

What if the right answer is wrong?

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

26 Jul 2017

The thing about process is that it leaves very little room for madness, obsession and mistakes. To be human.

My fear is that our business at the moment is having a lot of conversations about ways to get to huge quantities of acceptable, average answers. Creativity is not at the forefront of our business right now. The ability to make a lot of average stuff quickly, is.

The desire for vast amounts of content by its very nature means a process has to be created. A pipeline. A conveyor belt. A factory. If you look at those last three words you don't get to unique, memorable and human. You get to continual, consistent and sterile.

To some, this may sound pretty good. The problem will be when everybody has a conveyor belt. Then a lot of things are going to look the same. What then?

The question is, will accuracy and frequency be enough? There's a very strong desire to create order and patterns in our business right now. Creativity, by its very nature, breaks patterns. For it to survive it has to be able to make mistakes and take risks. It cannot be content with an average answer. If creativity can't have those things, it will give you the answers you already have. And then it has no value.

I tried to think of an example of doing something the wrong way but something marvellous and human coming out of it. I didn't have to look far.

My youngest son Jamie (playing the piano in the video) is dyslexic. One of the ways we discovered this is that he took piano lessons and he would play a piece at a concert.

We noticed that he wasn't looking up at the sheet music. He was looking down at the keys, He would play the whole piece out of his head. He coped by memorising a whole song. He is eight years old.

In essence, because one part of his brain struggled, another part became almost superhuman. Dyslexia is often called 'the MIT disease' because so many end up in these kinds of respected learning institutions. The reason for this is that dyslexics often develop the ability to make unique connections and come up with novel solutions to complex problems that are very different to typical minds.

Finding another way is one of the most important parts of creativity. It is also a very human quality that gets you somewhere new.

I am not sure it is a word, but I think about humanness a lot. I would define it as the opposite of sterile. It is unexpectedness, delight, surprise and the other stuff that makes life worth living. And I don't just mean those words on a poster. I mean what you feel.

In a couple of years, once we have created a hyper-personalised, hyper-conversational, cross-channel, responsive, data-unified, outcome-based, always-on, highly snackable, curated customer experience, how will human beings feel about it all?

Will research come back that they find it all a bit boring and predictable? Or, will it be that they don't notice it at all because everything has become so seamless? After they have been chased around the internet will they feel like people do now when they get a machine instead of a human being at a call centre?

The truth is, another word for creativity could be humanity. And, if we lose that, in a business that is all about talking to other human beings, we will be in deep trouble. No matter how accurate we are.

"For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong." – HL Mencken.

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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