

THE INFLUENCERS

## Truth or Care?

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*Grand Central Recording Studios, 3 months ago*

### **Truth or Care?**

*Sarah King, Head of Studio Production, GCRS*

A few weeks ago, Carole Humphrey, founder and MD of Grand Central Recording Studios, wrote a thought piece on the topic: Does Anyone Care Anymore? It came from a feeling of increasing frustration, shared by many of my colleagues at GCRS, that, in today's commercial industry, quantity of output is king, often to the detriment of quality.

When Carole wrote the piece, she had no idea of the reaction she would get from those within the wider commercial world who are feeling the same pain. It turns out that many of us working in the creative industry do indeed care, very much. A snapshot of the responses she received reveals that, in general, we know something is broken and we're keen to help fix it, both for the good of our professional reputations and our enjoyment as viewers, watching these commercials ourselves, via TV, online, social or any other medium.

Following this outpouring of "Hear, hear", I read with interest the recent op ed '[Why Pay More?](#)' from Ben Essen, global executive planning director at Iris Worldwide. In it, Ben argues that it's time to "seize back control of the most ignored, most impactful lever in the marketing mix". As he summarises: "So how can brands hack consumers' sensitivity to price? By first answering a simple question: what about your offering are people prepared to pay more for?"

This feels like the question we should ourselves be asking, especially at a time when creative teams are increasingly under pressure to use less specialist, in-house production and post-production facilities, rather than going with those they know and trust.



To use a brand analogy, we should act as though we were Waitrose, offering quality and expertise, rather than cut-price deals and something for everyone.

On the topic of deals, we are increasingly being asked to create 'all-in' offers, rather than the traditional route of payment for time. I can see why these are appealing to under-the-cosh producers as they take away the headache of contingency planning when things take an unexpected twist and also make it easier to budget upfront. However, there is a danger as these become the norm: suppliers could find themselves increasingly struggling to make a profit on fixed price deals that overrun. The sad reality then is that companies are likely to go out of business – meaning loss of jobs, loss of craft skills and fewer options for brands and agencies, which, in turn, could mean the market rebalancing itself and thus prices actually increasing.

Rather than using fixed prices as a way of squeezing facilities, the opportunity here is in agency producers allowing their partners within post-production to take the lead on what is needed and do their specialist job. For example, when clients ask us to work along with them from the start of the production process, we can confidently manage the budget in our area of expertise and can offer



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realistic ways of delivering a high-quality product in a way that works within the budget.

This requires confidence and bravery on both sides but is hardly revolutionary. Everyone in post-production has a story or ten about the bold client who was not afraid to be decisive, put trust where it was needed and, ultimately, achieved something marvellous.

Let us focus our attention there. Rather than bemoaning those who know the price of everything and the value of nothing, let us take this fantastic opportunity to inspire and enable those brands and agencies who still do care. They are out there!