

Creative for good

 By [Travis Bussiahn](#)

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"How do you give someone purpose?" he asked me, his gaze direct as he slurped down the last bit of his freezo. The wintery afternoon sun streamed through the large glass windows behind me and glinted in his eyes as he asked. This was a professional moment both compelling and onerous all at once.

You see, this fellow (and what a brilliant fellow he is) and I have been working on an internal marketing project that's exploring using content and storytelling inside his business to influence the culture of his staff and management for the good. Stunning, right? Except, the deeper we dig the more we find that 'purpose', while great in fleeting principle, is a shimmery mirage that only manifests when people are seen as individuals. This is not purpose that comes through a badly written headline on a nicely designed poster or a veiled call-to-action campaign hidden in "good to great" and "we really care" messaging. This is the kind of purpose that'll appear when employees feel seen and heard and accepted and looked up to and needed and ultimately, loved.

It's about media designed to connect with human beings so that they honestly feel different. Important. Empowered.

It is, to a degree, creative for good.

Now hold that (creative for good) thought, we'll come back to it. Look at this quickly, it's too cool. In 2010, Paul Butler, a Facebook intern [connected the platform's relationships using blue lines](#) and some other stuff:



[click to enlarge](#)

To me, what's fascinating about this image is that there's no actual world map here and I encourage you to go and see a large version of it - the detail is breathtaking. It is the planet earth as depicted by Facebook relationships. It's beautiful from up above as the planet generally is with no signs of turmoil. But look closer into the world's biggest social media platform and inappropriate digital pamphlets litter the streets while businesses like Marks & Spencer and BSkyB threaten to [boycott the platform](#) if they don't stop serving inappropriate adverts to their users. I don't need to remind you about my previous comments on this topic. (If I do, then [here's](#) where you need to go).

Blemishes begin to show

Our blue planet, glistening in the great black silence is a book that can't be judged by its cover whether seen from space or through Paul Butler's lens. As we draw closer the blemishes begin to show. Hunger, poverty and injustice abound while economies are fueled by, to an extent, our middle-class fear of living with less.

Where is our hope in these dark times?

According to the World Economic Forum, it's sitting in your local creative agency.

They say on their [website](#) that "As much as world change may be about politics or economics, at its heart it's a creative proposition."

They call it Creative for Good.

The way I see it (which makes this an opinion and capable of being full of holes while making for hopefully interesting reading) in creative agencies across the globe there's thousands of snappily-dressed, exceptionally-intelligent, prolifically-inventive people chasing a variety of different goals: loeries, lions, land rovers, bottom lines, bottoms, self gain, portfolios, salaries, reputation, career - the list can go on and on and I'm sure there's a number you could fill in for yourself.

All are working hard to occupy billboards, airtime, print space, skyscrapers (digital and outdoor), banners and lord knows what other space with branded messaging in order to reach people so that they'll buy more of the stuff they may or may not need.

Sparking social change

So what would happen if all that space became blank for just one month?

What if every single contact point on every medium or channel or vertical designed to deliver advertising and marketing across the face of the planet was cleared of that for 30 days? And I mean all of it. Not a single piece of promotional messaging anywhere. What would we look like as a race by the end of those 30 days? Would our goals be different? Would we buy as much or even care about buying as much? Imagine if in those 30 days all the people designed to design all got together and put their collective creativity into the mother of all brainstorming sessions around the issues facing the planet with the theme "using the power of creativity and media to spark social change".

More importantly what *stories for good* could all that blank space be filled with instead? Consider that billions of minutes and impressions and pages every month have turned us into a middle class of consumers and many economical strategies would have the poor become middle class consumers too. Imagine what billions of minutes and impressions and pages that spoke a different language could achieve. Instead of the words "buy now" there would be persuasion of a, some would argue, nobler ilk.

"You can't activate philosophy"

I know, I know. I'm making socialist noise and so I'm going to step away from this idealistic buffet I'm serving up because, as the guy who I've written about in the beginning of this piece would say, "You can't activate philosophy." With that said I must also state that this isn't a rally cry to overthrow the system, we need the system right now. It's more about planting a small seed that may see you using that stunning creative head on your shoulders in ways you never thought you were allowed to.

In my own business we're working really hard to find the clients and procure the platforms that also want to be part of the change in the world. For us and for you it may be something as seemingly simple or completely challenging as using content and storytelling inside a business to influence the culture of their staff and management for the good. In the end our project I spoke about at the beginning of this article may eventually touch only one person out of the 400 we're trying to reach but then I'm claiming [starfish rights](#) and so can you. Creative for good is good for creative.

ABOUT TRAVIS BUSSIAHN

Travis Bussiahn is the Executive Creative Director of the Happy Media Video Agency. He solves creative and business problems for both Happy Media and its clients. He understands the importance of emotional connection in content, branded or otherwise and believes in traditional media's ability to be blended with new media to profound and holistic effect. He loves and excels at concept and the art of story. Contact details: website www.happymedia.co.za | Twitter [@TravisBussiahn](https://twitter.com/TravisBussiahn)

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