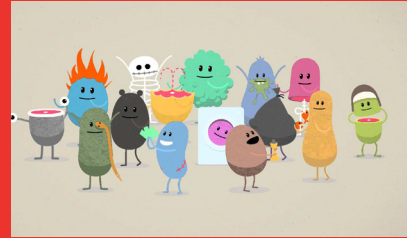


# ADS WORTH SPREADING



**TED**2013

**TED INITIATIVES**



**ADS WORTH SPREADING**

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## INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of advertising in the 21st century? To say that it exists to sell stuff would be to capture only part of its evolving mission. Advertising operates in a cultural and technological context where consumers know everything about a brand – from who owns it to where products are manufactured. Corporations are judged by more than the quality of their goods. A brand's values, and the emotions they evoke, matter. In response, advertising is going from building brands to taking stands.

TED's Ads Worth Spreading challenge rewards advertising that takes a stand.

### What can <service/product here> do for me?

Advertising used to define a brand's utility to consumers – think Miller Light's "Tastes great, less filling." Increasingly, corporations consign utility to mobile apps that can manage your finances, track your calories and organize your day. Brand advertising now sells something less tangible but equally powerful: Coke is about happiness; Ram Trucks embodies resilience; Expedia offers (personal) journeys. These are relatable moments that speak to the audience on an emotional, and even primal, level.

Visual media, like Internet video, amplifies these emotional responses. The effect is so profound that web giant Google consulted with anthropologists to understand and catalog our reactions. They set out to discover what people share on the Internet and why. The answer has three parts:

*First*, visuals elevate the everyday and make it fascinating. This explains why we photograph our meals and post them on Instagram. It also explains the power of CCTV footage in Coke's "Security Cameras" spot.

*Second*, visuals access our child mind, which is free to make associations between seemingly disparate topics. It's the part of us that appreciates the Ryan Gosling "Hey Girl" meme but also the power of myth and fairy tales.

*Third*, there's an energy exchange that takes place when you share experiences with others. It's the energy of the fans that fuels the athlete in GlaxoSmithKline's "The Crowd."

As Google's Abigail Posner says, "Visual is always the A story." As ads have become more adept at tapping human emotions, they have, paradoxically, become less and less like advertising. Instead, they're messages from brands to citizens. Documentary-style spots such as Expedia's "Find Your Understanding" are increasingly blurring that line between traditional media and messaging.

As Eliza Esquivel, a two-time Ads Worth Spreading judge and the vice president of global brand strategy at Mondelez International, summed up the challenge winners: "It's all the stuff that makes the world go around: human moments, human myths, transcending our limits, transcending our prejudices, rediscovering ourselves, laughing at ourselves, and believing in our dreams."



## INTRODUCTION (CONT.)

### *What makes an ad worth spreading?*

The Ads Worth Spreading challenge, now in its third year, seeks to shine the spotlight on creative that uses the intuitive power of visual storytelling in service of ideas. TED partnered with media analytics firm Ace Metrix to solicit viewer reaction to the spots from both American and international audiences. The spots were judged on everything from shareability to authenticity across all demographics.

The spots are also judged qualitatively by a group of curators convened by TED. Unlike traditional advertising competitions, the challenge pairs a celebrated TED speaker with a leading thinker in the advertising industry to match insider knowledge with the outsider perspective.

## TEAMS

### SOCIAL GOOD

**Ellen Gustafson**

TED Speaker, creator of The 30 Project, co-founder of FEED

**Simon Issacs**

Principal, Task Force

### TALK

**Sebastian Wernicke**

TED Speaker, head of business development, Seven Bridges Genomics

**Tom Beckman**

Executive creative director & partner, Prime Stockholm

### CREATIVE WONDER

**Raghava KK**

TED Speaker, contemporary artist

**Adam Joseph**

Executive producer, Legs Media

### CULTURAL COMPASS

**Kirby Ferguson**

TED Speaker, filmmaker and remixer

**Gerry Graf**

Founder, Barton F Graf 9000

### BRAND BRAVERY

**Jared Ficklin**

TED Speaker, user experience designer, Frog Fellow

**Eliza Esquivel**

Vice president, Global Brand Strategy at Mondelez International

### EDUCATION

**Jonathan Bergmann**

TED-Ed educator, co-creator of Flipped Learning Network

**Jinal Shah**

Digital strategist, JWT New York

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## SOCIAL GOOD

*Click "Like" to Save the World*

The generation raised on digital technology, the prevailing critique goes, will click "Like" for a cause but that's it. Join the Peace Corps and risk getting only one bar for your iPhone reception? No thanks. This tendency even has a name, coined by Internet critic Evgeny Morozov: Slacktivism.

It's true that digital activism can seem hollow at times, in part because people consume content on multiple devices, often while distracted by something else. Yet while it's difficult to imagine being spurred to action by digital media, it has proven to be remarkably good at raising awareness. Kony 2012, which breathlessly reported the atrocities of the Ugandan rebel leader Joseph Kony, proved to be one of the most effective pieces of communication in recent memory, garnering approximately 100 million views on YouTube. Some of those viewers contacted their legislators or got involved, but for the vast majority it was an awareness raising campaign.

So perhaps digital spots can do the most good when they require the least from the audience. This is the clever assumption of The Rainforest Alliance's "Follow The Frog" spot (*Wander Films, Los Angeles*). The spot is in part a play on the desire of digital media consumers to participate despite a lack of time, ability or expertise on the issue. What would happen, the video asks, if you saw something so compelling that you decided to take drastic action?



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**"The simpler the idea, the easier it is to share."**

*—Max Joseph, director, Wander Films*

**"I would argue that it's the best nonprofit video ever."**

*—Ari Kuschner, CEO, m ss ng p eces*

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## SOCIAL GOOD (CONT.)

### IN FOCUS: “Follow the Frog”

If Kony 2012 represented the height of earnestness in online advocacy, “Follow the Frog” was the antidote. Self-referential on multiple levels, acutely culturally aware and unabashedly funny, the campaign lovingly lampooned its target audience of aspiring do-gooders while communicating the message. Max Joseph, the spot’s director, cinematographer and narrator, said the concept was “a runaway train of thought, this nervous extrapolation of things you shouldn’t do.”

The spot careens from one cultural trope to the next, like a fever dream of strange logic and loose causality. But it does all of this in service of rainforest advocacy. The simple message, which asks only that consumers buy coffee and other products branded with The Rainforest Alliance, is tailor-made for online advocacy.

Viewers responded by rewarding the spot with highest scores of any challenge winner. “Follow The Frog” received an Ace Score of 679 against the average score of 512 for all ads. The ad performed well across all demographics, particularly young men and older women, and across all income brackets.

ACE SCORE OF

**679**

AGAINST AN AVERAGE OF  
512 FOR ALL AGES

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## TALK

### *Content and Context*

A classic tale about the power of visuals: Lesley Stahl, then the White House Correspondent for CBS News, reported a story critical of President Ronald. The almost-six-minute piece, an eternity on the evening news, showed a smiling Reagan speaking at the Special Olympics and visiting a nursing home. After it ran, Stahl got a call from a White House source thanking her for the story. “Nobody heard what you said,” the source told her. The upbeat visuals, in his estimation, overrode the negative talk.

It was a wonderful bit of judo by a skilled political operator, but did the visuals really trump all else? How do we use the power of visuals to complement, rather than obscure, the message of a powerful talk? Take, for example, the TED Talks, a collection of insightful, funny and sometimes frightening ideas that recently surpassed 1 billion views. Each of these videos attempts to create a visually stimulating talk by shooting lectures with the same level of stage direction and artistic effort as a rock concert.

The Talk category is meant to celebrate a style of video that features direct communication with the audience, much like a TED Talk. It elevates the content and context without losing the message. The Talk judges asked, what is this spot saying and why is it important now? Through this lens, advertising is less about cleverness and more about communicating a message to constituents. If corporations are to articulate their values, they have to speak with an authentic voice. The clearest example of this was Ram Trucks’s Super Bowl spot, “The Farmer” (*The Richards Group*).



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**“If you look at ‘The Farmer’ from a craft perspective, then you miss the important part. Why is this an important piece now? How does this piece display where we’re going in society in general?”**

*—Tom Beckman, AWS judge, Prime (Stockholm)*

**“The Farmer allowed those eloquent words that Paul Harvey created to be heard again. We didn’t want to reinvent this presentation.”**

*—Rob Baker, creative director, The Richards Group*

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## TALK (CONT.)

### IN FOCUS: “The Farmer”

In recent years, Chrysler, Ram Trucks's parent company, has transformed its advertising to map the contours of American society, with spots featuring Eminem and Clint Eastwood. “The Farmer” moves further down this road by appropriating a speech by radio personality Paul Harvey, replete with the scratches, warps and seemingly eternal pauses from the original recording. The spot was nothing short of the brand's embrace of America's farmers according to judge Tom Beckman, a principal at PRIME Stockholm. It was a declaration of Ram Trucks's “values proposition,” Beckman said. It makes good business sense, too: Consumers reward companies that announce who they are.

The original idea came from an amateur YouTube tribute to farmers set to Harvey's poem, which was delivered at a Future Farmers of America (FFA) gathering in either 1978 or 1986 (the date is in dispute). The creative team at Ram's agency, The Richards Group, found the video on Farms.com's YouTube channel, and proposed to the FFA that they collaborate on the spot. Harvey's description of the farmer was the same as the values of the Ram brand, said Rob Baker, a creative director at The Richards Group.

**10 MILLION**  
YOUTUBE VIEWS IN JUST  
**5 DAYS**

The agency set about making a new set of images that would match the power of Harvey's words. The photographs were raw and didn't shy away from religious iconography, which might have put other brands off. The spot scored much better with older audiences, who tended to recognize Paul Harvey and were more forgiving of the spot's run time as a result. As part of the spot, Ram Trucks partnered with the FFA to donate \$100,000 for every 1 million views, up to \$1 million dollars. The video racked up the 10 million views in five days.



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## EDUCATION

### *Seeking Enlightenment*

Can advertising educate? Can it express the joy of learning without shilling products? And can, on occasion, ads serve as a complement to educational media? Those were the provocative questions posed by the inclusion of this category for the first time in Ads Worth Spreading. Of course, it's difficult to see the educational value of bros happily imbibing light beer at a beach house. But to view advertising in this light alone would be myopic. Some of the best advertising sells nothing but awareness – of struggles, causes and ideas.

For nomination team member Jinal Shah, a digital strategist at JWT, the category called for a rethinking and a broadening of what education could mean in the context of advertising. “Where does education get you?” Shah asked. “It gets you to a more enlightened place.”

Enlightenment isn't the exclusive domain of non-profits and advocacy organizations. Brands can play an important role in shaping our notions of education. Such was the case with Dell's “Annie” spot (*Young & Rubicam, New York*), the story of a young girl's quest for flight aided by her laptop. The creative brief called for a simple back to school spot. So the team set out to educate themselves by going into classrooms and afterschool sessions. They also did homework with kids and that's when the inspiration struck. “We realized that the real emotional power wasn't really what kids we're doing in the classroom,” said Joe Rivas, head of Global Strategy at Y&R. “It was when they were making things, doing things and creating things with their own hands.”

The spot tied Dell to education – Annie achieves her dreams with the help of a laptop and some real-world tech skills – but also spoke to a deeper cultural truth about inspiration and perseverance. That may explain its consistently high performance across all audiences, particularly for authenticity scores. Audience members noted that the ad highlighted “the fun of technology” rather than conveying the message “this device can be your personal slave.”

**86%**

**OF RESPONDENTS  
FELT THE SENTIMENT  
OF “ANNIE” WAS  
AUTHENTIC**

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## EDUCATION (CONT.)

### IN FOCUS: “Three Little Pigs”

The “Three Little Pigs” (*BBH London*) offers such a satisfying meal that it’s hard to believe you’re eating vegetables. The creatives were charged with the seemingly impossible task of communicating the *Guardian’s* model of open journalism through a compelling story. It was, in the words of David Kolbusz, BBH’s deputy executive creative director, “a product demonstration.” A current event would quickly become dated, so the team reached back to a classic fairy tale.

In this telling, the tale becomes a nuanced look at our times. Our sense of who the victims and the villains are shifts as information trickles out and, empowered by technology, we play a key role in shaping the story. The pieces of the tale branch off as readers react to each revelation and propel the discussion with their comments – “I’m behind on my payments too,” one sympathetic commenter notes after the pigs are revealed as underwater mortgage holders driven to insurance fraud. The spot’s narrative economy stems from the familiarity of the tale and of the current issues of homeowners’ rights, false accusations and mortgage default.

Yet, while this spot was beloved by the advertising community, viewers were somewhat perplexed. Audiences in the U.S., United Kingdom and Australia found the message hard to follow, pronounced themselves confused and said they found it less authentic.



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**“They wanted to create a piece of creative that would do the job of explaining what creating a piece of open journalism was. It’s a product demonstration.”**

*—David Kolbusz, BBH London*

**“It’s about what the *Guardian* stands for its what they believe in its what they aspire to be. You didn’t even know you were being marketed to.”**

*—Jinal Shah, digital strategist, JWT New York*

## BRAND BRAVERY

### *The Courage To Be Interesting*

Brand Bravery is what happens when brands sign off on truly great work. It's about corporations creating content that declares solidarity with customers. Stunt marketing, or ads designed explicitly to shock, attract attention but rarely elevate the brand. When Oreo rallied around Gay Pride Month and put rainbow stuffing in its cookies, it put the brand on one side of an issue that, while shifting, is still divisive. It was a calculated risk that paid off. The post has drawn almost 300,000 likes to date and almost 100,000 shares to date.

Coke's "Security Cameras" spot (*Young & Rubicam Argentina*) took on an equally politicized topic with a cheeky sense of humor. The surveillance apparatus that arose after the 9/11 terror attacks inflamed citizens across the spectrum. Coke's spot, which featured acts of kindness, bravery and friendship captured by security cameras, turned the idea of "security" on its head: The cameras were passive witnesses to citizens "securing" each other. Audiences said the ad enhanced the brand, which is particularly difficult with a brand as established as Coca-Cola.

**<2%**

**OF RESPONDENTS**

**claimed the ad changed  
their perception of the  
brand negatively**



## BRAND BRAVERY (CONT.)

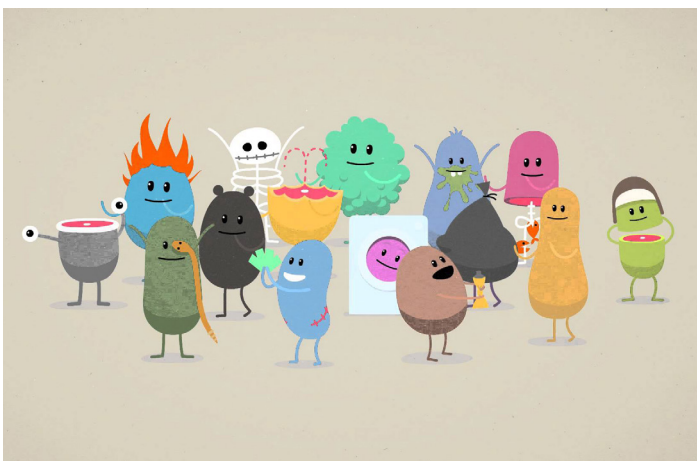
### IN FOCUS: “Dumb Ways to Die”

Some subjects are both numbingly boring and deadly serious. There was a huge incidence of risky behavior, particularly among teens, around the metro in Melbourne, Australia but nothing the authority had done worked. “The only real way to create a safety message that would spread and get through to young people was to embed it in very entertaining content,” said John Mescall, the executive creative director at McCann Melbourne. Thus was born “Dumb Ways to Die.”

It takes bravery to use dark comedy to address a grave issue, particularly if you’re waiting until the last 15 seconds to unveil the message. But it works because the song is so singable (a karaoke version is available on iTunes) that it encouraged audience participation. It’s a classic example of what anthropologists define as the “energy exchange,” where people want to share events that make them feel more human and alive.

The video went viral around the world, making the front page of Reddit and spreading through Tumblr. The audience response was typified by a YouTube commenter: “I thought this video was just a joke then i saw the end and was like HOLY SHIT THIS IS LEGIT!?!?”

The spot lagged behind others in the set. It was deemed “long” at 3:00 and also displayed some polarity – with instances of “gruesome”, “disturbing”, and “horrible” scattered amongst the praise. The music made an impact on respondents, with many noting “catchy” in their verbatim responses.



**“Most work that’s spreadable is likable and actually leaves you feeling happier than when you went into it.”**

—John Mescall, executive creative director, McCann Australia

**“A public service announcement to encourage young people to be safe around trains could have been really heavy-handed and preachy. This spot used dark comedy to connect with young people and get them to share the message.”**

—Eliza Esquivel, vice president, Mondelez International

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## CULTURAL COMPASS

### *Defining the Cultural Moment*

What defines the cultural moment? Is it the Harlem Shake or the debate over marriage equality? Many brands feel the need to have a plan for both them – the Harlem Shake because corporations desperately need to figure out how to go viral, and marriage equality because the discussion is so important in America right now.

Of course, culture isn't only about controversy. GlaxoSmithKline's "The Crowd Is My Only Drug" (*TBWA/London*) carried a straightforward message that was tied to the Olympic moment. The spot, a masterpiece of special effects, conveyed the natural high that athletes experience. GSK was providing antidoping services for the games and wanted to make sure the spirit was clean. However, the ad had a relatively short shelf life because of its tie to a specific moment in time. It did not score as well as others in a host of areas, including brand perception and shareability.



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## CULTURAL COMPASS (CONT.)

### IN FOCUS: “Find Your Understanding”

The online travel business is, by its nature, transactional. It's about deals and ease of use. When 180LA set out to pitch Expedia, the goal was to put the emotion back into travel. “Nothing is more prejudiced to narrow-mindedness and bigotry than travel. We thought, let's tap into that notion. When you travel, you experience,” said William Gelner, managing partner of 180LA.

“Find Your Understanding,” the real-life account of a father traveling to his gay daughter's wedding, took on this political issue with a sense of humanity. It was a story that every parent could relate to: a child on a different life path than you envisioned. The piece, which used footage from the couple's actual wedding video, had an unmatched air of authenticity.

The spot split viewers, providing a mirror image of the scores of “The Farmer.” Young people and those with higher incomes flocked to the ad but the ad changed 18 percent of the tested viewers' perceptions of the Expedia brand negatively. Expedia took a chance on this piece.



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**“Nothing is more prejudiced to narrow-mindedness and bigotry than travel. We thought, let's tap into that notion.”**

*—William Gelner, managing partner, 180LA*

**“If it was a short documentary that some guy had made, it would still be that strong.”**

*—Ari Kuschner, CEO, m s s n g p e c e s*



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## CREATIVE WONDER

*Let's Give Them Something to Talk About*

Humans have a remarkable ability to adapt to good things. Flush toilets, plush pillows and top notch CGI are all minimum requirements now, despite being luxuries not that long ago. This tendency has a name: hedonic adaptation.

It's certainly true that our expectation for advertising excellence has increased over time. The world's first TV spot featured a static picture of a Bulova watch face superimposed on a crude map of the United States, with the voiceover "America runs on Bulova time." That was it. Our best ad spots these days are pieces of creative that rival films in tradecraft and creativity. That almost impossibly high expectation is what animates the creative wonder category.

Channel 4's Paralympics promo ad "Meet the Super Humans" delivered that kind of excitement for viewers. The ad performed well among audiences in the United States, Australia and its home market in the United Kingdom. The ad was deemed both highly shareable and sublimely authentic. "We kind of showed these guys for what they really, really are. It was an honest, truthful approach and that was key to the success," said Olivia Browne, business director for Channel 4.



## CREATIVE WONDER (CONT.)

### IN FOCUS: “Daily Dose of Drama”

If creative wonder is about a spot’s ability to hold the audience’s attention, then TNT’s “Daily Dose of Drama” (*Duval Guillaume Modern/Antwerp*) is rare example of the species. Only five of the 26,000 ads tested since 2010 scored as high for attention as this spot.

“They wanted an ad worth talking about,” said Kristiaan Hoet, one of the ad’s lead creatives, of TNT’s instructions for the spot that launched their new channel in Belgium. The spot is an elaborate guerilla marketing stunt: when depressed, a red button in the middle of a small Belgian town sets in motion a calamitous series of robbery, shootout and car wreckage. The team wanted to create an experience and get authentic reactions from bystanders as the mayhem unfolded around them. The spot was created for the express purpose of sharing. “Brands have got to be more active in thinking about a story that’s more interesting so people can talk to each other,” said Hoet.

# 78%

### OF RESPONDENTS

claimed they would talk about or share “Daily Dose of Drama” via email, Facebook, Twitter or in some other way



“We try to think about giving people a story to tell to each other.”

—Kristiaan Hoet, head of digital,  
*Duval Guillaume Modern*

“I want every day to be a Super Bowl day, when ads are fun, are exciting, are engaging, are stories in themselves.”

—Raghava KK, contemporary artist