

Tim Spencer

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- Brand and communications strategy
- Cultural analysis and forecasting
- Semiotic decoding and recoding

I am a creative thinker and innate problem solver. I approach research, insight and strategy with a leaning towards my training and experience in commercial semiotics and cultural investigation. I bring years of client-facing experience across the full strategic process; from interrogating the brief, insight gathering and data mapping, creative briefing and tactical planning.

I am flexible and adaptable in my work, due to many years operating as an external consultant a broad range of organisations. I'm articulate, relaxed, quick thinking and pragmatic. I believe stories energise us more than data and isolated insights, and I present to clients in a way that inspires, motivates and assures.

I am adept at managing qualitative insight gathering, working with quant data, conducting ethnographic research, and translating results into strategic direction.

Education

Central Saint Martins College of art and design BA (Hons) 2:1

Academic specialism: Semiotics and Cultural Theory

Employment History

WeAreSocial October 2022 - May (end) 2023

Head of global cultural insight - Fixed term contract

My time has been focussed on establishing a networked global culture monitoring council across 17 offices worldwide.

I devised and built the Global Culture Monitor (GCM) database, a global collaborative network of daily cultural monitoring. GCM enables contribution from all 17 offices. I consulted with the global strategy leadership team and each office worldwide to uncover and map the numerous challenges of achieving dependable cultural insight at the speed of social for clients operating globally. To launch GCM I designed and facilitated training programs in culture mapping with 80 global WAS delegates, many of whom had no prior Cultural Insight experience.

Alongside the creation of the GCM platform I was involved in pitches and projects for Adidas, Meta, CanAm, UnderArmour, Fwrd (Energy drink), Starbucks, and Tinder. I also contributed to the shape, content and evolution of WeAreSocial thought leadership.

The Pineapple Lounge January 2021- July 2022

Senior strategy director - Fixed term contract

TPL had been a client since 2016. Following significant pitch wins in 2020 we agreed to a rolling

six month exclusive fixed term contract. My role was to help qual researchers translate findings into sound strategic recommendations. I was responsible for shaping the debriefs and providing strategic frameworks and recommendations to clients around design, marketing and communications.

During my time with TPL we discovered and reported to Google the previously unknown insight that GenZ were increasingly turning to social for search - a phenomenon that wasn't being reported at the time. I worked with Nike on creating a strategic vision for adaptive apparel (disability apparel). For Netflix I created a sorting matrix to enable Netflix Development to work more effectively with influencers and creators on appropriate crossover concepts.

Clients included: Google, Hasbro, Netflix, Spotify, Nike, Lego, Mattel, HBO, Impulse.

Publicis September 2018 - May 2019

Lead strategist on Galderma - fixed term contract

Positioning and launch strategy of Aklief, a game-changing prescription topical therapy for acne,, requiring a game-changing strategy.

A longer report on this project is included at the end of this CV.

Cognitif Strategy Ltd 2016- 2021

Brand strategy director (own business)

Self-employed consultant while co-founding an A.I start-up (Signoi Ltd). I was also under contract with The Behavioural Dynamics Institute to provide cultural intelligence training on-site to UN militaries (Canada and Netherlands). I also provided semiotics and strategy to my own clients during this time.

Cognitif project examples include:

Britain Thinks (now called **Thinks**) - Speculative investigation into the future of food and groceries, exploring how the UK's grocery profile may evolve over the next twenty years based on global resource and distribution.

Barclaycard - Changing the traditional German mindset that cash is king. Culturally informed insight and foresight leading to various strategy developments around credit card service advantages.

Yum Brands - Reclaiming KFC's status as the original in a fiercely competitive category.

Samsung - Global strategy planning for the Samsung S8 phone, following the exploding Galaxy 7 crisis.

British Land - Insight, strategy, naming, and brand creation for Storey, flexible workspace by British Land.

The History Channel and H2/Vault - Restructuring History and sub-brands around a renewed focus on being the narrators of Humanity's Infinite Story Book.

Nickelodeon - Understanding 'coolness' for 8-15 year olds for cross-platform content development.

ClearChannel - Global strategy to promote large scale digital media as a means to transform under-invested or neglected city centres into vibrant cultural epicentres

Impulse Fragrances - Repositioning strategy based on cultural analysis of pre-teen and teen culture.

Hasbro - Global insight and strategy development for Hasbro boxed games and action figure EIPs.

Sony Pictures - Brand revival strategy for Sony European SVOD service, FilmOne.

Truth Consulting (2012- 2016)

Head of Cultural Intelligence.

I established and ran the cultural intelligence offer until the company was sold in 2015.

Truth project examples include:

E.ON Energy - The future of home energy for NPD and brand evolution.

Cadillac - Redefining luxury to devise a revival strategy for a fallen brand.

Intel - 'Beyond Intel Inside' global repositioning strategy to reframe Intel as a creative enabler not just a microchip in a box.

Financial Conduct Authority - Communications strategy to clarify role and purpose of the FCA and restore its credibility as the guardian of ethics in financial services.

Weetabix - The future of breakfast for NPD strategies.

Dove Mens+ - Brand evolution based on cultural decode of evolving men's skin care category.

Carlsberg - Reasserting Carlsberg's original philosophical wit in a category that had since become saturated with broad humour.

Scottish Government - Managing public perceptions of serious crime, fear & safety. Communications strategy.

Direct Line Group - Redefining Trust, brand strategy development.

Previous roles in brief:

Space Doctors 2009-2012

Semiotics and creative strategy.

StudioFury 2002-2010

Co-founder and creative/strategic lead.

Overland Group 1998-2002

Head of brand strategy for global fashion licensee.

One thing about me:

I have been an avid street photographer since art college. I have tens of thousands of photographs of street life on film, and more recently digital.

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AKLIEF Case study (Publicis fixed term contract)

Using outsider thinking to solve an unsolvable problem

Galderma had been acquired by Nestlé in 2014 as part of their strategy to enter the skincare and wellness categories. By 2019 they were selling off their acquisitions to refocus on food and beverage, and Galderma was up for sale. However Galderma had a distinct problem with their NPD pipeline which threatened their market value at a crucial moment. Publicis were running out of time to solve the problem and they recruited me to take a fresh look as an outsider.

It takes ten years to discover, refine, patent and commercialise a new molecule for pharmaceutical use. Once launched, a Pharma brand has only ten years of exclusivity before a patented molecule is released for use in cheaper generic alternatives. As a result of this mandate, businesses like Galderma are in a constant investment/R&D cycle to find new molecular therapeutics in order to stay ahead of Generics.

Galderma had lead the topical acne prescription therapies category for 20 years with Epiduo and Epiduo Forte, but they were approaching Loss Of Exclusivity (LOE) on the patented molecule. Galderma's next molecule development, a mono-retinoid, only performed well in one specific but unconventional way which wasn't accounted for in traditional efficacy testing.

Galderma couldn't see a realistic case study on which to launch and promote the new molecule. After ten years and a multi-million dollar investment in R&D, their next patent looked like it might fall short of efficacy testing, and therefore fail to be included on HCP prescription lists. Their single action retinoid molecule was not demonstrably better by the established testing metrics. New therapies must demonstrate greater efficacy than what is already on the market to receive technical approval and adoption by HCPs.

The strategic challenge lay in finding a therapy application rationale that would gain the necessary approvals and ensure the product was recognised as a credible treatment by HCPs worldwide. My approach was to understand both the established traditions of acne therapy testing, and to discover the challenges, social barriers and adaptive behaviours of acne sufferers. The solution to the problem lay at the intersection of category norms and real consumer insights.

The insight that transformed a significant challenge into a unique opportunity was that acne therapies traditionally focus on facial acne efficacy, and are tested accordingly.

Topical acne treatments that are effective on facial acne usually cause torso soreness and sensitivity, aggravating torso acne to make it worse long term. They also cause clothing discolouration. The new retinoid presented none of these problems, and due to the precise mechanism of action, it was singularly effective on torso acne with near zero side effects for the patient.

Consumers told us that torso acne remains a huge social inhibitor, causing anxiety and low self esteem even after facial acne has been successfully managed.

For adolescents and adults, torso acne remains a barrier to confidence and intimacy. There were no effective remedies on the market that focussed on managing torso acne effectively because the entire process of efficacy testing and approval was focussed exclusively on the face.

Aklief became the first prescription therapy to be approved by the FDA and worldwide bodies based on its unparalleled efficacy on torso acne (aka truncal acne). It is the first market leading topical therapy specifically aimed at managing torso acne which also has proven equal efficacy on many common types of facial acne too.

Postscript: EQT led a consortium that acquired Galderma for 10.2 billion Swiss francs in 2019. In 2022 Galderma were the number one choice for acne management globally, based on sales data across 75 countries around the world.