

'Cannes' you see the change?

Public relations Lions made their debut at the annual Cannes festival this year. Jury member **Prema Sagar** writes about the key message from the winning Campaigns and what it means for the future of the communications business

Change is opportunity. Are you, grabbing it?

This was much more than just a theme at the Cannes International Advertising Festival last week. It was an eye-opener and living proof that every time we blink, the world moves forward a few more inches.

Invited to be a member of the jury for the inaugural PR Lions, I had assumed that I was part of the "change" in an advertising festival that had finally recognised the increasing importance of public relations in the communications mix.

However, I came away amazed at the changing seas of knowledge through which I swam over the past few days.

The strangest part about the change is that rather than get more complex, it is actually chasing simplicity.

Within the PR lions jury, for instance, which was drawn from 15 countries, we were challenged by the diversity of campaigns and the geographies they represented. We overcame it by seeking a simple idea that was well executed to influence change.

I loved turning student again as I soaked in*the creativity with which I was surrounded.

The most astounding instance of powerful simplicity was Australia's "The Best Job in the World". A single-minded idea delivered brilliantly to catch the imagination of the world and deliver measurable results. It rightly won the Grand Prix and also bagged the PR lion for the Travel, Tourism and Leisure sector as well as the PR lion for the Best use of the Internet, Digital Media and Social Media.

And if that was not enough, it also bagged the Direct Grand Prix as well as the Cyber lions Grand Prix in the Website and Interactive



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win

(From Right) Humanitarian, pop star and businessman **Bob Geldof**, former UN General Secretary **Kofi Annan** and Havas Worldwide global CEO **David Jones** at the launch of the campaign 'Tic, Tic, Tic, Time for Climate Justice' on eimjte change

Campaigns category.

Out of the 400-plus entries that were shortlisted down to 30-plus, the PR lions were awarded to a total of 15 campaigns (not counting the three won by the Best Job in the World) across the various categories. These included Australia's "Earth Hour"; Japan's "Yubari Resort" and "Love Distance"; Lebanon's "Khede Kasra"; Portugal's "World's First Ephemeral Museum" and "Selling Hope"; Switzerland's "Zurich's Being Sold"; Costa Rica's "Bring Back Peace"; Brazil's "One Thousand Casmurros"; UK's "Beautiful Game" and "Pig's are Worth It"; and USA's "Honey, Let's Lick the Problem," "Guinness Rally," "The Great Schlep" and "Protecting Futures".

Interestingly, a number of entries for the PR Lions came from ad agencies — it was their "idea" to use public relations to deliver their message!

Ten entries were submitted from India. Although none of them could

bag a PR Lion this year, I have no doubt this will change in the coming years as the tug of the Lions fills a vital aspiration gap for a well-recognised international award platform.

Are we grabbing it?

So let's go beyond my jury duty. The festival gave me a super chance to listen to some super experts at some super sessions. There was so much to learn from giants such as Steve Ballmer of Microsoft, Eric Schmidt of Google, Biz Stone of Twitter and David Plouffe of Campaign Manager, who opened the doors to understanding the power of "grassroots" communication.

Fernando Vega Olmos, Creative Chairman at JWT, gave a delightful talk on "Mother Crisis" — how to create an opportunity out of a crisis.

Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, delivered a sincere message on climate change. He was followed by David Jones, Global CEO, Havas Worldwide presenting his Tic Tic Tic

programme and thereafter Bob Geldof, humanitarian, pop star and businessman, who received a standing ovation for his emotional yet factual plea on the same subject.

As the days passed it became increasingly clear, that there was no escaping the digital tsunami. As Ashwani Singla wrote in his Postcard from Cannes on his blog (www.reputare.in), digitise or die.

The PriceWaterhouseCoopers media and entertainment outlook survey discerned three trends that were driving this change:

Digital Migration:

There are more "connected" consumers than ever before and growing. Hard to imagine but true, the Internet has already overtaken TV viewers!

Digital Acceleration:

Using internet is simply cheaper than consuming traditional media. It is, therefore, accelerating simply because it provides more value for money!

Digital Transformation:

New business models are emerging and are likely to outrun the traditional business model. For instance, the research data indicated that consumers are happy to watch commercials for free content as long as they are targeted to them and valuable to them.

So, if I were to look into the crystal ball, what "Cannes" I see? I see the emergence of a robust marketing and communications Industry. Advertising, public relations, promotions, outdoor, digital, and so on will morph into this industry. Whoever wins the "idea" will win the business and use all or most of the elements of the industry. The tools could include gaming, causes, publishing, anything that captures the target audience.

Or, as I would like to say, change is an opportunity and I am grabbing it.

The writer is Principal & Founder, Genesis Burson-Marsteller