

The Great Reset

How a community of advertising professionals endeavoured to use its creative power to reset their industry and society by encouraging people to maintain the positive environmental shifts experienced during lockdown.

The Global Threat and the UK Government's Response

The planet is facing a climate emergency and human behaviour is the cause. Scientists have forecast that if the world exceeds 2C of heating above pre-industrial levels the consequences will be catastrophic for humanity.

Society has a brief period of time to address this existential threat. In 2015 governments signed the Paris agreement committing to limit warming to 2C with an ambition to keep it below 1.5C requiring significant reductions in carbon emissions across the globe.

In June 2019, the UK parliament passed legislation for the government to reduce net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. Achieving this will make the UK a 'net zero' emitter.

The Role of the Advertising Industry in Reducing Emissions

For over 200 years the global advertising industry has demonstrated it has the power to influence human behaviour driving consumption and resultant carbon emissions to unsustainable levels. It stands to reason to think that the same industry can play an equally powerful role in influencing human behaviour to **stop** the planet from warming dangerously.



Industry leaders whilst aware of their power are making environmental commitments which are neither sufficiently ambitious nor widely adopted. It is apparent that advertising professionals **at all levels** need support to make the necessary far reaching changes to alter the way they work, what they create and most importantly reduce the environmental impact of their output.



The Role of Purpose Disruptors

Purpose Disruptors was formed to provide that support. The organisation was set up by a group of committed former marketing and advertising insiders, Lisa Merrick-Lawless, Jonathan Wise and Rob McFaul, who seek to use their skills and talents to educate and persuade the industry to shoulder its responsibilities in tackling climate change.



It evolved from a year of informal monthly pub nights into a social purpose company formed in early 2020, before lockdown. It gained early success working with major networks such as WPP and industry bodies like D&Ad as well as fostering a community of 1500 industry professionals worldwide. However, less than two months into trading they had to quickly change their approach as Covid-19 struck.

With the world on pause but with the climate crisis continuing unchecked, how could Purpose Disruptors pursue their mission during lockdown?

Evidence of change

By May 2020 the effects of lockdown were beginning to have a positive impact not only on the spread of the virus but on carbon emissions. Green shoots of change were emerging. We were flying less, fewer cars were on the road and UK sales of bicycles in April increased by 60%. Overall, scientists predicted a worldwide fall of 7% in emissions in 2020. The Global Carbon Project stated this annual decline was the largest drop in emissions ever recorded and the largest relative fall since the second world war. It was also, coincidentally, almost the same as the required annual reduction of 7.6% the UN Environment Programme states is needed **on an annual basis** between 2020 and 2030 to remain on track towards the 1.5C temperature goal of the Paris Agreement.

A different approach

This was a seismic shift. Until this point the Purpose Disruptors community had been pushing the advertising industry to **reduce** its carbon emissions. However, for the first time, the world was on track to meet its annual reduction target of 7.6%. What was needed now was encouragement to **maintain** that reduction both within the industry and ultimately in wider society as we emerged from lockdown.

The climate emergency is a 'bigger than self' problem. It requires swift collaboration at scale to overcome it. They needed an approach that would achieve multiple objectives:

1. **Industry awareness:** Raise the profile of the climate emergency within the industry.
2. **Collaboration at scale:** Educate advertising professionals from across the industry, on the critical role their work plays in shifting consumers towards more sustainable

values, attitudes, lifestyles and behaviours and seek to galvanize them into working voluntarily and collaboratively across networks and agencies to develop a consumer advertising and awareness campaign that communicated the environmental benefits we were witnessing.

3. **National awareness:** Use that campaign to reach wider society.

The Great Reset

The concept of The Great Reset was thus born out of a series of fortnightly virtual meetups throughout April and May 2020, attended by hundreds of members from the PD community of advertising professionals generously sharing their observations, experiences, creative thoughts and ideas. It became a rallying cry to the industry to build back better and not return to business as usual and promote individualist, high carbon lifestyles.



How it happened

Like many, Purpose Disruptors moved to virtual working during lockdown and conducted everything that followed over Zoom whilst endeavouring to home school, and stay healthy. They began experimenting and moved their community 'pub nights' online which proved successful and had the added bonus of widening their audience outside of the UK.

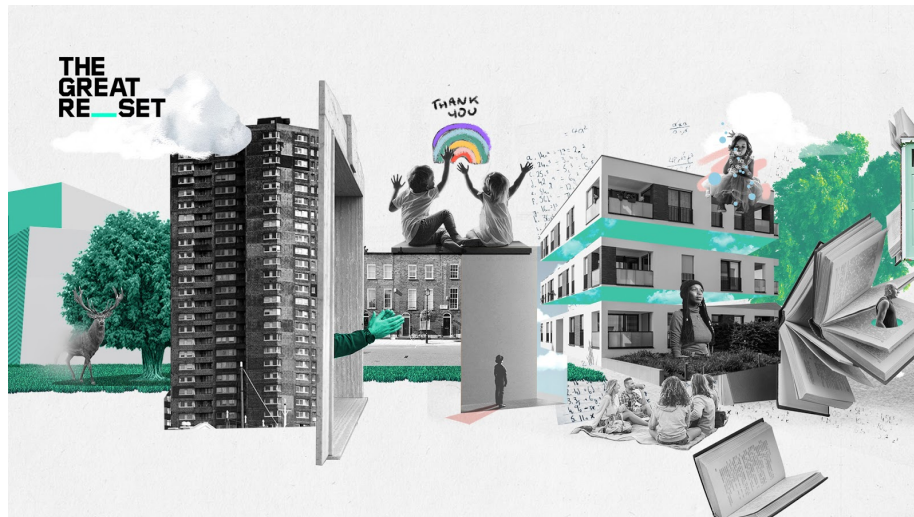
As things began to crystallize over a series of Zoom meet ups with the community, they drew up a 3-phase plan:

1. Recruitment

Their first challenge was to attract more members and the wider industry to their cause. They needed media owners, creatives, and influencers from across the industry to engage and commit. Throughout June they worked with a growing team of volunteers to develop a recruitment strategy.

They began by securing a small amount of funding and developed a [launch film](#) and [digital hub](#), recruiting the skills of Ben Essen, CSO, Grant Hunter ECD and a team of 20 from Iris.

Simultaneously they began a deep-dive into systems change with Dr Orit Gal and developed a [white paper](#) written by Alex Kingston and Laura Costello to share the theory behind why The Great Reset was needed and what it might mean for the industry.



They also commissioned a poll conducted through OnePulse which validated their anecdotal evidence and showed that only 23% of the population believed post-lockdown advertising should encourage people to consume, shop and fly like before, while 77% thought it was the creative industry's responsibility to encourage people to behave more sustainably, as we had in lockdown.

With the help of a team of communications volunteers The Great Reset launched with a call to arms on 2nd July at a live virtual event attended by nearly 200 industry professionals. They secured coverage in the industry press: [Campaign](#), [Creative Brief](#), [Little Black Book](#), [The Drum](#), [Marcomm News](#), [The Stable](#), [Shots](#). They even managed to influence the theme of the summer [Campaign](#) magazine .

2. Engagement

Throughout July they collated pledges of support from creatives willing to respond to a creative brief and influencers wanting to encourage work colleagues to participate and spread the word amongst their professional networks. They received 200 pledges via their [digital hub](#) with more being added through direct one to one contact with key decision makers.

With the help of the buying team at Mindshare they also spent time securing support from media owners in the form of donated media space. By August they had significant donations totalling £500,000 from : The Guardian, The Telegraph, The Daily Mail, Metro, Clear Channel (Outdoor), Global (radio), and digital inventory from Channel 4, The Independent , Stylist magazine and WeTransfer.

3. Movement

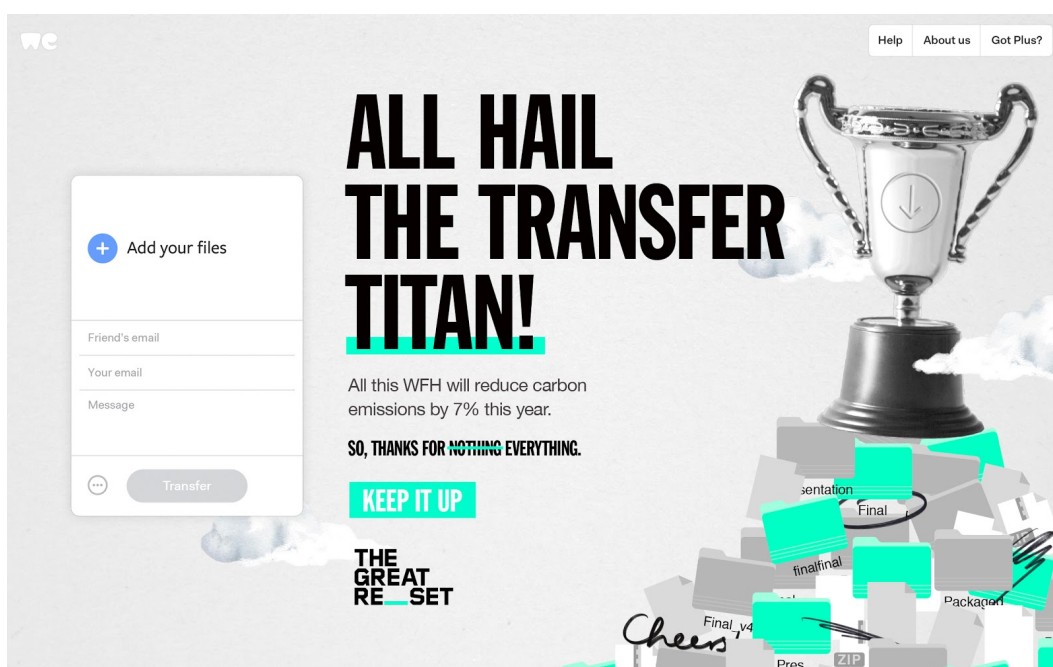
Once the media plan was confirmed they worked with Will Lion, ECD at BBH to develop the [creative brief](#) and released it to the creative community who had pledged support giving them 3 weeks to submit ideas.

They also recruited D&AD, a prestigious industry awards body by securing the D&AD New Blood Academy members as judges. More than 50 rising young stars of the advertising industry would ultimately choose the final creative to be used, flipping the traditional awards model on its head and ensuring the participation of the next generation of advertising professionals. How we respond to climate will define all our futures. Purpose Disruptors wanted those with the most future in front of them to decide on the best climate work.

160 creative submissions were received. These were whittled down to 20 shortlisted pieces of work and 8 final executions, all showcased on greatreset.com

Selected creatives ranged from interns and junior designers to award winning creative teams and a team of ex-industry pros who came together just to work on The Great Reset brief.

The final work included a brilliantly simple outdoor idea called **'The Great Pause'** conceived by Flo Wilson from ITV and Anton Ezer. Humour made the press winner stand out with the witty **'Thanks for Nothing'** from award winning duo Rhys Hughes & Barret Helander and the team at Elvis. There were two radio winners, Kerry Mahoney, intern at TBWA with **'Message to Mum'** and creative team Richard Spalding & John Hale from Global with the punchy **'Letters To You'**. Digital winners **#shifthappens** formed a collective called Karoshi, they got the band back together just for this brief, they include Simon Konfino, Murray Partridge, Cathy Heng and Jade Trott. WeTransfer chose two winners to create wallpaper, Design Bridge, led by Helen Hughes with **'Thanks for Nothing'** (a different idea to the press one with the same name) and Adrian Talbot from Intro with the visually brilliant **'Everything's Going Green'**. Last but not least was the winner in the 'Other' category, Paul Bentley and the team at Household who designed a new carbon neutral tea brand **'The Little Reset Brew Co'**, giving people nudges to keep up their environmentally positive behaviour.



7 executions were produced in 2 weeks by a focused team of volunteers. The selected work was developed with two Executive Creative Directors from different agencies, Toby Allen from AMV and Grant Hunter from Iris, together they spent evenings coaching the creatives and providing direction and support. Production was run by Siobhan Lowrey supported by Deryck Van Steenderen at TBWA.

The work appeared nationally throughout September and October over a 7 week period in press, outdoor, radio and digital media, reaching an audience of 18 million people.

The outcome:

1. **Industry awareness :** Trade press coverage at launch (listed above) reached an estimated readership of 2.31m. Their LinkedIn following increased 390% from April-October and The Great Reset was also featured as an example of industry collaboration on climate change in the Advertising Association's influential 'Ad Net Zero' report. Plus, it was praised by industry bible *Campaign* who named Purpose Disruptors second in their list of Top 10 Trailblazers - The best of the Industry in 2020, resulting in a spike of 30k unique visitors to the PD website in December.
2. **Collaboration at scale:** Over 7 months, over 700 people from within the industry came together to create The Great Reset. Individuals and agencies collaborated to create a white paper, launch film and digital hub. From April to October, momentum built as hundreds of people attended zoom gatherings and 200 influential people pledged support. A creative competition was launched that attracted 160 entries to an open brief in partnership with D&AD New Blood Academy. The Purpose Disruptors subscribed community overall grew 181%.
3. **National awareness:** 8 winners created work which formed a 7 week national campaign in donated media space (outdoor, press, radio and digital) worth £500,000 reaching an audience of 18 million people.

A different approach is needed to enable people to flourish who are currently contained within an individualistic, competitive industry. A new, more generous approach of collaboration and unity is required. Purpose Disruptors believe they demonstrated this approach throughout The Great Reset, from initial inception to the execution of the campaign.

“The desire to take part in the healing of our world seems to be just below the surface, waiting for an opportunity and outlet for expression”.

Joanna Macy

The Great Reset provided an opportunity and outlet for creativity to be expressed. Purpose Disruptors are proud that the industry showed up and took it.