



If Your Creative Isn't Driving Impact, Your Relationships Might Be the Problem

New D&AD and System1 research reveals the strongest creative work is built on trust, not bigger budgets

London, February 19, When creative work fails to deliver results, the instinct is often to blame the idea, the agency or the budget. But new research from D&AD and [System1](#) suggests the issue is more fundamental: *the quality of the relationship behind the work.*

Drawing on analysis of D&AD award-winning campaigns from brands including Burger King, Renault, BBC, Essity, Doritos and CeraVe, the research identifies a clear pattern. Creative excellence that drives impact consistently comes from teams built on strong, long term creative and stakeholder relationships.

Based on six in-depth case studies and System1's effectiveness testing, the findings show that creativity performs best when teams are aligned around shared ambition, able to challenge one another, and trusted to think long term, rather than optimising for short term metrics or speed of delivery.

The findings reinforce D&AD's long-held belief that creative excellence is a critical driver of effectiveness. While D&AD judging remains focused on the quality, originality and execution of



creative ideas, the research helps deepen understanding of the conditions that allow outstanding creative work to deliver meaningful commercial and cultural impact.

The research also challenges a common assumption in modern marketing. When creative work fails to make an impact, it is rarely because teams lack talent or ideas. More often, it is because the working relationship behind the work is not strong enough to support bold thinking and execution.

In practice, this means creating environments where constructive challenges are encouraged, trust is built through consistent collaboration and ambition is protected rather than diluted. The research suggests that brands ultimately get the creativity their relationships allow, not simply the creativity they ask for.

The findings underpin the launch of **Brand & Creative Lab**, a new learning programme from D&AD. The programme is designed to help marketing and in-house creative teams strengthen collaboration, improve decision making and build the conditions in which effective creative work can thrive, combining evidence-based insight with D&AD's long-standing expertise in creative excellence.

A preview session of the programme will be available at the D&AD Festival in May, offering attendees an opportunity to explore the research findings and experience elements of the framework in action.

Paul Drake, Foundation Director at D&AD, said: *“Great creative work doesn’t happen in isolation. It’s built on trust that gives space for healthy tension, shared ambition and the confidence to challenge one another. At D&AD, we’ve spent more than 60 years celebrating creative excellence; studying what enables it and the Brand & Creative Lab is about giving teams the tools and frameworks to build those conditions in practice.”*

Andrew Tindall, SVP Global Partnerships, System1, said: *“Great creativity thrives when it is supported by trust, confidence and a shared belief in long-term impact. Our partnership with D&AD and creative measurement platforms show that emotionally effective work is rarely accidental. It comes from environments where strong relationships allow ambition to flourish and creativity to be challenged, and where clear emotional evidence empowers teams to back bold ideas earlier, make braver decisions with confidence and deliver work that drives real, sustained growth.”*

You can read the full report [here](#)

ENDS
NOTES TO EDITORS

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About D&AD



D&AD is a global creativity non-profit that celebrates, stimulates and enables excellence in design and commercial creativity. Through its world-renowned Awards and education programmes, D&AD aims to generate funding to champion the next generation of creative talent to drive positive change in the industry and beyond. The global steward of creative excellence in commercial creativity. For more, visit: dandad.org

About System1

System1 is The Creative Effectiveness Platform that harnesses the power of emotion to drive growth for the world's leading brands.

Our Test Your Ad (TYA) and Test Your Innovation (TYI) solutions quickly predict the short- and long-term commercial potential of ads and ideas, giving marketers confidence that their creative concepts will resonate with consumers and drive profitable commercial growth. Complementing TYA and TYI is Test Your Brand (TYB), which measures the impact of ads and ideas on brand health.

With a database of over 100,000 ads, System1 allows brands to compare their ads against competitors, and System1's expert guidance helps brands improve the effectiveness of ads and ideas.

System1 was founded in 2000 by John Kearon and has operations in Europe, North America, Brazil, Singapore, and Australia. For more information, visit system1group.com or follow us [@System1](#) on LinkedIn.