

Second Edition, 2023

# AB InBev

## The Creative Debrief

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Insights, intelligence, Cannes Lions talks, data and commentary on this multi-Lion-winning brand

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 **LIONS** | **THE WORK**





“AB InBev’s second consecutive year as Cannes Lions Creative Marketer of the Year demonstrates its ongoing commitment to creativity as a driver for growth. This dedication to creativity and the role it plays in business value creation is further supported by the clear buy-in from the company board, including CEO Michel Doukeris, which has been critical to its success. It has also scaled its approach across dozens of countries, all of which have helped deliver incredible business results.”

**SIMON COOK**  
Chief Executive Officer | LIONS



“The moment we stop learning and enter a comfort zone, that’s a bad place to be. This is a constant process of evolution. We push ourselves to keep learning every day and are ambitious but humble.”

**MARCEL MARCONDES**  
Global Chief Marketing Officer | AB InBev

# In this edition of The Creative Debrief...



How AB InBev scooped Creative Marketer of the Year for two consecutive years



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## 1

### AB InBev's journey

Get the inside track on internal changes AB InBev made to its culture to gear it towards creativity and effectiveness, and how it continually refines its programmes and processes.

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## 2

### Themes from winning work

Learn how AB InBev prioritises problem-solving, builds strong partnerships and acts with agility.

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## 3

### Data

Discover the pieces of work that have won the most Lions and the most-awarded companies behind them.



1

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# AB InBev's journey

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# Lessons in Culture & Capabilities



In 2018, AB InBev committed to “move into an era of organic growth where creativity is a key enabler,” according to Ryan Verschoor, Global VP, Marketing Culture & Capabilities. This section takes you through its transformation

## a

### **Lead from the top and measure everything**

Lead creative transformation from the very top of the organisation. Implement new structures and metrics to track progress.

## b

### **Be attuned to people and their needs**

Be on a non-stop fact-finding mission to understand people’s ever-changing needs and how your brand can help solve their problems. This is particularly important in local markets where a one-size-fits-all approach won’t work.

## c

### **Don’t forget to celebrate!**

Celebrating success keeps people motivated. Consider how to share ideas and inspiration across global creative teams and how to adapt successful concepts for other markets.



a

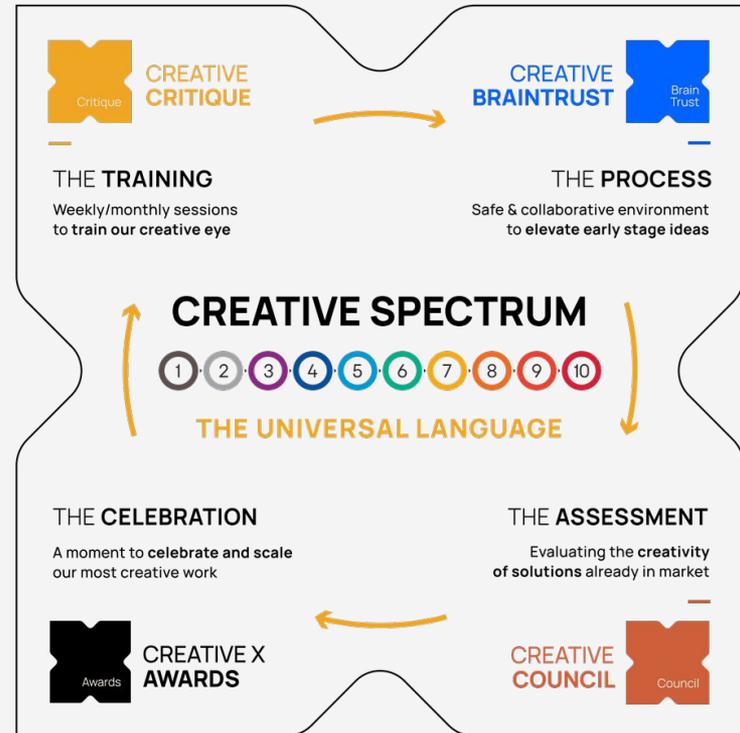
Lead from the top and  
measure everything

# Transformation from the top down

## AB InBev's leaders committed to creativity for growth and pioneered it across a restructured organisation

When leaders at AB InBev prioritised progress through creativity, it led to internal transformation. The brewer launched an in-house agency – draftLine – whose team includes more than 700 creative colleagues.

AB InBev also created a new Marketing Culture & Capabilities team to lead the transformation, helping the team sharpen their skills and developing a common language and set of tools, including the Creative Spectrum (see next page). The Creative Spectrum has been adopted throughout the company to help maintain high creative standards around the world. Brain Trusts comprising creative leaders from outside AB InBev help to improve creative ideas and measure progress. And AB InBev also introduced an internal awards programme, Creative X, to recognise and celebrate success (see page 19).





# AB InBev Creative Spectrum



“The Creative Spectrum is a scale from one to ten that helps us set the creative ambition for a campaign and which allows us to talk in the same language on a global level. It helps us build our acumen and intuition so that we know what great creativity looks like.”

JODI HARRIS †

Former Global VP | Marketing Culture & Capabilities

Watch the talk:

[How AB InBev Created a Culture of Creativity](#)



“Now more than ever, we’re speaking the same language on creativity, and our setting is calibrated globally on what the bar should look like.”

DIMITRI MICHALIDIS

Global Director | Brand & Creative Effectiveness | AB InBev



b

Be attuned to people and their  
needs

# Problem-solve for your audience

AB InBev's ambition – to improve people's lives and help solve their problems – continues to be a central tenet of AB InBev's transformation journey.



**Dimitri Michailidis**  
Global Director | Brand & Creative Effectiveness  
AB InBev

“Any brand seeking to play a meaningful role in people's lives needs to invest its attention and resources in understanding the consumer, their day-to-day issues and how to make their lives better.”



One example of this in action is AB InBev's Tienda Cerca. This initiative saw the beer giant helping small shops to trade through lockdowns. Customers shared their location via tiendacerca.co and ordered groceries via **WhatsApp**. Some 60,000 stores registered and it was rolled out to other markets including Peru and Mexico.

2020

AB INBEV | TIENDA CERCA



GRAND PRIX CREATIVE  
ECOMMERCE LIONS

DRAFTLINE BOGOTA



“The CMO is the bridge between consumers and the company. Marketers often believe that their job is to change the minds of consumers. Instead, marketers need to adjust to meet the needs of consumers.”

MARCEL MARCONDES  
Global Chief Marketing Officer | AB InBev





C

Don't forget to celebrate!

# ‘More than a pat on the back’



**Ryan Verschoor**  
Global VP | Marketing Culture & Capabilities | AB InBev

Ryan Verschoor, Global VP, Marketing Culture & Capabilities, AB InBev, explains why celebration is an important part of AB InBev’s creative process.

For any culture of creativity to thrive, you have to constantly feed it and enrich it. Celebration is a really important part of that.

We have a creative gala where we celebrate our successes and also see some of the opportunities where we can improve.

The lessons behind those successes are the most significant part. It’s more than a pat on the back; it’s about asking why something worked and seeing who can improve on an idea.

It’s important to celebrate the successes we’ve had as well as the successes that have been scaled to other places. We incentivise and encourage people to not just constantly come up with new ideas, but to be inspired by ideas from other countries, zones and brands. We actively incentivise that behaviour.



**Dimitri Michailidis**  
Global Director | Brand & Creative Effectiveness | AB InBev

‘Creative X’: ‘an efficient way of driving value’

“Creative X is our internal creative awards programme that’s now in its ninth year. It’s designed to nurture and celebrate creativity, serving as a platform to share best practices. So someone in South America might see an award-winning case from Europe and be inspired by it; and we encourage ‘stealing with pride’. It motivates teams by recognising their creative efforts and is a more efficient way of driving creative value.”

“The Creative X ecosystem is simple. Marketing is half science, half art and 100% discipline. It’s now leading to more brands delivering higher quality creativity: the brands that are actually leading growth are the ones that are coincidentally being recognised as the most creative. Creativity is fuelling their growth because of that proof point and the hype around it.”



*Chief Marketing Officer Marcel Marcondes (centre) and colleagues celebrate AB InBev being named Cannes Lions Creative Marketer of the Year in 2022*



# 2

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## Themes from winning work

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# Lessons in Creativity



Three takeaways from AB InBev's creative approach

## a

### **Problem-solve for progress**

AB InBev brands develop creative ideas that tackle a range of consumer and business problems, and those ideas steer sustainable growth. Assess how your brand could problem-solve in a meaningful way.

## b

### **Be agile**

A test and learn mentality has spawned some of AB InBev's most successful and enduring ideas. Encouraging ideas, launching pilots and fast turnaround times have become an established way of working. Consider how agility could transform your approach and your output.

## c

### **Nurture long-term partnerships**

Partnerships can offer support when a creative idea leads you into unfamiliar territory. They are also crucial to business growth because they can take your brands in new directions, exposing them to new audiences. Think about how you can grow your reach through strategic partnerships that offer growth and benefits for both parties.



a

Problem-solve for progress

# Problem-solve for progress



AB InBev brands tackle a range of consumer problems and deliver commercial impact. This section highlights three pieces of Lion-winning work from 2022 that show this problem-solving in action: 'Jersey Pay', 'Contract For Change' and 'Plastic Fishing Tournament'.

JERSEY PAY | CORONA

2022



VMLY&R COMMERCE, MEXICO CITY

SILVER MOBILE LIONS

CONTRACT FOR CHANGE | AB INBEV

2022



FCB, CHICAGO

GRAND PRIX CREATIVE  
EFFECTIVENESS LIONS

PLASTIC FISHING TOURNAMENT |  
AB INBEV | CORONA

2022



WE BELIEVERS, NEW YORK

GOLD OUTDOOR LIONS

# 'Jersey Pay': Get creative with contactless

Pickpockets stealing wallets at football matches in Mexico meant that fans started leaving their wallets at home as a precaution. To overcome this problem and make payments convenient and seamless, Corona embedded RFID tech into team shirts that enabled people to pay for beer.

## Results:

- 30,000 tags inserted in week one
- 35% increase in in-stadium sales

>Takeout: Focus on understanding and solving real consumer problems. 'Jersey Pay' capitalised on a shift towards contactless payments to solve a consumer pain point.

[JERSEY PAY](#)



JERSEY PAY | CORONA

2022



VMLY&R COMMERCE, MEXICO CITY

SILVER MOBILE LIONS

## 2 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Silver Lion ●

Bronze Lion ●



“‘Jersey Pay’ uses a T-shirt or a badge – the thing that’s closest to fans in the moment of sport – to pay. It doesn’t need the Corona brand on there but you know it’s from that brand. Companies are recognising new business models and applications that don’t always need to shout about the brand to increase brand equity.”

**BETH ANN KAMINKOW**  
Global Chief Executive Officer | VMLY&R Commerce  
Jury President | Creative Commerce Lions 2022

# 'Contract for Change': Invest in progress

This three-year agreement between AB InBev and US farmers established the brewer as a pioneer in the path towards sustainable agriculture. By signing up, farmers were guaranteed training, subsidies and their first organic buyer, removing some of the largest obstacles to the organic transition.

## Results:

- More than 175 farmers participated
- Michelob ULTRA Pure Gold's business grew 18%

>Takeout: Treat purpose-led business transformation as ongoing. Consider how to extend efforts beyond marketing and who your brand can collaborate with to achieve long-term impact.



CONTRACT FOR CHANGE | AB INBEV



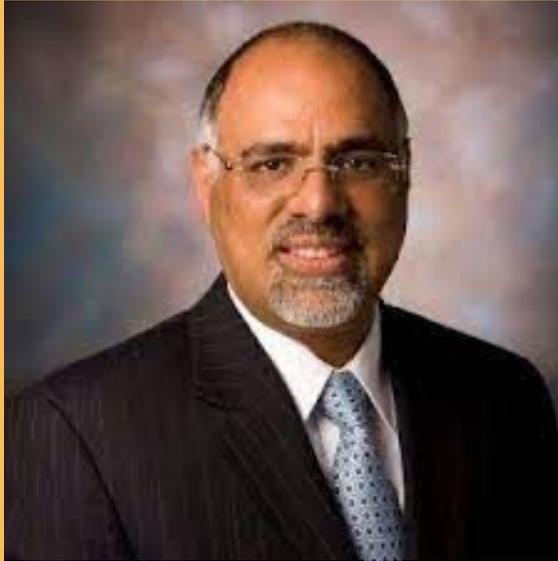
FCB, CHICAGO

GRAND PRIX CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LIONS

## 11 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

- Grand Prix  Titanium Lion  
Gold Lion  Silver Lion  Bronze Lion 

[CONTACT FOR CHANGE](#)



“‘Contract for Change’ is social good that ties back to a business model. It’s a beautiful demonstration of how marketing can play a key role in value creation and the entire value chain.”

RAJA RAJAMANNAR

Chief Marketing & Communications Officer and President | Healthcare  
Business | Mastercard

Jury President | Creative Effectiveness Lions 2022



# 'Plastic Fishing Tournament': Consider scalability

This initiative saw fishers from all over the world explore a new kind of fishing: by taking to the seas in search of plastic waste. Corona connected participants with recycling companies willing to buy their waste, resulting in cleaner oceans and a second income stream for fishers. After a highly successful debut in Mexico, the initiative was rolled out globally.

## Results:

- Successfully rolled out across ten countries
- More than 20 tonnes of plastic caught
- A second, year-round income stream for fishers

### >Takeout: Increase your impact with scale.

Corona tackled a global issue with a simple idea that would work across different markets.

PLASTIC FISHING TOURNAMENT | AB INBEV / CORONA

2022



WE BELIEVERS, NEW YORK

GOLD BRAND EXPERIENCE & ACTIVATION LIONS

## 5 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Gold Lion ●●●

Silver Lion ●

Bronze Lion ●

[PLASTIC FISHING TOURNAMENT](#)

How It Got Made

# Corona ‘Plastic Fishing Tournament’: “This is not just a stunt.”

PLASTIC FISHING TOURNAMENT | AB  
INBEV / CORONA

2022



WE BELIEVERS, NEW YORK

GOLD OUTDOOR LIONS



**Gustavo Lauria, CCO & Co-Founder, We Believers, explains how Corona beer incentivised fishers to haul plastic out of the ocean**

## **How did this build on Corona’s longstanding commitment to reduce plastic?**

Corona has a long-standing dedication to fighting plastic pollution on the beach. But plastic doesn't happen on the beach; it happens far out into the ocean. Plastic pollution and overfishing impacts marine life and local fishing communities. We found that, in some specific coastal areas, fishers find more plastic than fish in the ocean. And the fish they catch are smaller compared with ones they caught 10 or 15 years ago. We connected the dots to engage local fishers to start fishing plastic. This is not just a stunt, it's becoming normal practice.

## **Tell us more about the tournament.**

It was an excuse to connect fishers with recycling companies. It's happening once a week in some countries, and if fishers keep doing it, we'll eventually be able to clean the water. We convinced the fishing communities to participate by offering to pay for the gas and the equivalent money of a day spent fishing so they didn't lose a single dime. In partnership with the recycling companies, we paid for the plastic on those specific days.

## **How did you convince the recycling companies to be a part of this?**

We found out that the plastic that comes from the ocean is easier to recycle than the plastic that we throw out every day. So they were extremely open to participating and investing in this.



b

Be agile

# Be agile



AB InBev brands show the benefits of being agile in different ways. This section highlights two pieces of Lion-winning work, 'Foamy Haircut' and 'Tagwords', that show how to find creative ways to overcome a key constraint.

THE FOAMY HAIRCUT | BRAHMA BEER 2022

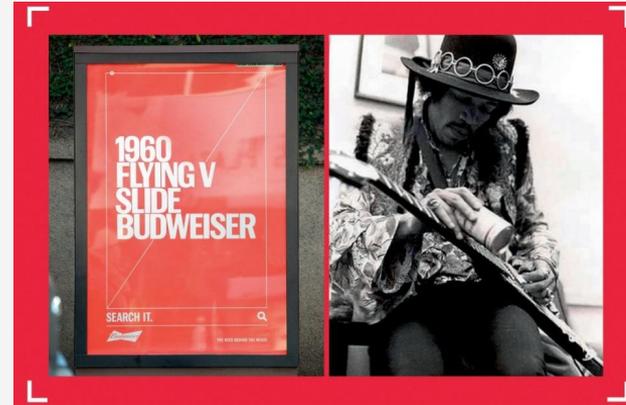


FCB, CHICAGO

GOLD SOCIAL & INFLUENCER LIONS

TAGWORDS | AB INBEV

2018



AFRICA DDB, SÃO PAULO

GRAND PRIX PRINT & PUBLISHING LIONS

# 'The Foamy Haircut': Creativity from constraints

In the wake of a beer sponsorship restriction in Brazilian football, Brahma needed a novel way to tackle the football scene. Inspired by players' controversial trims, it created 'The Foamy Haircut', a hairstyle mimicking Brahma beer and its creamy top layer. The hairdo trended on and off the pitch, boosted by OOH, TV commercials and influencer-driven social media content.

## Results:

- 415m impacts
- 37.6m earned impressions
- Brahma beer sales increased by 39%

>Takeout: Tap into pop culture in a creative way. Brahma overcame restrictions by attaching itself to something that was already attracting eyeballs: the players themselves.



FCB, CHICAGO

GOLD SOCIAL & INFLUENCER LIONS

## 7 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Gold Lion ●

Silver Lion ● ● ● ●

Bronze Lion ● ●

[THE FOAMY HAIRCUT](#)



“The Foamy Haircut’ was a creative solution to circumvent a constraint that restricted Brahma from sponsoring or branding the football team. It was a brilliant solution that leveraged one of the most distinctive assets of the brand – the creamy foam. The haircut developed from that resonated more with fans than any billboard in the stadium could have done.”

DANI WAKSWASER  
Marketing Vice President | Ambev



“‘The Foamy Haircut’ was an amazing hack that overcame a prohibition. There's a lot of regulation in the alcoholic drinks industry around where brands can advertise. ‘The Foamy Haircut’ wasn't allowed to advertise within a football stadium. It was an interesting use of a influencer starting a whole cultural movement that everyone mimicked. As it was visual, it reminded people about the product.”

JUDY LEE

Head of Global Brand Experiences & Programs | Pinterest  
Juror | Social & Influencer Lions 2022



# 'Tagwords': Agility drives intrigue

Budweiser turned a constraint into an online treasure hunt when it was restricted from showing pictures of musicians holding cans of its beer. Using OOH as a call-to-action, it challenged people to search specific terms on Google and unlock the images for themselves.

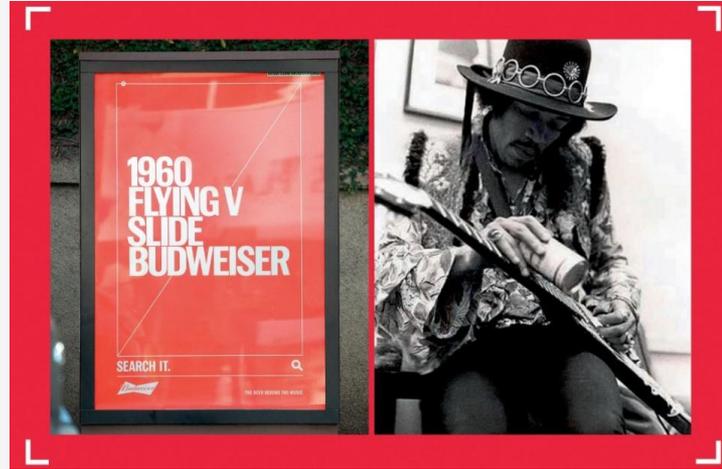
## Results:

- 5MM searches
- 7000% increase in the photos' relevance on Google

>Takeout: Lean into a pain point. By transforming this restriction into the central tenet of the campaign, Budweiser masterminded a distinctive push that sparked intrigue and reinforced its connections with the music world.

TAGWORDS | AB INBEV

2018



AFRICA DDB, SÃO PAULO

GRAND PRIX PRINT & PUBLISHING LIONS

## 7 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Grand Prix  Gold Lion  Silver Lion    

[TAGWORDS](#)



C

Nurture partnerships

# Nurture partnerships



Partnerships have been a key feature of much of AB InBev's Lion-winning work. These three 2022 winners show how different types of collaboration have been critical to AB InBev's success.

NATIVE SPORTSCASTERS | AB INBEV 2022



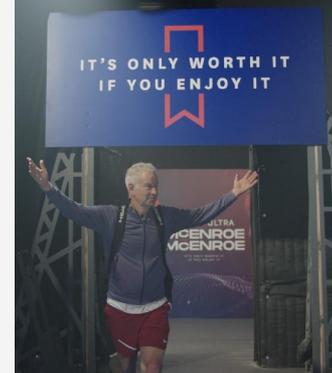
WE BELIEVERS, NEW YORK GOLD ENTERTAINMENT LIONS FOR SPORT

MICHELOB ULTRA COURTSIDE 2022



FCB, NEW YORK SILVER CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LIONS

MCENROE VS MCENROE | AB INBEV 2022



FCB, NEW YORK GOLD DIGITAL CRAFT LIONS



# 'Native Sportscasters': Think local

To activate its sponsorship of Mexico's national football team, Corona enlisted the help of amateur sportscasters and local radio stations. Following auditions, six winners commentated on Mexico's qualifying World Cup game across 75 local radio stations in their native languages.

## Results:

- 97% positive social media sentiment
- Sales increased by 21%

>Takeout: Add value. Identify a pain point for your audience and work out how the right partnerships can help your brand to alleviate it.

NATIVE SPORTSCASTERS | AB INBEV

2022



WE BELIEVERS, NEW YORK

GOLD ENTERTAINMENT LIONS FOR SPORT

## 5 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Gold Lion ● Silver Lion ●● Bronze Lion ●●

[NATIVE SPORTSCASTERS](#)



# 'Michelob ULTRA Courtside': Find the fun

When COVID-19 stopped spectator sports, NBA sponsor Michelob ULTRA partnered with Microsoft and the NBA to reinvent the experience. Fans could scan Michelob ULTRA bottles to win virtual courtside tickets, rubbing digital shoulders with the likes of President Obama and Lil Wayne.

## Results:

- 13 billion media impressions
- Sales increased by 32% year on year

>Takeout: **Be tenacious.** Don't give up when disaster strikes. Use challenging circumstances as an opportunity to double down with your partners to deliver solutions that benefit both of you.

MICHELOB ULTRA COURTSIDE | AB INBEV

2022



FCB, NEW YORK

SILVER CREATIVE EFFECTIVENESS LIONS

## 8 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

Gold Lion ● Silver Lion ●● Bronze Lion ●●●●●

[MICHELOB ULTRA COURTSIDE](#)

# 'McEnroe vs McEnroe': Joyful technology

A nail-biting match pitted tennis player John McEnroe against different avatars of himself from his heyday. Reinforcing Michelob ULTRA's 'It's Only Worth It If You Enjoy It' positioning, it brought together six different technologies to create an unmissable tournament that screened on ESPN.

## Results:

- 10m viewers
- 99% positive social sentiment
- Michelob ULTRA organic search increased by 95%

>Takeout: Use technology to enhance a creative idea. By combining different cutting-edge technologies, Michelob ULTRA created a new entertainment experience that earned free media for its brand.



MCENROE VS MCENROE | AB INBEV

2022



FCB, NEW YORK

GOLD DIGITAL CRAFT LIONS

## 5 CANNES LIONS AWARDS

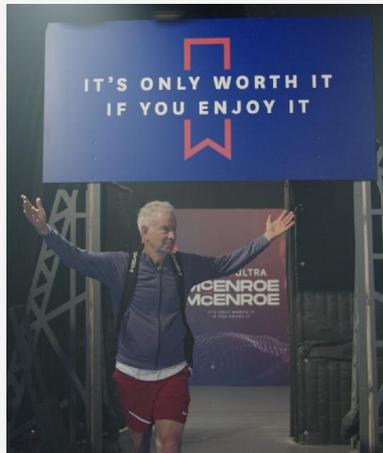
Gold Lion ●● Silver Lion ●● Bronze Lion ●●

[MCENROE VS MCENROE](#)

How It Got Made

# AB InBev ‘McEnroe vs. McEnroe’: “It collapsed a few times before it worked”

MCENROE VS MCENROE | AB INBEV 2022



FCB, NEW YORK

GOLD DIGITAL  
CRAFT LIONS



Alex Abrantes, Group Creative Director, FCB New York, and Michael Aimette, Co-Chief Creative Officer, FCB New York, reveal the issues behind aligning six different techs, how mist was problematic and why naivete is a super power

## How did you come up with the idea?

MA: The line ‘It’s Only Worth It If You Enjoy It’ is Michelob ULTRA’s North Star. McEnroe was someone who didn’t enjoy his success and career as much as he should have, making this piece clearly aligned with the brand promise.

## How did it all come together?

AA: It was 13 months of research and development. We partnered with Unit9 and brought together six separate technologies. It collapsed a few times before it worked. Motion capture, AI learning and the Unreal Engine was central to all of this, and we had to project onto a mist. The choice of the mist was hard: it needed to be stable enough to hold the high-res projection, but also penetrable so the ball could go back and forth. Lighting was a huge issue. Robots were needed across the court because we needed to return the balls; it needed to feel like a real match. Plus, we had to have an actual full court built from scratch because all the technologies needed a fully controlled environment. We couldn’t just go to Billie Jean King or Arthur Ashe stadiums and play there.

## Were you worried it wouldn’t work?

MA: Our superpower is that we don’t know any better and that means that you start coming up with interesting solutions that haven’t been done before.



“Choose your partners carefully. There will be moments when things won’t go well. You’ll be faced with situations where you’ll either point fingers or hold hands.”

ALEXANDRE ABRANTES  
Group Creative Director | FCB New York



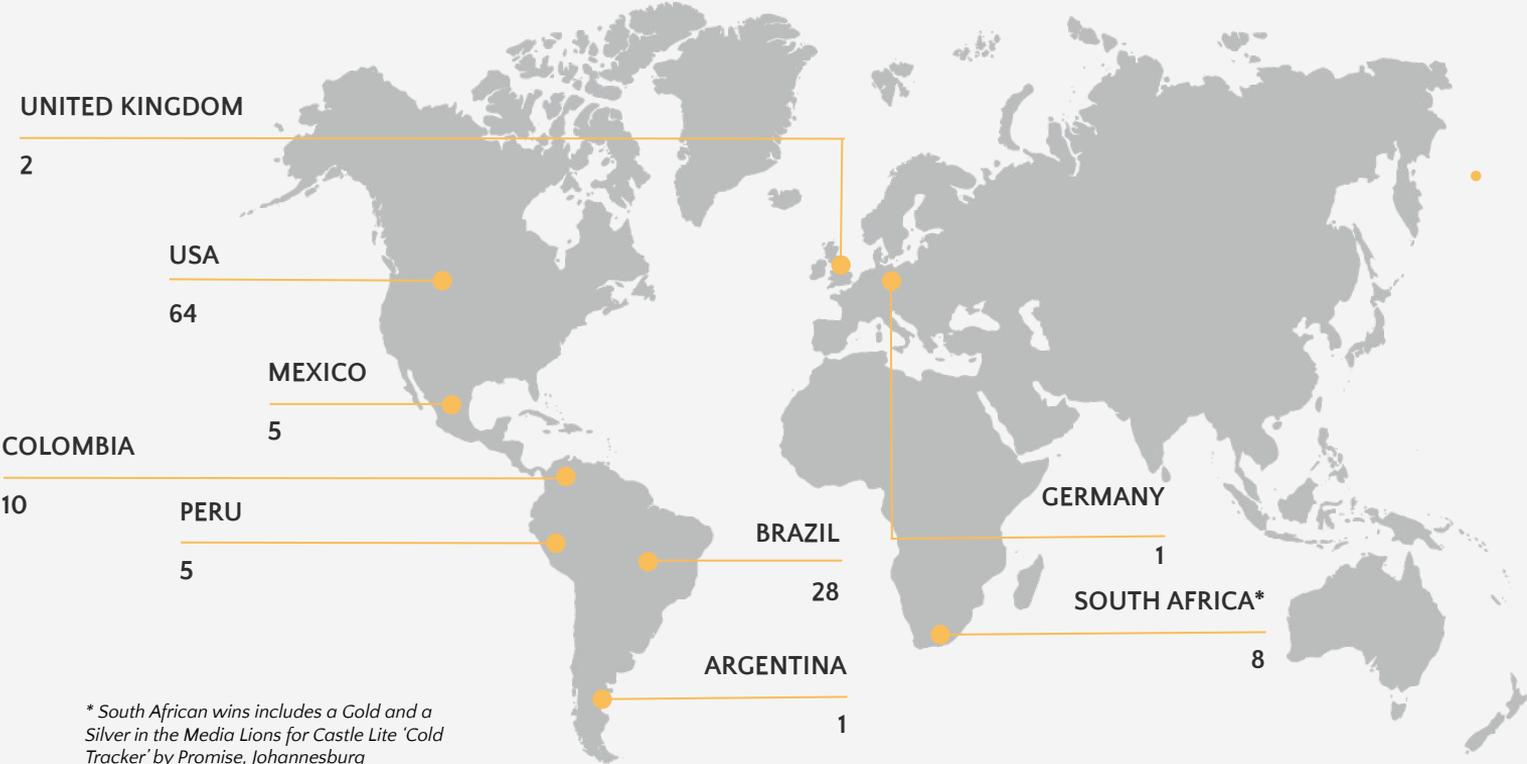
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# Data

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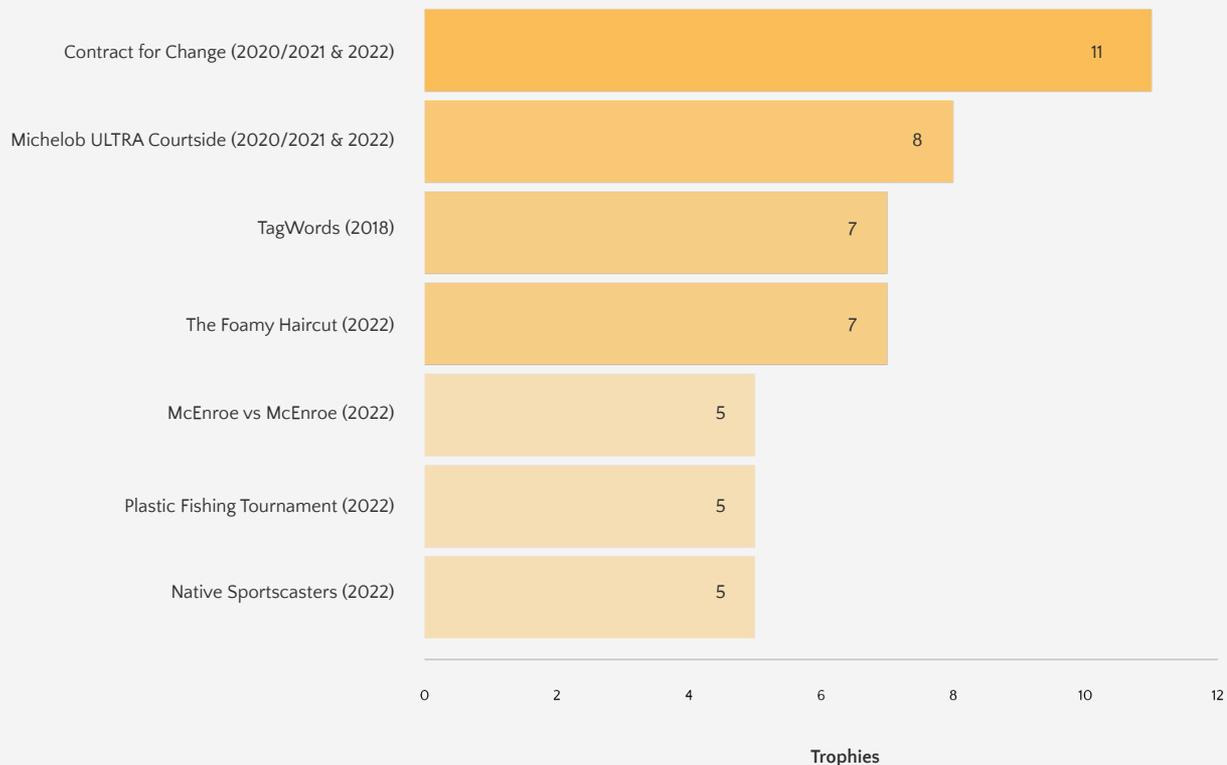
# AB InBev: Awards by country, 2018-2022



- Since 2018, AB InBev have won 133 Lions across 21 brands entered from nine different countries

\* South African wins includes a Gold and a Silver in the Media Lions for Castle Lite 'Cold Tracker' by Promise, Johannesburg

# Most-awarded work, 2018-2022



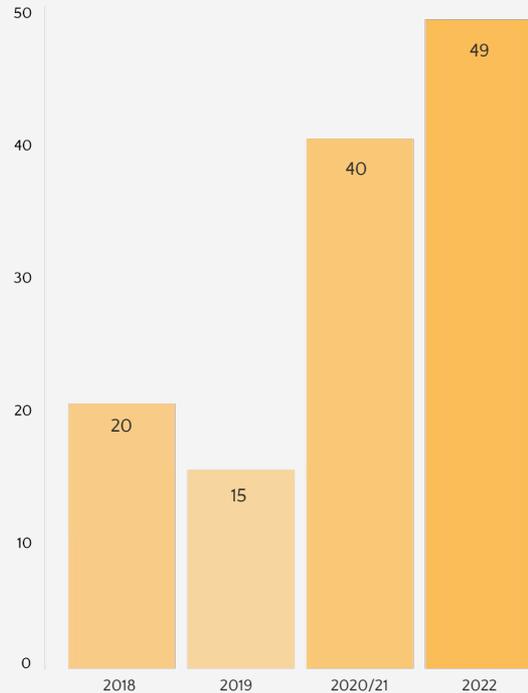
- AB InBev's most awarded work is **'Contract For Change'** which won **9 Awards in 2020/2021** and **2 Awards in 2022**.
- **'Michelob ULTRA Courtside'** follows, with **7 Awards in 2020/2021** and **1 Award in 2022**.
- Coming in third, with **7 Awards** each, are:
  - **'TagWords'** (2018)
  - **'The Foamy Haircut'** (2022)

# Best-performing companies, 2018-2022

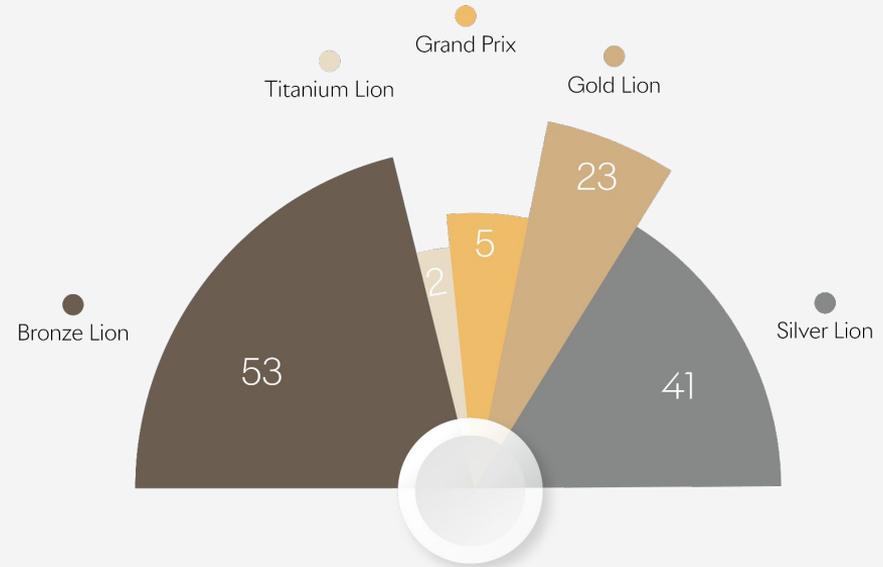


- AB InBev's best-performing partner company is **AFRICA DDB São Paulo**.
- **We Believers New York** comes in second place, with **15 Lions** – all of which were awarded in 2020-2021 and 2022 alone. The company was AB InBev's best-performing in 2022 and also took the Cannes Lions Independent Agency of The Year in the 2022 rankings.

# Awards by year & trophy, 2018–2022



- AB InBev has been a consistent winner at Cannes Lions, with its performance stepping up in 2020–2021. 2022 was AB InBev's **highest year** in terms of Lion wins.



- AB InBev has won a range of trophies, including **five Grands Prix**, two of which were awarded for '**Contract for Change**' which took the PR Lions Grand Prix in 2020–2021 and then returned in 2022 to win the Creative Effectiveness Lions Grand Prix.

# Awards by Lion, 2018–2022

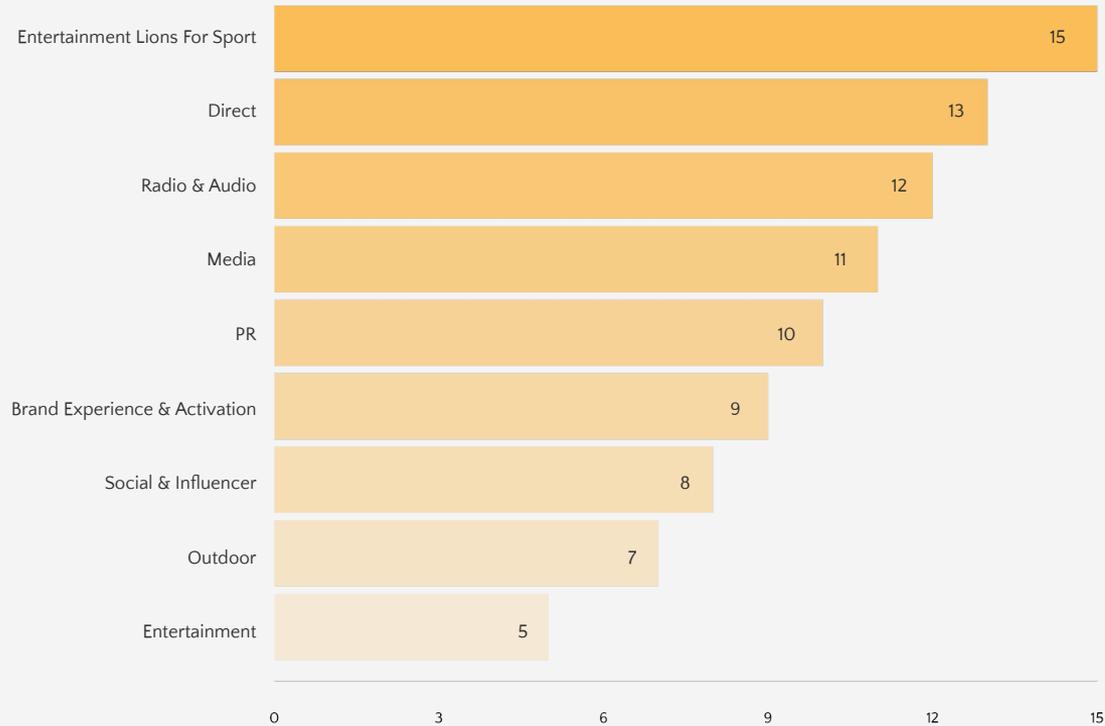


Chart shows Lions with 5 or more Awards

- The Lion in which AB InBev has seen its highest number of awards, is within **Entertainment Lions For Sport** – with **15**.
- AB InBev has received awards across a wider breadth of Lions in recent years: in 2022, it received awards in **16 out of 31 Lions**.

# Growth Through Creativity



Marcel Marcondes shares three lessons from AB InBev's transformation journey

## a

### **Prioritise people**

Have a clear understanding of the opportunity you have to be relevant in people's lives and to add value. This is easier said than done! But if companies keep looking at themselves as the centre of gravity, nothing is going to happen.

## b

### **Empower and unite teams**

Being relevant to consumers can't be done in silos. It needs a mindset that everyone shares. Teams need to feel empowered to come up with solutions. Bring everyone together; not just one tiny section of a team.

## c

### **Be a force for good and growth**

We can't be naive or hypocritical: as CMOs, we're here to drive growth. But being a force for good and for growth needs to be a North Star that drives everything.

If you are at the Cannes Lions Festival this year, don't miss the Cannes Opening Seminar in the Lumiere Theatre: **Creative Marketer of the Year Seminar – AB InBev | 10:00 – 10:30 am**

- **THE WORK**

#### **The Work**

More than 250,000 pieces of work from Lions, Eurobest, Spikes and Lynx featuring how they were conceived and crafted, and how they performed

#### **The Creative Debrief**

Exclusive data and analysis into multiple Lion-winners

#### **Creativity Reports**

Research, rankings and actionable insights from winners and Jurors for Lions, Eurobest, Lynx and Spikes Awards to help you benchmark your work and inspire your teams

#### **LIONS Intelligence On...**

Analysis into sectors, strategies and channels, driven by Lions data

#### **Festival Highlights**

1,600 Festival talks from 2011 onwards

#### **Daily Inspiration**

Best-in-class work curated by experts and delivered to your inbox

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If you are interested in hearing more about specific creative trends or in benchmarking your organisation's creative work, please contact [lionsadvisory@canneslions.com](mailto:lionsadvisory@canneslions.com)