



THE CREATIVE EDGE IN COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION

April 1, 2006 - Boards Magazine

REAR VIEW

The future is connected

Kevin Roberts assesses the screen age with Sisomo

by Rae Ann Fera

TORONTO - "The revolution has started and no one knows where [advertising is] going because it's being led by the consumer, not by the industry or manufacturers," says Kevin Roberts, worldwide chief creative officer of Saatchi & Saatchi while in Toronto for a chat about the future of advertising. At the root of the discussion is Roberts' new book *Sisomo* - sight, motion and sound - which outlines the need to create an emotional connection with consumers through the myriad screens in their everyday lives. Roberts is accompanied by Brett Channer, CEO/ECD at Toronto-based Saatchi & Saatchi, who is leading Saatchi's charge for change in Canada with projects such as Toyota's recent twominute piece for the new Camry (see pg. 11). Herewith is a snapshot of that conversation.

Boards: What is *Sisomo* and what compelled you to write a book about it?

Kevin Roberts: The mass market's dead and we're in the marketing business. Consumers are blogging and creating their own media everywhere and I realized, 'We're not giving clients what they want'. We're not structured that way, we're not thinking that way, we're not hiring that way. It's all going to come to a really nasty, brutal end quite quickly if we don't do something. I'd written *Lovemarks*, which is all about creating loyalty beyond reason, and it became apparent to me that we'd entered the screen age - I don't know how I lived without a [mobile phone] or an iPod. Then I tried to figure out why I was feeling manipulated and ignored since I should be feeling great. On here (his phone), most of the content I get, I don't want. Most of the stuff I do want, they don't give me. It struck me that we were all dominated by the technology and not by emotional connections. So I wrote a book to say stop arguing about who's going to rule the world, whether it's going to be the telcos, the TV owners. It's going to be none of them - it's going to be the consumer and they're going to want everything. They're going to want convergence and divergence. They'll want it all. But they don't want it treating them disrespectfully.

Boards: Why coin a new word?

Roberts: Because revolutions start with language - and the answer to all of these burning questions around who was going to dominate all this boiled down to sight, sound and motion that was emotionally engaging, attractive and not interruptive.

Boards: How is this concept going to prevent the "nasty, brutal end" for agencies?

Roberts: Because we're going to reinvent ourselves to be the great connectors. It's about bringing emotional connections to these technological platforms. We're going to do that through the screens. We're going to do that through motion and connecting with you in

what we're calling the age of interaction, not the age of interruption. Saatchi's future is going to be around connecting, not just creating. It's going to be about a different kind of creativity, about really engaging with consumers and getting really incredible creative minds committed to all strains, all the time. It's going to be about getting people coming into our creative departments from the get-go who are really hooked into those media.

Boards: How do you make that change?

Roberts: It's the simplest thing in the world to do. You install a new leader [points to Channer], give him a framework and then get the hell out of his way.

Brett Channer we can't do this alone. We have to do this with [our suppliers]. What we need to be able to do is say to our supplier chain, "Right guys, this time it's not a \$200K spot. So how can we do a \$5K content piece on a grocery cart? What else can we do to do the \$10K on a mobile phone that I want to send out for a week and then throw away? It's interesting because when you have these questions, [production] companies have the answers. It's just that no one's been asking the questions. We need to hire creative guys that are interested and think beyond TV. We need to bring media back in house so that it's part of the idea, which we did; we brought in a creative director of media.

Roberts: But don't think TV's dead, the opposite is true.

Channer In fact, these other touch points can drive TV. One of the things we're doing for Camry... what is coming out is a car that's so beautifully designed it will trigger an emotional response. We're doing a two-minute featurette about these two worlds that collide and the car is the savior to these worlds. It's only going to air once on the Academy Awards and then it will be available online for consumers to pass on.

Boards: But there's a risk in only showing it once, isn't there?

Channer There's always risk in trying something new and if you don't take risks you'll never move forward.

Roberts: Risk-aversion is what's stopping this thing really moving from beyond just talk. I can understand that - if you're the chief marketing officer at a client, you have less than three years in your job; if you're a brand manager, you have less than 15 months. The measurement is all on ROI. At the moment emerging media can't even get into that conversation because there isn't enough history to talk about what ROI will be. So clients want to explore, they want to take risks, but they're frightened because their jobs are on the line. The winners will be those people who can [figure out] new research techniques that measure emotional response and feelings - not just this focus group kind of stuff - and learn how to fail fast, learn fast and fix fast.

Boards: When you're looking at this from a creative perspective is a screen a screen a screen?

Channer:No, absolutely not. That's been a big part of our problem because that's what we've been doing. We've been taking a TV spot and then figuring out how to put in on the web or on a phone. That's not the point. The point is what contact point is relevant at that point in time. And that's what we have to figure out.

Boards: What is the biggest barrier at the moment?

Roberts: Most manufacturers are still trying to dominate and own the consumer. They've got to give up that control to the consumer and respond to their feelings. The brands and retailers and media owners still think they have the power. Get over it.