# Advertising’s Most Inventive Leader Is Leaving. Here’s What We Can Learn From Him

For all their talk of innovation, most ad agencies basically just create ads. But Thailand’s BBDO Bangkok has a reputation for being able to create just about anything.

Instead of creating ads about mosquito prevention in the slums of Bangkok, the agency created “Nano Shoes” that covered mosquitoes’ feet in larvicide, turning the pests into their own exterminators. Instead of creating billboards about motorcycle safety, BBDO Bangkok created a smart helmet that could automatically report a crash even if the rider was unconscious.

At the helm of all this creativity has been Suthisak Sucharittanonta, a 22-year veteran of the agency and its globally respected creative chairman. He has won many of the creative world’s top accolades, including being named one of only 10 global talents on Adweek’s 2017 Creative 100. But recently, Sucharittanonta announced he will be retiring from the agency world to focus on being a director, photographer and solo creator.

As part of the transition, he directed the agency’s newest short film, “Giving Life” for the Ramathibodi Foundation, an organization that provides healthcare and services for the underprivileged. You can check out the touching film, based on a true story, followed by Adweek’s conversation with Sucharittanonta about the lessons he learned from three decades working in advertising.

**Adweek: What made you decide to step away from agency life?**
Suthisak Sucharittanonta, creative chairman, BBDO Bangkok: It wasn't an easy decision, but after three decades in the advertising industry building and promoting brands and products, I thought it was time for a change. Now, I have a goal of giving back by using my experience, passions and skills to promote and encourage the betterment of society for the greater good through two things I love and enjoy doing most: photography and film directing.

**Under your leadership, BBDO Bangkok has been a leader in creating not just campaigns, but truly ambitious inventions and innovations. What are some you're most proud of?**
Over the years, there have been so many great ideas, some of which we were lucky enough to be able to bring to life thanks to some supportive clients. Two projects that come to mind are:

"AbsorbPlate" for the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. The plate was designed to help Thais eat healthier and it features hundreds of tiny holes inspired by the texture of sponge, making "AbsorbPlate" able to separate excess oil from food before people eat it.

"Predict To Prevent" for Samsung. This was an innovative predictive text function that recommends the right mix of words to use when texting with someone who is suffering from depression.

**There's always a lot of skepticism when agencies create ambitious inventions. Some people say it's just for awards or PR and can't ever be produced at scale. How would you defend inventing big ideas?**
Creatives create. That's what we do. And I'm not just talking about the art directors and copywriters; anyone can be creative. And now, more than ever, it is important that everyone in the agency is creative and pushing big ideas—whether strategic or creative. From the planners to

client service to the creative departments, big ideas, new ideas, crazy ideas are the ones that break the barrier of conformity that is constantly being put up for brands and agencies alike.

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>
> *Suthisak Sucharittanonta*

**You've often talked about what makes Thailand such a unique market, ev**

**en wi th in As ia . Wh at ar e th e bi gg es t ch al le ng es th at ma rk et er s fa ce in Th ai la nd ?**

Thailand’s unique culture, way of life and people really endear us to the rest of the

world… our delicious food and beautiful beaches don’t hurt either. But there

are some real challenges that need to be considered and thoughtfully addressed. Like

the rest of the world, we are all being affected by Covid-19. Luckily, in terms of

health, our country has implemented and abided by some strict measures to help sh

ield us from the pandemic. Financially though, many industries and individuals

are suffering. Aside from that, our volatile local politics are constantly pull

ing us back as we try to move forward.

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