

The Provocateur



Listen Up: It's time for brands to find a new way to tell their stories

Wavemaker

It's old news that the pandemic has created a new social purpose for brands – at least for those that COVID-19 has inspired to make a contribution beyond commerce.

Stepping up has made their values more visible and more important. Consumers expect less talk and real action. What's new is the role this has created for branded content. Social responsibility requires communicating and interacting with people in a nuanced way; a task that's tailor-made for the richness and storytelling of content, and its ability to draw in authentic voices outside the walls of a brand.

Pre-crisis, few brands had any great appetite for large-scale branded content beyond standard partnership deals and influencers. Clients often told us that they saw it as time-consuming or difficult to measure. Since advertising did most of the comms job all on its own, branded content was used to simply 'fill in the gaps.'

This had its frustrations, but for our clients who did jump in, success has come quickly. Two quick examples. Formula One's Drive to Survive, a fly-on-the-wall documentary series in collaboration with Netflix about the 2018/2019 F1 World Championships, was wildly successful in attracting new audiences. Another client, Lavazza invested in a 30-minute documentary with one of Columbia's leading directors, highlighting the sacrifices and risks farmers take by choosing to grow coffee over cocaine, a perfect example of the unique power of branded content to tell, not sell, a complex brand story to existing and new customers.





2020 is the year to give people reasons to believe, and there is a world of brilliant creative and distribution partners out there that can help your brand share these reasons. Three tips for getting it right:



Experiment to find what's right for your brand, and for your target audience. While a big investment may feel too risky for many brands, sharing new stories in smaller spaces allows brands to evaluate what lands and what doesn't before going big.



Work away from the plans of the past to up your creativity and discover roots for growth. Maybe choose a niche product or audience. Some of our biggest successes are on smaller brands. And it will cost less than you think.

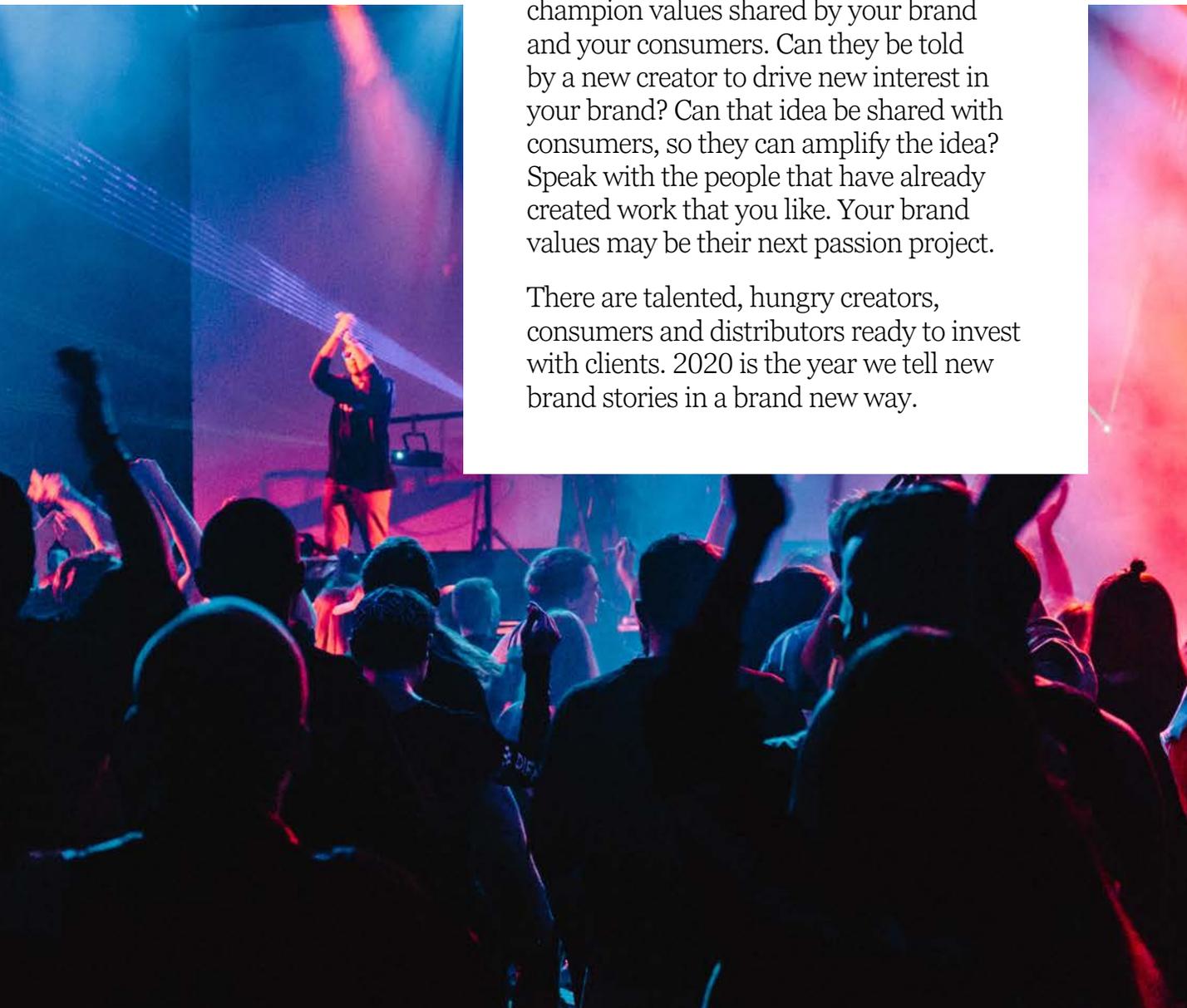


People want to collaborate – creators, consumers, producers, even platforms. This is the time to bring them on board, take risks together, learn and invite the diversity that creates category-busting growth.

Change is in the air. One of our clients is currently working with the world's hottest hip-hop artist (no exaggeration!) on a song and music video inspired by their brand. Another is exploring a pan-regional docuseries. FMCG clients, typically with more TV-heavy plans, are ever more interested in branded content because they know that as TV spots get skipped or streamed over, creating something people choose to watch is a business must.

How can brands get started? Begin with the experts inside your agencies – there are probably ideas that have been discussed internally, but not presented as they weren't right for the 2020 brief back in 2019, but could be right today. Zone in on the ideas that feel right because they champion values shared by your brand and your consumers. Can they be told by a new creator to drive new interest in your brand? Can that idea be shared with consumers, so they can amplify the idea? Speak with the people that have already created work that you like. Your brand values may be their next passion project.

There are talented, hungry creators, consumers and distributors ready to invest with clients. 2020 is the year we tell new brand stories in a brand new way.





Any questions? We're here to help.
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