

Q&A: Megan Farquhar

Co-founder and Creative Partner, Schaaf Consultancy

10 answers to 10 questions that let us peer into the mind of one of the world's leading creative directors.



Meg has worked at Ogilvy Brazil, Ogilvy Singapore, David Brazil and more recently as CCO at Ogilvy Canada and EVP Executive Creative Director at DDB Chicago before setting up her own creative consultancy, Schaaf, with the ambition of “building the kind of agency that puts people at the centre, does what’s right for employees, the work and the clients and has a really good time doing it.”

You're a busy creative director. Do you have a side-hustle? What do you do as a counterbalance to the pressures of your workplace?

I say that there is a clear through line of walking in my life. Like the transformation that Forrest Gump had on his epic run, I have processed the hardest moments of my life and solidified the thinking that defines who I am as a leader on the trails. Walking may not pay like a side hustle, but it liberates my mind in ways that a chair never has. Kendra, the founder of Schaaf, and I do many of our meetings walking and talking. And we've nearly solved all the world's problems. I'll let you know when we are done. I have 10 little side-projects warming on the back burner at any time but I find I leave too much on the field to have much energy to create in the after-hours. Generally, I spend that time listening to podcasts, reading, nerding out on behavioural science, spending time with people smarter and more interesting than myself and refilling my reserves of inspiration.

If you hadn't ended up in advertising, what would you be doing instead?

I always wanted to be a fashion designer but I get so much joy from decorating my home, from restoring old furniture and creating a cosy space that I would have probably become an interior designer or a therapist, both have a lot to do with what I do today.

In your career, what one piece of personal work are you most proud of?

Probably 'Prescribed to Death' for National Safety Council. It was at the forefront of the national response to the opioid epidemic and really brought out the humanity in the problem, shifting the image of victims from shady characters with no self-control to everyday people who had no idea what they were being prescribed. We were so effective that members of our team were asked to consult on the first-ever national Opioid Taskforce and the installation was presented to a bipartisan group of senators on the White House lawn.



Agency: Energy BBDO Chicago. Client: National Safety Council. See the case study [HERE](#).

What work has your agency/team produced you're particularly proud of?

It hasn't launched yet, but at Schaaf we are immensely proud of the work that we are doing with Planned Parenthood. This work will bring hope to the nearly 2/3rds of the country that does not believe in abortion bans and will empower them to take power back from certain bad actors that seek to control people and their bodies.

What recent work have you seen from another agency (or agencies) that you would really like to see entered into The Caples? And why?

The Runner 321 work from Adidas moved me to tears. It is such a stunning example of how compassion and inclusion can change the world. I can't imagine how inspiring that would be to an athlete from the Down's Syndrome community. The way so many brands and events rallied around this idea showed the true scale of its brilliance.



Agency: FCB Toronto. Client: Adidas. See the case study [HERE](#).

Can you identify any trends which you and your fellow judges should look out for at The Caples 2024? GenAI, perhaps, or new developments in influencer marketing, etc?

I struggle to go all in on ad trends. I prefer timeless, moving ideas that are big enough to be relevant regardless of the technology that brought them to life. Tools like AI are great and we should learn to harness them but tools rarely make a great idea.

Are awards important?

They are incredibly important. As someone who wants to work with the best talent in the world, not just my city, awards are a significant way of demonstrating capability, easing the path to building a career on a global scale and getting the coveted visas that will allow them to share their unique perspective and creativity with the biggest and best global brands.

What does it mean to you to be a juror of The Caples Awards in 2024?

I'm grateful to have the chance to shape the body of work that we lift up as the best we are capable of in 2024. It feels like advertising can become a bottomless well and it is important to take a moment to identify the ideas that really rose to the top, that made us feel something and will inspire us as we try to move the world with our ideas in 2025.

If you could have five creative luminaries sitting around your kitchen table, having a drink and a chat, who would they be? What do you think you'd talk about?

The architect and artist Maya Lin who has fought for her ideas and built things that will last. Gabriel García Márquez, because his writing has made me feel more than any other author ever has. Martha Stewart because that woman knows how to work a brand and a comeback. And finally Ryan Reynolds because he has made more ad people jealous in the past five years than anyone else I can think of. We'd talk about the weather.

Impossible question. But what is your one all-time favourite piece of advertising, the idea you most wish you'd done yourself?

It feels so cliché, but Avis' We Try Harder will always be the bar against which I measure great ideas. It didn't change the world, but it certainly saw it in a completely new way. A brilliant idea makes the person experiencing it feel seen. That ad took what was a disadvantage and saw how a person might prefer them because of it. So elegant and holds up today.



Agency: DDB New York. Read the case study as published by the Denver Post [HERE](#).