

Creative Business Transformation Lions president Ronald Ng's briefing

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Every year at Cannes Lions there's a jury working tirelessly behind the scenes to identify the best work. Before they get started with the judging process, the jury president of each respective Lion gives a briefing to set the tone and provide some guiding principles for assessing every piece of work. These president briefings are private and have never been public before, until now. For the first time ever, Simon Cook, MD of Cannes Lions is pulling back the curtain to let us in on the briefing that would have been given if they had been able to come together.

In the first presidential briefing, Cook interviewed Isobar global chief creative officer, the inaugural president of the new Creative Business Transformation Lions, Ronald Ng to hear his briefing for 2021.

Before commencing the interview, Cook explained that the Lion was created over a three-year period in consultation with the industry and that the presidents will meet with the juries in person next year to judge two years' worth of work.



Ronald Ng, global chief creative officer at Isobar, inaugural president of the new Creative Business Transformation Lions

Here, Cook and Ng get into exactly why the Lion was introduced this year and why it's relevant, especially now given what's been going on...

Cook: *I think one of the things that probably needs to be asked is why creative business transformation? You were preparing to give a briefing to your jury on the very first day of judging to set the tone and also help them build the criteria from which to judge the work, but why now and why does this new Lions exist?*

Ng: I think, Simon, the reason the Creative Business Transformation Lions exists is it comes from a need. Clients' businesses, in the last few years especially, have gone through shifts. You know, we talk about industry shifts and in the last few years these shifts have been seismic, whether it's a threat from a competitor, a startup that was not even there six months ago, and now it's not just a business challenge.



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With the Covid crisis, I think clients are in uncharted waters. It's nothing like anything we've seen before and nobody gave us a heads up that this was coming. So, transformation is really what every client would need to (if not, if they haven't already) look at very quickly, very rapidly because it is transform or die. It is absolutely imperative for clients to go through a transformation right now.

And having this category is absolutely important because looking forward, you know, in a way we are quite fortunate that the Lions didn't happen this year because I do believe that next year we will have a massive body of work that will be submitted into the Lions with all the transformations that are going on right now.

There are going to be fantastic examples next year. If you look at very quickly already, Louis Vuitton, AB InBev, are transforming their operations to create sanitisers, GM [General Motors] is creating ventilators – these are just the starting points of transformation for many of these businesses and with the adoption of e-commerce (that has increased up to 150% in many regions). So the adoption of technology and e-commerce has forced many businesses, that are not already in e-commerce, to take that on and to take that transformation very quickly.

So, for the Creative Business Transformation Lion, it's important that we shine a light on the best examples of transformation. We want to celebrate and hopefully, the rule of Lions as we've known for many, many years has been to inspire brands to do the same, to look at what the benchmark is in terms of creative business transformation and hopefully learn and create their own forms of creative transformation.



Simon Cook, MD of Cannes Lions

Cook: *So Ronald, on the first day of judging, as is tradition, the jury president is expected to give a briefing to their jury to sort of galvanise their thinking and help them set criteria for how to judge this huge breadth of work, especially with transformation, which is a new category. Can you tell us about the briefing you would have given this year if we had been able to come together to judge this work and maybe a little about how we might need to adapt going forward to next year?*

Ng:

“Transformation is the change of the current state. The change of the status quo. So, the one question I want the jury to ask themselves for every piece of work are these five words: Does this unstatus quo everything?”

And what do I mean by that? We want to look at the work through three lenses. What is the dramatic change for the business, the organisation and how does that change affect or influence the industry and ultimately, the third, what is the effect on people's lives? What is the positive that comes out of this transformation, and how does it align with what people seek from brands?

Cook: *So, one of the things about introducing a new Lion within Pride at Cannes Lions is we need an indication of what's going to win because we don't know, so we're going to show a couple of examples from last year – previous winners. So the first one we're going to look at is from KFC:*

So that was KFC and we're going to see other examples when you come together to judge not one year but two years' worth of work and of course there's going to be some work we consider to be pre-Covid versus work that has happened very recently and showing how companies have really accelerated in recent times. Now can you think of an example from the last couple of years that can still stand up, that would fit within the experience?

Ng: Yes, definitely and I think one really, really strong example that was truly transformational was Today at Apple where they transformed their real estate, their brick and mortar that is there and repurposing it to become educational hubs for their customers, and the reason why this is really, really interesting to me is, brands and businesses are having a real challenge getting people to come to their stores today. What Today at Apple did was give people a reason to come to their stores, be inspired and most importantly experiment with the products and see the potential of what Apple products could do for them from a creative standpoint.

Cook: *So, there we have Today at Apple which is something we might describe as pre-Covid work. What about the transformation that we're experiencing at the moment as part of and reaction to Covid-19?*

Ng:

“ Covid-19 has forced companies to transform at scale and speed, but whether a company is transformed to survive, to defend itself, to open new revenue streams or to just augment profit, I think the challenge is how does a company transform for themselves but also align with what's good for the people? ”

And this is a very interesting opportunity for us as client partners because we have never been in a situation where we have been in more conversations with our clients. We are true client partners, so I would urge all of us to as we shape the narrative with our clients, think about what is the press headline that you want coming out of this transformation, and when I say headline, I mean think about a headline that appears in the *Wall Street Journal* or *Wired Magazine*, not just a headline that appears in the ad publications, and think about your case study, you know, as you create the work. When you think about a case study, what are the ingredients that would make the transformational story more powerful? This is the opportunity we have right now. The Lions will only take place in 12 months. I believe there's going to be a really strong body of work that we will see next year and it's going to be really exciting.

Cook: *So, we talked about the transformation side of this Lion but of course, this is a creative festival, we're celebrating the role of creativity in driving business and changing the world, so where does creativity fit into this?*

Great question Simon. If it's not creative, it's not going to be transformational.

“ Creativity is really the non-negotiable ingredient for success. We've seen report after report about the positive effects on business because of creativity and the creativity that we're looking for is going to be bigger than just the creativity you see in the marketing and communications world. ”

It's really how creativity solves big problems, whether it's to help a company survive the current situation, to defend against a previously unknown threat or competitor or creativity to expand into new revenue streams and, ultimately, creativity that leads to exponential growth for the long term.

Cook: *So, obviously with the winners that are going to emerge from this, the very first transformation Lion and because it is the first year it's going to make a statement to the rest of the industry, a benchmark after all, what would you like that statement to make to the global industry?*

Ng:

“ The work that we want to celebrate next year will be really strong examples of revolutionary transformation, not evolutionary change. ”

So, let's ask ourselves, 'What is the change we're making? Is everything we're doing truly going to unstatus quo everything?

Cook: *So, Ronald, we're looking forward to seeing the body of work that you and the jury recognise as the very first Creative Business Transformation Lion and I look forward to seeing your jury briefing in person in Cannes in the next year.*

Ng: Thanks for having me Simon and I look forward to many long hours of judging as many of you enjoy Rosés on the beach.

Cook: *Indeed. So many thanks to Ronald and we'll be talking to other presidents who will be giving their own personal take on the president briefing throughout the rest of this week as part of Lions Live. Be sure to tune in for that.*

Be sure to register and watch live or on demand at [LionsLive.CannesLions.com](https://www.lionslive.com).

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