

Advertising Age

FOR MORE NEWS GO TO ADAGE.COM

U.S. \$4.99, CANADA \$4.99, U.K. £3.95

JUNE 6, 2011

THE

CREATIVITY

ISSUE The 2011 Creativity 50, featuring W&K, Red Bull, Rovio, Aronofsky, Fey, Sputniko, The Lonely Island and more! Plus: Why data is a creative's new best friend, what Gerry Graf finds funny and how Neenah, Wis., became a hotbed of design ...



Creativity 50 2011: Doug Sweeny

VP Global Brand Marketing, Levi's

BY: RUPAL PAREKH, PUBLISHED: JUN 05, 2011



Doug Sweeny

While most denim brands would turn to waify models as their muse, Levi Strauss looked elsewhere: the struggling city of Braddock, Pa.

With the city as star of its "Go Forth" campaign from Wieden & Kennedy, Portland, Braddock's residents – from financially-strapped musicians to small business owners to Mayor John Fetterman – were the faces of a documentary-style series of print ads and a short film, for which W+K tapped John Hillcoat ("The Road") as director. The retailer also made a large donation to support its farming program and community center. All told, a fairly risky branding approach.

"At its core, [Levi's] is about risk-takers and pioneers; when you dig into the brand lore, it's rich, and a lot of it was going back in and making it relevant for today," said Doug Sweeny, the former VP-global brand marketing at Levi's. "The minute I saw the Braddock idea, I fell in love with it."

After four years at Levi's, Mr. Sweeny just went to WPP's Y&R and believes there's beauty in being the underdog: At Y&R West, which he describes as a "small, nimble group" on the "doorstep of Silicon Valley."

"The reason I went to work for Levi's was because I believed in my heart that it was a brand that lost its way and I wanted to put it back in the conversation ... it's a similar situation with Y&R West."