

# Titanium Lions president Susan Credle's briefing

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25 Jun 2020

Every year at Cannes Lions there's a jury working tirelessly behind the scenes to identify the best work. Before they get started with the judging process, the jury president of each respective Lion gives a briefing to set the tone and provide some guiding principles for assessing every piece of work. These president briefings are private and have never been public before, until now. For the first time ever, Simon Cook, MD of Cannes Lions is pulling back the curtain to let us in on the briefing that would have been given if they had been able to come together.

In the second presidential briefing, Cook interviewed President of the Titanium Lions, FCB's Susan Credle to hear her briefing for 2021.



President of the Titanium Lions, FCB's Susan Credle.

Here, Susan sheds light on the new trends she's keeping an eye on, and looks back at some of the award-winners that moved the industry forward, helping set the standards of exceptional creativity that the Titanium Lions demand today.

**Cook:** *Susan, let's talk about your relationship with this Lion because I think it would help us set the scene. So, obviously, it was invented back in 2003, some time ago now. Of course, it was the great Dan Wieden who actually helped Cannes Lions introduce Titanium. Can you tell us a little bit about your personal story with this Lion because you actually sat on the jury and judged it last year, didn't you?*

**Credle:** Yeah, that was my second time. But the first time, I was so fortunate because I sat on the jury when Dan Wieden was chairing it. It was interesting because, I have to say that, before I got on the Titanium jury with Dan, I found that the Titanium jury was really about who had advanced technology in a way that was exciting and interesting and when I sat on the jury with Dan, he said the reason that we created the Titanium jury, wasn't about technology, it was about looking at where the industry needs to go. And what the catalyst for this Awards was the BMW films, and yes, that was a technological feat and it broke open what we thought of as media and where we could place content.

*“ This crazy thing happened with David Lubars and Fallon - there was no place to enter it. There was no place to show the BMW films, according to the Cannes categories. And that's when Dan said that this industry is always going to be in a state of progression and we're going to always need to be shown the way forward, not just, 'Oh this is a great piece of creative', but where do we need to go as an industry. And the BMW films were highly creative, really at the heart of why it was awarded, because it was showing where the industry needed to go, which was to break open from television and start embracing this new channel, this new place, which was the internet. That's what I took away from it, and it really adjusted my thinking about how to think about the Titanium. ”*

**Cook:** *What was it about that particular piece of work from BMW, produced by David Lubars at the time? What characteristics does any piece of work need to have in order to make it Titanium worthy? I think the exact definition from Dan, at the time when it was produced, was: "It's work that causes the industry to stop in its tracks and reconsider the way forward."*

**Credle:** Exactly, and I think that is the key to stopping in your tracks and saying what do we need to do to propel the industry forward. Sometimes, that's going to be embracing new technology, sometimes it's going to be embracing new platforms, who knows what it's going to be?

I think potentially where we might need to go, is getting our industry back into the C-suite and not just reacting to briefs but becoming problem solvers with our clients and that might not even look like advertising in the future. But I think it should always be looked at through the lens of what makes us relevant and important and a value to clients and to people.

**Cook:** *(Referring to the above video above) We've come a long way since then. And of course, we were hoping to see the Titanium Grand Prix and Lions which emerged from this year's Festival but unfortunately, we're not coming together this year. We're going to be regrouping in 2021 when Susan and her jury not one but two years worth of work. Susan, can you tell us a little bit about the briefing that you would have given to your jury, had they had a chance to meet this year. And also, how is it going to need to evolve when you finally get together in a year's time?*

**Credle:** Well, I think it's interesting because last year, I got to be on the Titanium jury with David Lubars running it. And of

course, David has been on the jury with Dan Wieden and David was also a part of why the Titanium was created in the first place. So, it was another great learning experience. And David went back to Dan's words and said, " Okay, we're looking to point the industry forward." And one of the things that we talked about in the jury, and if you go back and look at most of the Titanium winners of last year, is that we had a sobering conversation about that it seemed that a lot of the creative that is awarded and recognised in our industry, is what I call "haute couture". I think that Jeff Goodby even said this years ago. "The only people that see the best creative in our industry, are the people who walk up and down La Croisette one week a year.

*“ What we said is that, if we don't start doing our best creative work on our biggest brands, and where the world see it, not just the advertising industry, we will become irrelevant because we won't be able to prove that creativity actually is a business amplifier. Because if you're not doing it on big brands, if you're not doing it on the biggest briefs, there's no way you'd know whether just putting something out there that's average and putting something out that's original, creative and interesting, what's the difference? And then we won't be valued. ”*

So, you go and look at the Titanium award winners. What differentiated most of the work getting honoured or not was, was it a business amplifier? Did the clients actually see how creativity help their business short-term and will they keep doing it? We got to stop doing our best work on side projects. That's the message that we wanted to send as jury last year. I think it's hard to say, sitting here, what we'll be looking for or what we'll recognise as propelling the industry forward two years from now, but that's what this jury should be looking for now, is what do we see that is that a-ha moment of, wow, that's where we need to go or that's what we should be doing.

**Cook:** *But it sounds like the approach you took last year was a bit of a blend - obviously staying true to the original definition, that was set out by Dan, which is consistent year-on-year, but then applying this new lens that actually relates to the business we're in. Is that something that you'll take forward to next year as well?*

**Credle:** I do think it is important that the Titanium work have a business outcome. I just think we're still in that place - everybody says creativity is important and it has value but I still don't see us as a whole, taking care of the creative from a financial standpoint. And so, if we don't continue to prove, creativity directly affects the bottom line of business, we won't get the investment. And if we don't get the investment, we won't pull in the talent, and if we won't pull in the talent, then you know it's a slippery slope to where the industry will, I think, need a lot of help.

So, yes, I think we have to continue to be an economic multiplier to clients, to be valued the way we should be valued.

**Cook:** *And let's just remind ourselves of last year's Grand Prix which of course adheres to that criteria that you guys put in place. That was of course, "Whopper Detour." What was it about this piece of work that did those two things. Really established itself for the brand with impressive results but then also pointed to a new direction for the industry.*

**Credle:** I think on first blush when people saw the Whopper case study, I do think people just engaged with it - it was fun, they pulled off a big idea, it involved a multitude of technology, participation, kind of a provocative idea, and I think that got it into the conversation. But where I saw, sitting in the jury room - and I wasn't really allowed to talk about it - but what I saw happening in the conversation that pushed it up to the top was, it's not only fun, it's not only showing how to think creatively about how to engage people. Let them be a part of the idea, which feels pretty modern - we talk about it a lot at FCB about if we can do something provocative and create participation, that is a modern piece of advertising.

But what pushed it up was when we started looking at the business results and it was like Burger King was way behind with their downloads of their app. And the app today, in quick-service restaurants, is like drive-thru in the 70s. If you didn't have a drive-thru, you were going to fall way behind your competitors and it's the same with the app. The behaviour overnight changed from people standing in line to ordering on an app.

So, you know, Burger King, the client, really needed that app downloaded and the creativity amplified how quickly people downloaded the app, and that was where it made a difference in the business, not just in the brand.

**Cook:** Susan, you and the jury are going to be judging two years' worth of work, and if that wasn't a task enough, you're also going to be looking at work that has been through the lens of obviously Covid and everything else that is happening around the world relating to Black Lives Matter and racial inequality, possibly even the global recession. Can you tell us a little bit about how you're going to get through all that work and how you're going to assess it, given everything that's happened?

**Credle:** When Covid-19 started to become a global pandemic, every brand, every creative was like, what do we say, what do we do? And I actually heard someone say, "Are we gonna create a Covid category to look at this work or are we gonna not let any Covid work to be entered into shows to be discussed?"

I think it's a wait-and-see but I do think that one of the things that might be interesting for a jury in the next two years is to honour which brands, pieces of creative really mattered and helped to make the difference versus what just became a course of messaging that started to blend and look alike.



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That's going to be interesting and I could see that how do brands and agencies and products show up under these kinds of stressful situations. That would be a very interesting discussion, I think, for a jury like that, because that would show the industry the way forward, right? And I think we'll also see that brands that have done the hard work of finding themselves over time might show up more authentically, more importantly, and know what to do during these kinds of moments in our lives.

So I think that could be a lot of rich discussions but it is two years from now and I don't know what we'll see happening in our industry but I think we'll still use the lens of when we honour this work, how does it help us day-to-day, in our jobs, progress.

**Cook:** And of course, Titanium is one that people are always waiting for because it is such a bellwether and it does give an indication of where we are going. It is hotly anticipated and it is also at the end of the week when we do get together in Cannes at the Festival. So it's the one that people are looking out for. It's the one that people are talking about way after the Festival itself. Based on that, when the lights go down on that final Awards show on the Friday night, people are waiting to see the body of work you guys have curated, what Titanium stands for in 2021, representing two years. What kind of statement do you want that body of work to make to our industry?

**Credle:** I think I want you to leave that show feeling proud of our industry, feeling and understanding that we matter, that we have a lot of power and that we can progress things. We can take advantage of situations and push our worlds forward.

*“ So, I really do think this is an interesting time. And we keep saying that a lot of the times we show up and we sell some stuff, but we actually have the voice and the power and the presence to make a difference or to be of help. ”*

I think that's my gut right now - it is that we would probably be honouring work that not only kept the economy going but kept us all going.

**Cook:** *This session is all about the briefing that you would have given, had we had the chance to come together. You're not going to be able to do that for an entire year, so just for our audience and indeed for people around the world who are thinking of entering the Titanium Lion, what is your briefing to the industry?*

**Credle:** Well, my first suggestion would be to go back and look at what was on honoured over the years. And I don't think the Titanium is different every year but I think it's cumulative. So, if you start off where we started which is Dan Wieden saying BMW was an important piece of work that was going to show our industry a way forward, and where the future is, and last year, the way forward was please do your best work on your biggest brands and make a difference when it comes to business, I think this would be a time where a lot of brands have been saying "What am I supposed to do in these 'new normal' times?" I think we will probably lift up the work that answers that.

**Cook:** *Thank you, Susan. Thank you so much for making the time to do this and it's a shame that we won't be able to see each other in a few weeks' time, but I look forward to seeing you next year and in the room, where you'll be delivering your jury briefing in real-time to your jury.*

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## ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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