

Common Ground launches at Cannes to support UN SDGs

In an unprecedented step for the industry, the world's biggest advertising and marketing services groups put aside competitive differences at Cannes Lions Festival to launch a major new initiative - 'Common Ground', in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted at the United Nations last year.

At the suggestion of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, for the first time rival parent company chief executives took the stage together to demonstrate their shared commitment to deploying the power of the creative industries to help address the world's most pressing problems.



The Secretary-General spoke at the Cannes Debate at noon on Friday 24 June in the Palais des Festivals, before being joined by leaders of the different groups.

The Common Ground programme will begin with a global advertising campaign, with space donated by key business and thought-leadership publications.

Following the Cannes Lions Festival, each group will focus on a specific area of the SDGs over the coming year, where possible and necessary working collaboratively across parent companies. They will also encourage other industries to find their own Common Ground.

Development fund for Young Lions

In addition, the six companies have agreed to provide a development fund for each of the winning ideas in the Cannes Young Lions competition, which this year is devoted solely to the SDGs. These funds will be used to develop the concepts and give them the strongest possible chance of being put into practice. This is the first time the Young Lions have been given a development fund, providing an opportunity to bring their ideas to fruition, directly contributing to the achievement of the goals and continuing to raise awareness of them.

The seventeenth and final SDG is based on the idea that collaborative partnerships will be essential if all of the SDGs, ranging from eradicating poverty to tackling climate change, are to be achieved.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged competing firms from other sectors to follow suit and make their own Common Ground commitments to supporting the SDGs. "Common Ground is breaking ground. This initiative is not only about the advertising industry's considerable influence in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals around the world. By putting aside their differences, these companies are also setting a powerful example for others to follow."

Tadashi Ishii, CEO and president of Dentsu; Yannick Bolloré, chairman and CEO of Havas; Michael Roth, chairman and CEO of IPG; John Wren, president and CEO of Omnicom; Maurice Lévy, chairman and CEO of Publicis Groupe and Sir Martin Sorrell, founder and CEO of WPP, released a joint statement.

"The Common Ground initiative recognises that the global issues the UN has identified transcend commercial rivalry. By working in partnership to support the Sustainable Development Goals, we want to demonstrate that even fierce competitors can set aside their differences in order to serve a wider common interest. We hope others in and beyond our own business decide to do the same."