

Making love

By [Gareth Lessing](#)

22 Jan 2016

We're likely to see a few trends shaping the industry in 2016, from the shift in agency models - which is one of our main reasons for being - to the challenge of finding the best medium to engage consumers in a world of multiple mixed platforms.



Fear

However, the issue that I think will continue to affect us most (and not in a good way) is one that is seldom spoken of: agency fear. It's been a theme in our industry for some time and, unfortunately, I see it continuing into 2016 - and probably beyond.

The fact is that agencies live in fear of angering clients by not giving them what they want when they want, no matter how outlandish the request. How many times do agency staffers tell clients that yes, of course they can produce a big idea, complete with costings and executions, in two days - knowing full well the strain this will place on all members of the agency.

So why do we do this? It's simple: we're scared to push back because of that well-known client threat: "We'll find someone else who is willing to do it." Losing a client just isn't an option for agencies, because they need every cent. Otherwise, staff cuts or even closure may ensue.

Of course, as with everything, there are exceptions to the rule. There are still clients out there who don't rule by fear, and to them I say a sincere thank you.

This is the core difference between a good client and a bad one. The difference between a good creative director and a bad one. An MD, a CEO - you name it. Think of Calogero who asked Sonny, the mafia boss, in the movie *A Bronx Tale*: "Would you rather be loved, or feared?" Sonny chose fear - and, two days later, was shot.

Now, I'm not saying I want to go on a shooting spree, but my point is that nothing truly great comes from fear. On the other hand, when you love someone, you want to please them. You want to impress them. In fact, you will go to the end of the world for them. It's only when you really love someone that you will take the time to talk to them in order to truly understand their needs.

Truth

I never feared my father; because I loved him and respected him, I never wanted to let him down. I wanted to make him proud of me. It's that desire not to let someone down that draws out the extra bit of effort. It's that care for each other that will keep every agency person motivated and willing to push harder in the search for the elusive creative nut. This is the truth that I wish clients would come to realise.

Love

I would love to see our industry morph into one that actually sticks together, agency and client alike. And as cheesy as this may sound, I'd like us to fall romantically in love with each other. Because then we really can do great things, and maybe even achieve what is probably *the* most difficult challenge facing today's marketers: connecting on a meaningful level with this millennial generation that knows our tricks far too well.

So I ask you: Would you rather be feared? Or would you rather be loved?

ABOUT GARETH LESSING

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