

# Paul Gunning: This Is the Most Exciting Time to Be in Advertising (VIDEO)

When it comes to assessing the future of advertising, most executives sound concerned citing shortened attention spans, ad-blockers and other signs that audiences are just not that into commercials anymore. But Paul Gunning, CEO of DDB Chicago, is not one of them.

“I do think this is the most exciting time to be on this business,” he told WHOSAY President of Sales & Marketing, Rob Gregory, when they sat for a conversation about branded content, influencers and the challenges and opportunities faced by brands and marketers in the ad-blocker era.

“The level of innovation is truly exciting,” Gunning told Gregory, adding that “the ability to see our work and its impact almost immediately in terms of consumer behavior and in terms of our clients’ business results, and having the levers and the experiences to pull on that see what’s working” is what makes him excited about this volatile era.

Make no mistake, Gunning is well aware of the fact that, as Gregory said, “The mobile advertising experience [...] it’s been increasingly blocked and docked and avoided [especially] by younger consumers.” However, for Gunning, the adoption of video on mobile devices, and the user experience derived from it offer a world of opportunities to marketers able and willing to evolve with the times. “Our ability to create sound and motion on the phone is at a fantastic stage right now,” he said.

He believes the user experience has to “embed itself with the actual content.” Gunning thinks that on top of the great

experiences happening right now there's even more room for experimentation given the innovation that's already here along with what's yet to come, including talent-based storytelling, which Gunning doesn't think is new at all.

"We've been doing celebrity-based work for decades," he told Gregory citing work with the likes of Anheuser Busch and, more recently, Miller Light and Jeep. "We're using celebrity and it's a great way to reach and connect the audience," he said.

And it looks like at DDB they have gone a step further when it comes to working with influencers by hiring someone like Wendy Clark who Gunning says is an influencer "in her own right." "And she's had a dramatic effect on the agency because of her position in the industry, because of her experience, and so I think we've sort of turned the tables and not just use celebrity for our clients but in this case using it for ourselves," he shared.

Gunning's vision is multi-layered. While being aware of the industry's challenges, the DDB Chicago CEO adopts a holistic approach. "There are other ways of us to communicate that are also becoming more innovative," he told Gregory before citing things such as driverless cars, which "open up a whole other level." "Storytelling environments might get shorter in other environments [such as mobile ads]" he said. "In other cases, our ability to deliver value and to connect so that so we're having a relationship with the brand through things like utility [can] overcome areas that we get challenged with such as attention deficit."

And experience is, indeed, the name of the game for Gunning. "We're thinking holistically about that user journey or that consumer experience. So it's just not how they see the advertising when our job is done but we're looking at the entire connected platform if you will of what is happening at the service level, what is happening at the retail level, what's happening at the purchase level and then after purchase

as well as the communications,” he explained.

Gunning’s multi-layered approach also favors multidisciplinary and collaborative environments. “What I think it’s interesting these days is how agencies are coming together in a pretty unique way on behalf of a client to now connect all of their independent dots with the sheer goal of making our clients customers consumers interested in buying our client’s brands,” he said.

And that includes not only data but also creativity. “Competition has become so tough not only in our industry but in all of our clients’ industries that we have to come together in new, unique and better ways so we can make our clients’ brand the one of choice,” he told Gregory.

This strategy obviously includes data but the DDB Chicago CEO urged us to look beyond. “We’re not gonna let ourselves get pulled into a pure data environment only,” he explained. “We go by the notion that creativity is the most powerful force in business and that remains centric to what we do.”