

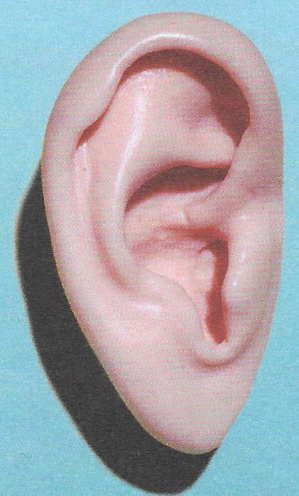
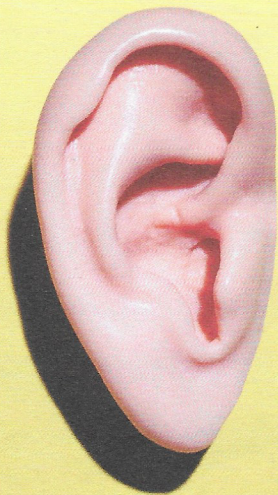
CRISIS  
TALKS

AMERICAN  
DREAM

VIRTUALLY  
PERFECT

RETAIL  
THERAPY

# CATALYST



**Truth  
be told**

CONTROL THE  
BRAND STORY

CIM







# THE BEAUTY OF DIGITAL

*L'Oréal UK & Ireland CMO Lex Bradshaw-Zanger on being in marketing's post-omnichannel vanguard*

Words **LUCY HANDLEY**

Photography **JOEL ANDERSON**

“

I've been very lucky to be at the forefront of a bunch of different things going on,” says Lex Bradshaw-Zanger of his two decades

in marketing. It has been a varied career, from strategic planning and digital transformation in agencies, to client-side at Facebook's burgeoning advertising business. Now, as chief marketing officer at L'Oréal UK & Ireland, his main job is to help speed up the beauty giant's shift to ecommerce for brands that range from luxe (such as Lancôme and Kiehls) to everyday – Garnier and Maybelline, via professional haircare and 'active' skin products such as CeraVe and Vichy.

“I've always been in this sort of catalyst, agitator role. And that's something where you have to understand that you're kind of always pushing people, ruffling their feathers a little bit, but trying to find ways to change, [and] bring people on the journey. And that's a hard task,” he states.

## CAREER DEPTH

His time in agencies gave him a focus on brand that's been with him throughout his career. “It's not about the colour, it's not about the logo. It's about the promise

## Inside...

- ◆ A brand is a **promise to the consumer**
- ◆ Both **breadth and depth** of experience make a career
- ◆ The **fundamentals of marketing** haven't changed but the environment has
- ◆ Stop talking about **digital and non-digital**

to the consumer. All you can do is live up to that and fulfil the promise – or you can break it,” he states.

Bradshaw-Zanger worked on IBM's business during a stint at OgilvyOne in Paris, where he learned all about CRM and demand generation – something he refers to as “massively innovative” at the time. He moved to digital agency, FullSix followed by a role as business director for HSBC at JWT. As a regional director for Leo Burnett in Dubai, he ran the agency's digital and CRM practice in the Middle East and worked on

McDonald's, among other clients, but a jump client-side to Facebook in Paris gave him a deep understanding of how the platform works for advertisers, witnessing its expansion from social network to advertising juggernaut, as well as its move from website to mobile app.

“I had the luxury of being at Facebook during a period of transition. So I really understand how Facebook works, what their intrinsic value proposition is, how they work at the top of the funnel for awareness in terms of broad reach, how the targeting works, how they work in the middle of the funnel, what formats work.”

His clients were large businesses in financial services and telecommunications, which spent a lot on performance marketing. “It was great being able to go out and say, listen, we've got a product offering that is as good, if not better than Google search. A different experience delivering the same result,” he says.

Bradshaw-Zanger's intellect shines through in his lightning-fast delivery, but he never comes across as arrogant, and conversation is peppered with humorous anecdotes. “I still have a lot of Facebook T-shirts and I like to wear them when I'm meeting with Google ➔





**YOU'VE GOT TO DIG QUITE DEEP IN EVERY NEW STEP OF MARKETING AND ADVERTISING AND DATA TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GOING ON. AND MY BRAIN WANTS TO SUCK IT UP**



as well, which antagonises them,” he deadpans. “All on video conferences – I have to look a bit more serious when I’m in an in-person meeting,” he adds.

#### **CONSTANT LEARNING**

This breadth and depth of knowledge has served him well, he says. “You’ve got to dig quite deep in every new step of marketing and advertising and data to understand what’s going on. And my brain wants to suck it up. You’ve got to understand a little bit about how things work to then be able to integrate it into all the rest [of marketing],” he insists.

That constant learning is also something he expects newer marketers to

focus on, emphasising the importance of both the fundamentals of marketing and understanding consumers. He mentions comedian Maureen Lipman’s turn as the star of BT’s TV ads in the 1980s. “A TV ad was about a story arc ... story arcs don’t work online because people see two, three, maybe six seconds of a video. So, you’ve completely got to flip it around. You really have to understand how a TV ad works, how the story arc worked, how people were sitting in front of it – and they were watching from beginning to end – to understand how that’s different today.”

After Facebook, Bradshaw-Zanger moved to McDonald’s to run digital strat-

egy for Europe, having previously had exposure to the brand as a Leo Burnett and Facebook client. “You’ve got franchisees that are the size of a country, so you’ve really got a board of franchisees you’ve got to go and sell [to] beyond the corporation,” he recalls.

He’d admired L’Oréal’s dynamism and innovation from afar, having worked on its business as an account director at FullSix in Paris and New York in the mid-2000s. When he was headhunted by the beauty business in 2016 for a role as its chief digital officer for the Middle East and Africa, he jumped at the chance. Working at McDonald’s had been a “great opportunity”, he insists, but he’d been somewhat frustrated by the tension between regional and global offices. He helped L’Oréal to “triple, quadruple-digit” digital growth in the region, working with African ecommerce platform Jumia when it was starting out.

#### **FUTURE RETAIL**

In October 2019, he moved from Paris to London – the city he grew up in – to take



## THE EXPECTATION OF MARKETERS TODAY IS GOING THROUGH THE ROOF IN TERMS OF WHAT THEY KNOW AND UNDERSTAND



on the UK & Ireland CMO role at L'Oréal, and says he'd been struck by changes on the British high street during his travels to the UK over the years. In July, British stores John Lewis and Boots announced several store closures due to the coronavirus pandemic – and both retailers are key L'Oréal clients. What of the beauty halls in which the company sells its lotions? He praises both chains for their digital agility during the outbreak, and states: “The high street’s not going away ... I think everybody is going through changes and it’s just rebalancing the business and figuring out what the consumer wants in the future.”

Globally, 20% of L'Oréal's revenues are via ecommerce – either through its own branded websites or those of online retailers – and its overall sales reached €29.87 billion in 2019. Bradshaw-Zanger picks out NYX Professional Makeup as “the archetypal digital-first brand”. He also mentions ModiFace, the augmented reality software company L'Oréal bought in 2018, which lets consumers try on makeup virtually. Lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic meant an acceleration of ecommerce and, while he can't discuss numbers, he says the online and offline channels are moving closer together.

“We're now post-omnichannel. We're moving into a world where either ecommerce is bigger than the bricks business or is just such an intrinsic part of it because everybody is buying in both channels that we no longer need to separate them. And I think that's the big challenge; how we stop talking about digital and non-digital... and think about the whole consumer as one,” he states.

Smaller beauty entrants like Glossier and Milk Makeup mean L'Oréal has to “keep ourselves pointed and chasing everything all the time”, and seeing how such brands are building themselves online is something the business can “learn a lot from”.

“We're starting to look at how we

change our marketing models and look bottom up, you know; performance media, consumer engagement, content. These things may be first, or more in the mix than they were before, more than traditional advertising,” he says.

Focusing on the bottom of the funnel and on product innovation is the “winning formula,” Bradshaw-Zanger says. “Just because our brands are big and some of them old – because the group is 110 years old – doesn't mean the product innovation isn't.”

## BUILDING ON EXPERTISE

“It's a really tough job, digital transformation, because you expect marketers to do so much and know so much today. The expectation of marketers today is going through the roof in terms of what they know and understand.”

Data is a big part of that expectation. “The people holding the data are now the ones making the sales, whether it's high-street retailers with their loyalty cards, or people like Amazon who are making the sales. So, I think, working with them, partnering with them and understanding their audiences is really critical,” Bradshaw-Zanger states, adding that of course L'Oréal also has its own consumer data.

At L'Oréal, he manages a group of experts. “I only have centres of expertise. So, I have a media team, a data team, digital technology, consumer market insights, consumer care, and ecommerce acceleration – these are all expert roles.”

His job is to bring that together – and make sure he also has marketers who understand the fundamentals. “Everything we know about marketing; the four Ps, from however many years ago, are still relevant today, but in a different environment. I think we need to have marketers who understand that.”

He uses continuous learning to make sure he is always thinking differently. He rattles off: “There is what you know, what you know you don't know, and what you don't know you don't know. You've got to find a way to break into that.”

Bradshaw-Zanger advocates reading beyond marketing and is a fan of a newsletter by tech and media analyst, Benedict Evans, who writes essays with titles like ‘What comes after Zoom?’ and ‘Netflix is not a tech company’. “I need to dig deep into things to understand how they work and that's the real way I get my brain around it.” ◇

**Lucy Handley**  
is editor-at-large  
of *Catalyst*

## CV

### LEX BRADSHAW-ZANGER

1997-1999

**University of Westminster**  
*BA, European Management*

2001-2002

**Spherical Brand Strategy Consulting – The Richards Group**  
*Brand consultant*

2002-2004

**Universitat Pompeu Fabra**  
*MBA, strategy & finance*

2004

**Hewlett Packard**  
*Team leader*

2004-2010

*Roles at agencies*  
**OgilvyOne, FullSix, JWT**

2010-2012

**Leo Burnett**  
*Regional director, digital strategy and innovation, MENA region*

2012-2014

**Facebook**  
*Client partner, business partnerships*

2014-2016

**McDonald's**  
*Senior director, digital strategy, marketing & CRM, Europe*

2016-2019

**L'Oréal**  
*Chief digital officer, Middle East & Africa*

2019

**L'Oréal**  
*Chief digital officer, consumer products division, Western Europe*

2019-present

**L'Oréal**  
*Chief marketing officer, UK & Ireland*