

Cannes Lions 2016: What Ad Agencies Can Do for Healthcare

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Inaugural seminar at the world's pinnacle - Cannes Lions

Cannes Lions tops the numerous advertising and communication awards and festivals held around the globe in terms of both entries and participants. The week-long festival features awards given to the best ad works, as well as over 250 seminars and talk sessions organized by leading companies in their respective fields.

Just as the award winners highlight the trends in the advertising industry in the years ahead, the topics discussed at the seminars indicate the industry's vision for the future. The topics to be addressed in the Cannes Lions 2016 seminars were chosen by the Cannes Secretariat from among the proposals submitted by companies around the world, taking into account the timeliness of the topics and their potential to generate global insight.

Hakuholdo DY Media Partners was asked to organize the very first seminar since its incorporation as part of Lions Health, a festival specialized in healthcare to be held in parallel with Cannes Lions.

Role of advertising agencies in healthcare

Since 2013, Hakuholdo DY Media Partners has been working with NTT DoCoMo on the development and operation of a [Motherhood Manual \(in Japanese\)](#), a new service for pregnant women. Starting from scratch, we have managed to overcome various challenges and difficulties over the three years to develop the service, which has spawned considerable business opportunities and is being used by 20% of expecting mothers and 12.5% of obstetricians/gynaecologists in Japan.

There are many issues worth addressing in the world, as attested by the many social good campaigns. However, a meaningful thing does not necessarily make a sustainable business, and I personally feel this is particularly true with healthcare-related initiatives.

Meaningfulness should spell sei-katsu-sha needs, and needs should spell market. The role of advertising agencies in healthcare should lie in: promptly addressing social needs and

providing output in the form most suited to the users; creating values for the target audience as well as people surrounding them (e.g. healthcare workers and companies); and developing the offering into a "sustainable business" for society.

The same is true with the Motherhood Manual: it started with the realization that a woman who is pregnant for the first time usually feels more anxiety than happiness. With the meaningful aim of reducing the anxiety of expecting mothers and increasing happy childbirths, we succeeded in developing a sustainable business by serving sei-katsu-sha with a smartphone app for daily use by pregnant women, integrating the needs of doctors as well as expecting mothers, and ultimately involving a private company.

In applying for the Cannes Lions seminar, I described in the application my belief that the insight that our advertising agency has gained in developing a "sustainable business" will provide "learning" for people working in the field of healthcare around the globe. With the three-year experience in working with sei-katsu-sha, healthcare workers and a private business for providing relevant services, I instinctively felt that we had the right to present a compelling case for the role to be played by an advertising agency to the participants from all over the world.

Following subsequent interaction with the Cannes Secretariat, Hakuodo Media Partners finally won a seminar slot for the very first time.



Inspiring audience with our experience and belief

Our seminar, which was entitled "How Media is Re-writing the Motherhood Manual." was held at the start of the first day of the festival. We were concerned whether many people, or even anyone, would come early in the morning of the first day, but such concerns were soon dispelled as the venue became packed, with some having to stand.

Most of the audience were participants from other countries. The Q&A session ran for the full time, with specific questions on the business model, engagement with hospitals and doctors, and project implementation process, among others.

Many participants came to provide feedback even after the end of our seminar. Some commented: "Hakuhodo DY Media Partners seems like an interesting company. I look forward to working with you," while others suggested: "We would like you to give a presentation at a festival we're organizing." The latter proposal is now going ahead. I was overjoyed when I realized that we had inspired the audience with our experience and belief.

The world was never as remote as it seemed

One year ago, the podium at Cannes Lions felt like a thousand miles away. As I look back, however, the world turned out to be much closer than I had imagined. Perhaps I had inadvertently constrained my thinking to fit this small box that is Japan, using differences in language or culture as an excuse. Now I have witnessed the true reactions of participants from around the world, my experience tells me to think out of that box.

The process leading up to the participation in Cannes Lions, the biggest festival for the global advertising community, not as a simple visitor in a seat but as a speaker, was an exciting experience. The world is much closer than it seems, as Japan is an attractive country for the whole world. By leveraging Cannes as a "place to communicate our work" and not only as a "place to win awards," we will be able to reconfirm our value while gaining an effective opportunity for external PR.



Azumi Maruyama

Media & Contents Creative Division

Born in 1981, he started his career as a designer for a local TV station, gaining experience in cross-media planning and UI/UX design, among others. Since joining Hakuhodo DY Media Partners, he has actively created new platforms, developed various

businesses, and leveraged media and client contents to produce services for sei-katsu-sha. His collection of awards includes Cannes Lions Gold, Spikes Asia Gold, Japan Digital Book Award Grand Prix, Good Design Award and Kid Design Award, among others. Owner of a black Lab puppy, he loves a daily walk.

*The title and position of the writer are those at the time of writing, and may therefore differ from the current assignment.