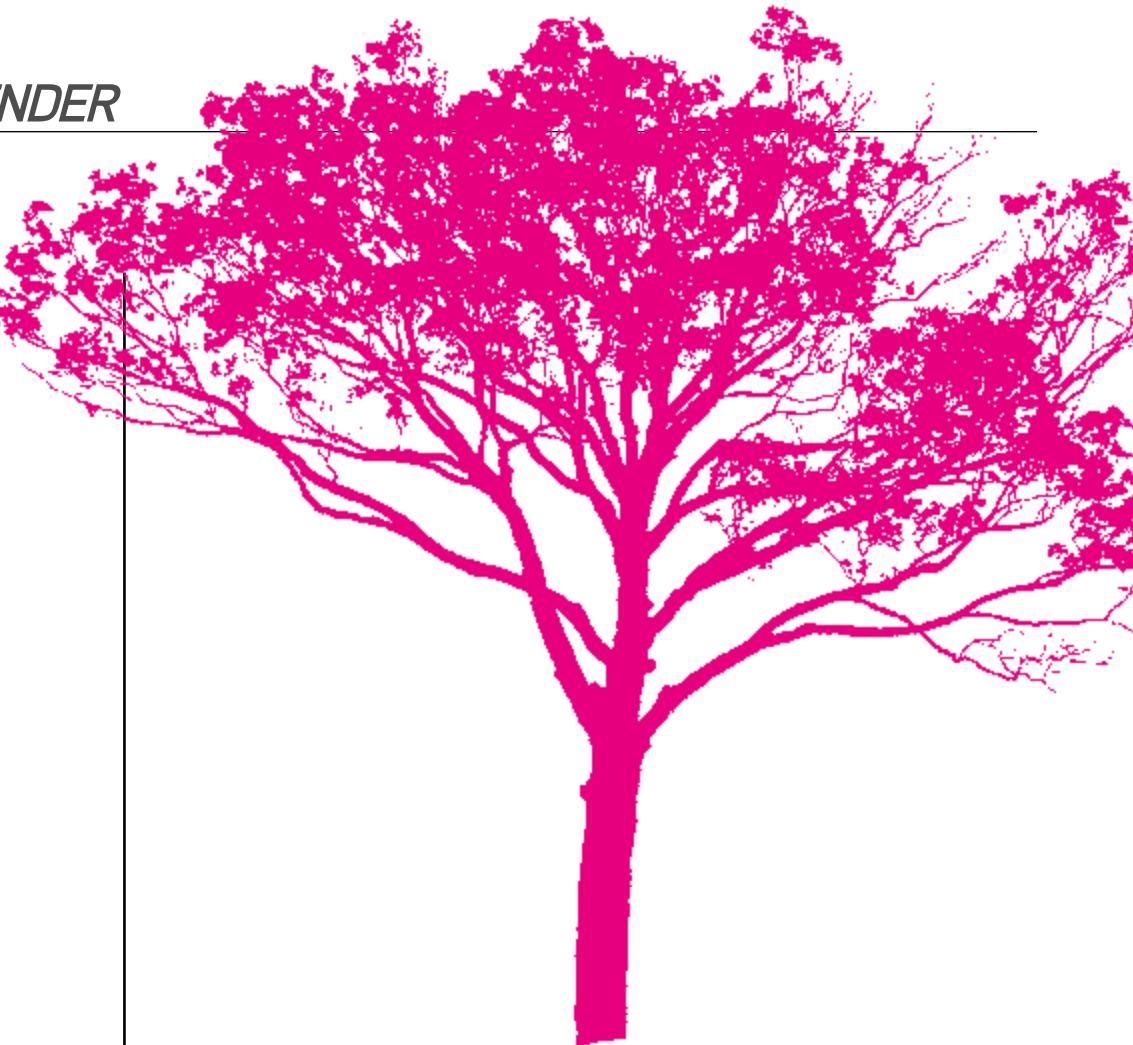
creators have to be up to the challenge of successfully selling their creativity or have it suffer the fate of the eponymous tree. The question therefore becomes how far you would go to bring your idea into the light?

One route is to fight, be belligerent, throw yourself to the ground and gnash at the carpet (*Like King John? Ed*). Cry out 'Off, off, you lendings! Come. Unbutton here' (*tear off your clothes like King Lear? Ed*). Jump on the table and wee over all the presentation boards (*Like American adman George Lois actually did? Ed*). I can't vouchsafe for the efficacy of these tactics, but again, how far would you go to see your ideas shared with the great unwashed.

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I have a buddy, a gifted creative chap, who, when faced with a client who was attempting to rewrite his advert, took out an incredibly huge, oversized joke pen from his pocket and proffered it to the aforementioned Philistine saying, 'if you're going to make a fool of yourself chum, make it a big one'. That took balls the size of zeppelins.



Now I might argue that these things are not particularly creative just extreme and might require great reserves of courage or foolhardiness. Perhaps selling the idea needs to be somewhat more subtly creative.

For example, and I think I have mentioned this before, the late Yasmin Ahmad was a past master at creative selling. She had great wheezes for putting the audience on their back feet and rendering negative arguments moot. Sometimes it would be showing excessive charm, sometime it was the clothes she wore, sometimes it was intellectual gymnastics, sometimes it was overly humble pleading, sometimes sheer bloody-mindedness. Absolutely anything to see her creative vision appear. No shame, no fear.



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I am quoted as saying 'she took no prisoners'. It was a skill easily as profound as her creativity. Possibly more so. I might add that she also was, in the 'French' mode, quite prepared to lose her job for her creativity, she actually refused to work for advertisers unreceptive to her creativity. (*And she won. Ed.*)

So when talking about creativity, either sending or receiving, do bear in mind that wonderful techniques and creative avenues for having ideas are only half the story. Without practicing, rehearsing, developing equally creative ideas for selling, you're wasting your skills, and in that case all you can do is 'make like a tree'. Boom tish!

A parting shot...

Never, ever, should one listen to the gainsayers, the obsequious fawners, the impotent folks who could never have an idea if their lives depended on it, when they say, on the rejection of an idea, 'there's plenty more where that came from'. They are assholes.

Paul J Loosley is an English person who has been in Asia 40 years, 12 as executive creative director and regional planner for JWT and 26 making TVCs. Retired some five years ago yet still, for some strange reason,



he can't shut-up about advertising. Any feedback: mail p.loosley@gmail.com (please keep it leafy).