3 Ways P&G’s Marc Pritchard Encourages Marketers to Confront Inequality

Key Insights:

As one of the largest advertisers in the world, Procter & Gamble has an opportunity to lead the discussion on marketing by influencing what gets discussed. For years now, P&G chief brand officer Marc Pritchard, Adweek’s Grand Brand Genius for 2020, has decided to focus on inequality—both within the industry and the nation at large.

In conversation with Adweek’s Nadine Dietz at this year’s five-day Brandweek event, which features presentations and workshops from the marketing world’s best and brightest, Pritchard laid out how the maker of household brands such as Tide, Charmin and Bounty has been addressing the issue at a time when civil unrest over racial injustice has become a worldwide issue.

Hire, develop and promote a diverse staff

Pritchard oversees about 4,500 brand marketers. It’s a lot of people, but also a chance to make a difference in terms of who gets hired. According to Pritchard, diversity and inclusion are built into P&G’s organizational makeup, as opposed to bolted on. This is not just an ethical position, but also one that’s good for business.

“We know that when you have equality and inclusion, when you have representation across all parts of your business at all levels, then what you have is better innovation, better problem solving, better ideas,” Pritchard said.

The company has systems in place for hiring, development and

promotion, and strives to recognize and respect everyone's identity through listening and celebrating events such as Black History Month and International Women's Day.

"It's just part of feeling like you're part of something," said Pritchard. "And when you're part of something, you feel great about coming to work."

Diversify the creative supply chain

For Pritchard, systemic problems cannot be solved without systemic action. This means "ensuring that we have true equality and inclusion throughout the entire creative supply chain," he said.

Pritchard recalled a moment in June, during a virtual media roundtable, that hit on this point.

"I made it very clear: I never want to see another advertising storyboard that doesn't reflect the population we serve," said Pritchard, who is of Mexican heritage. "Then I looked around the room and said, 'I never want to see another meeting where it doesn't reflect the population we serve.'"

Structural change also involves investing in women- and minority-owned agencies and media platforms, which in turn spreads funds to their immediate communities and helps close the wealth gap. "Right now, marketers spend about 5% of their money on multicultural marketing. That's not enough," Pritchard noted. To encourage such connections, we introduced Brandweek Lift at this year's event, helping over 100 such agencies, tech firms and other solution providers attend and network for free.

P&G is working toward this goal. Now in its second year, the Queen Collective is an initiative run by P&G, Queen Latifah and Tribeca Studios that offers mentorship, resources and opportunities for young women filmmakers of color. P&G has also committed to having women direct 50% of its ads by 2023.

Change public perception through advertising

Pritchard, who has been in his role since 2014, has a history of challenging the status quo through advertising. This has involved stripping away negative portrayals of people in ads as well as calls to action.

In the days following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, P&G released a spot called “The Choice” created by Grey and Cartwright. Aired during Oprah Winfrey’s CBS special on racism in the United States, the simple 75-second ad features close-up images of skin and, with superimposed text, urges white America to rally against racism.

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