

## Orlando Wood on Why Advertising Needs Showmanship Again an interview with the Global TV Group

A leading voice in advertising effectiveness, Orlando Wood has transformed the industry's understanding of how creativity drives commercial success. As Chief Innovation Officer at System1 and an Honorary Fellow of the IPA, he has studied more than 26,000 ads and authored the acclaimed books *Lemon* and *Look Out*. His award-winning research has demonstrated that showmanship matters more than ever in an age of AI, streaming, and short-termism. In this insightful interview, Orlando shares his views on the enduring principles of effective advertising, the future role of television, and how brands can rediscover the creativity that fuels long-term growth.

***You've said that advertising needs to return to its roots. Why do you believe this is necessary, and what do you think has been lost or changed?***

Over the last 20 years, advertising effectiveness has declined. We've shifted from a period of advertising *showmanship* to one of advertising *salesmanship*.

Showmanship builds salience and preference through narrative, character, and humour. Salesmanship speaks to the already half-interested, giving them reasons to buy and nudging them over the line.

Both are important, both have a long history, and each supports the other — but of the two, it's showmanship that's more crucial for long-term profit and growth. That's something we seem to have forgotten. In fact, good showmanship also strengthens your salesmanship. Unfortunately, we've become stuck in a salesmanship rut. What we need is a new creative revolution — one that brings us back to what drives growth.

***In what ways can advertising reconnect with its roots in today's landscape of digital platforms, AI, and streaming? How can it remain relevant while adapting to new media environments?***

The first step is understanding what showmanship and salesmanship are, what they look like, and what kind of business outcomes they create. They operate very differently.

- *Showmanship* captures attention among a broad audience and lodges the brand in memory through emotional appeal. Its effects build over time.
- *Salesmanship* targets people already primed to buy — its effects are direct, immediate and short-lived.

You can clearly see the same kind of business outcomes associated with each school in new media too. Our work at System1 shows that these two schools of advertising exist across even the most modern of platforms, with *showmanship* driving salience, trust and

sales, and *salesmanship* achieving only conversion (see our report, *The Long and Short (Form) of It*).

Understanding advertising's origins, roots and principles helps us to clarify what we need to do. Do this, and you realise that while practices change, principles endure. This is something I set out for participants in my effectiveness course *Advertising Principles Explained (a.p.e.)*. Showmanship will always work best with high-attention and broad-reach media. It requires a stage on which to perform. And this is why TV is so important.

***As fully AI-developed campaigns begin to emerge, what role do you see AI playing in the creative process of TV campaigns? How do you view this development?***

AI can be a brilliant creative partner — but only if you know how to brief it and how these two schools operate.

ITV has taken a proactive step with AI: it now offers a service where its creative team uses AI to develop ads for new-to-TV advertisers. This approach has two big benefits:

- It helps new advertisers get started in an unfamiliar medium.
- It lets them reallocate creative development budgets toward media spend.

We've tested some of these AI-generated ads at System1, and they can perform very well, surpassing the emotional scores achieved by advertising for established advertisers in the category. Perhaps AI can help to up everyone's game.

***What role does television, both linear and streaming, play in today's rapidly evolving media environment, where consumer behaviour is constantly shifting? How should advertisers adapt?***

TV plays a hugely important part in today's media mix — not just because of its reach, but because it delivers high attention. It can also, through its programming and sponsorship opportunities, help to insert a brand into culture.

So if you're an advertiser, use TV's strengths to deliver emotional, memorable and broad-reach campaigns — the kind that create long-term value and matter more than ever in a short-term world.

I often tell advertisers: *you have to be more interesting, more arresting, more entertaining than the content that surrounds you*. Remember that you are competing for time and attention. And that's true wherever you show up.