

The rise of the internet class

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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Lately, I have been followed. The man who is following me has good hair and dead eyes. It would seem wherever I go on the internet, he pops up. He is young, very young, but is constantly telling me that he has the wisdom and the secret stuff that can help me.



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He keeps telling me he is very rich and desperately wants to help people. This is why he will help me become very rich, too. He always seems to be at a mansion with a couple of Ferraris in the background. The snake-oil gospel of success. PT Barnum without a real circus.

I have a name for these people. I call them **the internet class**. My definition of the internet class is people who have no discernible skills, but seem to make money by claiming they can explain things. They don't make anything tangible, but have loads of information and answers they claim makes them experts. They repackage what exists and explain what is already known to people who are desperate for answers. They promise everything but deliver very little.

The internet class

I think our industry is starting to have its own internet class. Now, I know, advertising has always been full of hustlers. But, the hustle, for creatives at least, has always been about trying to make things. The hustle was the way, never the end goal.

One of the great comforts of being a creative is that you know, in the end, after all the talk, something will have to be made. There will be evidence of industry. The process will lead to something other than itself. This simple fact guarded against words being more important than things. The result is what counted.

For many that is still true. However, in my travels I have started to meet a certain type of person. Other creatives have described them to me as well.

“ They have good hair, the right trainers and a fixed smile. They knowall the work. They knowall the buzzwords. In the first meeting, they are very impressive. In the second one, less so. Their gift is, they can explain everything and anything. They just don't knowhowto make anything. They have vague titles and even vaguer skills. You find them everywhere. They are spread across the advertising universe like the black space between stars. ”

The internet has given them the information, the platform and the words. They don't think. They don't have to. They just explain. They tell you that you don't understand, but they have the formula. They know the secret. It is very seductive and very palatable, in a world where things are getting faster and faster. The danger is, as an industry, we could end up drinking our own snake oil and wondering why we are still not feeling well.



Don't believe the hype

Damon Stapleton 3 Feb 2016



There is a simple solution. Call me old-fashioned but there was a time when your portfolio mattered more than anything. It was proof in a world of puffery.

Look at what the person has made. Look at their ideas. Not what they say. Not their process. What have they done? Their work should speak for itself. Words are not things.

The industry needs to remember: **being able to explain something is not the same as being able to do it.** It is the difference between a critic and a creator. The difference between a commentator and a competitor.

And that, is a very big difference.

“First you make people believe they have a problem, and then you sell them the solution. That is how advertising works. Every snake oil salesman knows that.” - Oliver Markus Malloy

ABOUT DAMON STAPLETON

Damon is regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia. Before that, ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, before that, group ECD of TBWA Hunt Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank. He has won over 500 awards internationally, including a D&AD Black Pencil, Cannes Grand Prix, Grand Clio, ADC Black Cube and most effective ad in the world by Warc 100. Damon is now regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia...

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