

OPINION

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We need to share our expertise with global partners

Nicky Unsworth, CEO at Manchester-based communications agency, BJL, explains why global networking and collaboration is more important than ever

As we're all only too aware, the world is changing at an unprecedented rate - with more political, social and economic upheaval surely on the way.

Moves towards Brexit, the advent of the Trump era and looming European elections are changing how British businesses view and work with the rest of the world.

Dealing with such rapid change isn't easy and navigating these uncertainties is certainly challenging but one thing is clear - the need for international collaboration has never been so pressing.

As a business owner and member of a thriving Manchester and UK digital creative industry, I and my colleagues are looking to promote and extend ideas and skills sharing wherever we can.

I was recently appointed chairman of Tribe Global - an independent, global agency network, designed to bring like-minded independents from across the world together.

We have been in existence since 2012, founded to meet what members felt was a pressing need for productive partnership.

As well as skills and expertise, we share contacts and ideas and in 2017 the need for this, and our purpose, seems clearer than ever.

In a world where the international fault lines are being hastily redrawn, we are proud of our ability to come together to create an agile, flexible, pan-national whole.

Our 28 members (and two partners) representing European, American, Middle Eastern and Asian agencies meet in person whenever we can and, when we do, we find that despite working in often radically different markets, we have more in common than we think.

As an agency born and bred in central Manchester, we have always been keen to share our city's strong heritage, that passion for bringing truly original ideas to life, too.

This was the city that shaped the industrial world and is busy defining and contributing to a new digital global culture - and we never miss an opportunity to talk about how we can learn from that.

One of our last Tribe Global meetings was held in San Francisco, another cradle of technological innovation.

Arriving into the city, driving in through a distinctly industrial landscape, it was hard not to draw parallels with Manchester - its can-do attitude, progressive thinking and reputation for doing things differently.

Okay, so the streets are a bit steeper and no-one seems to have heard of Vimto, but apart from that the parallels are uncanny!

As part of our visit, we spent time



learning from businesses we admire - meeting with everyone from emerging start-ups to household names, like Airbnb.

They all bring very different ways of working and creating to the table but that pioneering, inventive, 'will do' attitude that is so much a part of Mancunian and San Franciscan culture and a belief in the power of collaboration was there in them all.

As 2017 continues to surprise, it feels like it's that spirit we feel will see us through potentially tricky times.

While politically, countries may withdraw, the business and creative worlds need to come together more than ever before.

At Tribe Global we are actively looking to recruit more members, to expand our base as far as we can.

Through our work here, and as an independent UK agency, we hope to expand on the principles that have brought us this far - sharing knowledge, process and ideas to create international partnerships that can transcend politics and benefit us all.