

## **The Magic Number**

***Featuring:***

Mark Fiddes  
Executive Creative Director  
Draftfcb London

**Stephen:** I'm Stephen Martincic and I'm in London today with Mark Fiddes, executive creative director at Draftfcb UK. Mark, bon jour.

**Mark:** Bon jour, Stephen.

**Stephen:** Let's go straight to the point, what is a magic number?

**Mark:** Okay a magic number is a spring board. It's a spring board into magic creative work. It's a number that such a powerful observation about the world we live in that it instantly presents to the mind pictures, words, scripts, ideas that can help you build a campaign that engages quickly and dynamically.

**Stephen:** Is it working everywhere? You've recently hosted a conference at the Lynx Festival in Dubai. What did you present and what did you learn from it?

**Mark:** Well I presented to the Lynx Festival a number of our case histories all of which were driven by magic numbers. And the overwhelming response from everybody at the conference was "wow, finally here is, here is a very straight forward starting point for creative strategy. But also here is some great creative execution that really engages me."

So it reassured me that the magic number is a creative springboard that can work anywhere not just in the West.

**Stephen:** You're talking about creativity but you are a copywriter by trade and a former reporter. How can numbers be so important to you?

**Mark:** Well as a copywriter originally I remember all kinds of debates about whether a word was worth a thousand pictures or a picture worth a thousand words. The good thing about a number is it's an objective take on the world outside. It's a really solid starting point. There are some numbers you come across some magic numbers that instantly trigger all sorts of powerful imaginary and even potential scenarios that really start you in a great place creatively.

When I first started in the business, I looked around at the campaigns that were really making a big difference and I thought creatively have a stamp of greatness on them. And I remember particularly we try harder which still is the strap line for Avis. And I thought "well, what drove Bill Bernbach to come up with such a clear idea?" An idea with such longevity. And it was really from the perception that the biggest player in the market Hertz had the largest distribution. They were number one. And what do you say if you're number two? Well clearly it's a service proposition, we try harder. And I believe that it was a perception, it was the number "2" in that case it gave Bernbach the real creative inspiration.

I also think about for example the very longstanding American Express campaign that used to be hinged on the idea of member since, member since 1979 for example. Surely that way

of making it clear the privilege and the status the American Express card holder because of their value to American Express and how long they've been a member and the number of years they've been a member was a critical part of recognizing it as one of the world's leading recognition schemes.

So you know those are two great numbers. And of course the one we're still living with today that everybody talks about and always, always picking up awards is the Guinness campaign, which has been based on the length of time it takes to pour a Guinness. A 119.5 seconds. And that has been the creative source for much of the great Guinness advertising.

All of these campaigns were led by a magic number and they help propel forward magic creative work.

**Stephen:** The words, pictures, numbers where do you get your ideas from?

**Mark:** That's the golden question for any crazy person isn't it, where do you get inspiration from? And I remember asking my first creative director where he got his ideas from. And he said he got them from a bar man in SoHo who got them from a guy who came in every Thursday evening who got them from a milkman in Liverpool. And where he got them from nobody had any idea.

So there's always been a mystery around where you get your ideas from. For me the number provides that great spring board. The real effort however comes into finding the

right number. And that's about digging around and finding observations in the real world that we represent by numbers that trigger great ideas.

**Stephen:** Can we take a look at some numbers. Can you give us some examples?

**Mark:** I'll give you a couple of examples that we've turfed up recently. That don't necessarily have campaigns attached to them right now, but could easily have campaigns attached to them. So for example, 8. Well that's 8%. This would be relevant for example to any client involved in household cleaning. 8% is the percentage of Americans who flush the toilet with their feet because they're frightened of germs.

Here's a good one from the UK. 66. That's the number, the magic number. 66 is the percentage of U.K .men who admit to having bought a book simply to impress someone. Sadly it doesn't say which title, but it's still a relevant insight into the U.K. man.

Here's another one if you're working in the, in the automotive field, 300. 300 is the percentage by which a German Shepherd dog's carbon footprint exceeds that of a sports utility vehicle. Now it may seem like a rather archaic number but somewhere there's a great press ad in it. So again very solid foundations for building a great creative idea out of.

**Stephen:** And some example of creative word that you developed that has been developed within Drafftcb based on numbers?

**Mark:** Yeah well the, here over the past few months since we've really started to adopt the magic number is the first box in the brief. We've been seeing some very powerful work coming out of local offices of Drafftcb. The one that really has to, is leading the field at the moment is from Sweden. It's Radiotjänst and they picked out the number 90. Now Radiotjänst is a TV licensing authority. They basically it's a tax on your TV watching. And the normal way with most of the licensing authorities around the world is to threaten people and say if you don't pay us your license fee you won't get any television. Radiotjänst looked to the very relevant number 90% of people in Sweden actually pay their license fee. It was the 10% they were after. So they thought well hang on that's a very high percentage. Why don't we thank everybody who's paying their license fee. Why don't we make them into a hero. And that's the basis of the fantastic viral that Radiotjänst created to encourage universal paying of the, of the license fee in Sweden.

One that was relevant to us in the U.K. we discovered when we were looking at the Jamaican Tourist Board we realized that if we really wanted to up the number of family holidays being taken in Jamaica we had to address teenagers. One of the facts we discovered about teenagers is that 79% of them believe that their parents are embarrassing in social situations. This actually is tremendous creative hook for us; we've created off the back of that the U.K.'s first-ever dad dancing campaign which now has, has hundreds of thousands of views. And we'll shortly be announcing the winner. So you know as soon as you get that number you know you're on to a good thing.

Dockers probably is the one from the U.S. that makes the, that's the most famous campaign based on the number. And the number here is 17 for 17%. The 17% is the amount by which

testosterone levels have dropped in the average U.S. male over the past 20 years. Now it's not too great a leap to connect that to a man's clothing range, particularly when your end result is to come up with a campaign entitled, We Wear the Pants. That insight, that number has led to Dockers representing a new breed of man trying to reclaim their masculinity in a very public way.

**Stephen:** Does it work?

**Mark:** Well in that latter instance, from what I understand it went out in the Super Bowl it was the hottest rated ad after the Super Bowl on Google. In fact, the number of people visiting Dockers.com was dramatically higher than anything they'd seen before. Online sales were up 60% year on year. And Google rated it not just "hot" but "volcanic." So clearly something's going on.

**Stephen:** You've just talked about numbers, but isn't it too simple?

**Mark:** Nothing's too simple in advertising. The whole process of advertising is about clarification and getting down to simply enough communication units that really hit powerfully and really help engage consumers. What the number does for us is it acts as a filter. It filters out all the unnecessary information and gets us thinking in a very clear way. In fact, Jonathon Harries, the worldwide creative director, has a brilliant expression for this. You know when he's looking at creative executions he's saying the execution has to be "simple enough to be understood and complex enough to be interesting." It goes back to what Einstein said you know when he was talking about the physical theory. He said that

everything should be made as simple as possible but not simpler. And this is what you know I think it takes us onto another unique property, another unique number property that we have with Drafftcb which is the 6.5 Seconds That Matter. Because when we're talking about the execution of these ideas and I'm thinking of Radiotjänst, I'm thinking of Dockers, I'm thinking of Dad Dancing, these are uses of 6.5 seconds up front that really grab attention. That 6.5 seconds is a great filter on us when we're looking at the creative expression of the creative strategy created by the magic number. And it really helps us focus in that first 6.5 seconds a message which is going to be compelling and powerful to the consumer.