

Why we needed an industry purpose and what it means to me

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We are lucky to work in an industry that is exciting, collaborative and dynamic. The work we do has the ability to influence change. Its impact can be felt across culture, business and the economy. It can help people see things differently and change their behaviour for the better.



But when we are elbow-deep into the minutiae of the job, it can be easy to lose sight of the bigger picture.

For many newcomers to our industry who joined in the past two years it has meant working at your kitchen table has replaced swiveling your chair to talk to a colleague. As a result it can be hard to see how the day-to-day work they do contributes to something larger.

For that and many others reasons, now felt like a good time to be launching an industry-wide purpose – an EVP of sorts – that reminds us all of the impact of the work we do. ‘We are the changers’, the creative expression of our purpose, perfectly captures this impact. Huge credit to Sophie Price from Mediacom for her strategy and to Francis Coady and Alex Tracy, and the team at Havas Media for distilling the message and bringing it to life.

What began as a conversation among MFA Board members and industry leaders two years ago grew to involve more than 200 individuals, everyone checking their agency badge at the door and working together for the good of the whole industry.

Our ambition was to create a purpose that reignited the pride we feel for the work we do, and to convey our industry’s fun and dynamism to a new generation, enticing them to join us.

We were also passionate not to overstep the mark. We didn’t want to create something that was farfetched or didn’t reflect the experience of those working in media agencies. In other words, it had to be honest, true to who we all are and what we do – we had to get the balance right between authentic and aspirational.

As well as giving us something to rally behind, ‘We are the changers’ is also about attracting talent. It’s always been a challenge for our industry to explain what we do to potential recruits, so having a clearly articulated purpose makes that easier.

And of course, it’s about keeping people in the industry. At the moment, about 17% of media agency employees leave our industry for other sectors, and we’d like to reduce this number to 11%. We know that when people have a greater sense of purpose and can see the impact of their contribution, they are more engaged and motivated – and therefore more likely to remain in the industry.

Personally, I’d like to see everyone in our industry be proud of what they do and to be able to see how they’re part of something bigger, recognising that the work they do can – and does – make a difference.

