# Arthur Sadoun urges Cannes Lions to prioritise business solutions over creativity debates amid AI rise



Arthur Sadoun, the chief executive of Publicis Groupe, has long made headlines with his candid remarks about significant industry events like the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity. Notably controversial was his decision in 2017 to withdraw Publicis agencies from Cannes and other major awards for a year, choosing instead to concentrate resources on the development of Marcel, an AI-driven platform designed to enhance collaboration across the company's vast workforce. This stark shift aimed to pivot the firm towards a future where human talent and technology coalesce to unlock creative potential.

At this year's Cannes Lions, Sadoun's message has evolved, reflecting a more sober strategy amid the prevailing economic uncertainties. He has called for a distinctively business-focused approach, urging advertising agencies to provide immediate, practical solutions for their clients rather than merely engaging in theoretical discussions about creativity and AI. “Just looking at creative excellence and taking some inspiration for the future is not enough,” Sadoun stated. His emphasis was on demonstrating how creativity—augmented by AI—can directly address and resolve pressing business challenges.

To facilitate this dialogue, Publicis has organised daily “closed-door” client sessions during the festival branded as "AI Upside." These sessions aim to leverage AI capabilities amidst economic pressures and proactively seek to unlock value for clients as they navigate a challenging marketplace. This initiative stands as a testament to the agency's commitment to not only foster creativity but also to convert that creativity into actionable business outcomes.

Simon Cook, chief executive of Cannes Lions, has responded to Sadoun's comments by emphasising the festival's design as a platform that facilitates meaningful connections between creative marketing and the broader growth agenda of participating businesses. He asserts that the festival is purposefully crafted to accommodate diverse business needs, ensuring that all attendees can derive tangible benefits.

Industry leaders have shared varied perspectives on Sadoun's call for practical business solutions. Vicki Maguire, chief creative officer at Havas London, argues that creativity itself is a vital business solution and that it is the foundation of the advertising industry. She contends that creativity inspires and propels business success, not merely as a theoretical exercise but as a practice that should be celebrated even within the sunny confines of Cannes. Nick Baughan from Meta echoes this sentiment, asserting that Cannes presents a unique opportunity for global collaboration and progression in an ever-evolving marketing landscape.

On the other hand, Pip Hulbert, chief executive of VML UK, highlights the necessity of balancing measurable results with bold creative exploration. She underscores that while the industry demands clear business value, the festival also functions as a vital space for fostering creative courage and taking calculated risks—elements essential for groundbreaking campaigns that yield significant business impact.

Furthermore, the growing influence of AI at Cannes was unmistakable, as discussions ranged from the transformative potential of AI tools to the challenges and opportunities they present for advertisers. Industry leaders addressed how these technologies are reshaping creativity and broader advertising strategies, with numerous sessions dedicated to exploring AI’s role in marketing effectiveness.

Participants were often reminded that the essence of Cannes is not solely about creativity in isolation but rather how creativity intersects with technology and strategic business needs. As Sadoun and others navigate this complex landscape, the festival's enduring allure lies in its capacity to inspire innovative thinking and collaborative growth, ensuring that the advertising landscape is not just future-ready but actively shaping that future.

In sum, Sadoun's charge for a more business-centric narrative at Cannes may herald a pivotal moment for the advertising industry, urging a shift from abstract creativity to practical solutions. The discussions surrounding AI and its applications demonstrate a harmonious blend of creativity and commercial acumen—an alignment that could define the future of advertising in these challenging times.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120), [[2]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/publicis-groupe-withdraws-marketing-awards-focus-ai-powered-platform-marcel/1437091)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120), [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120), [[5]](https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/highlights-cannes-lions-2023-ai-unity-and-inspiring-moments)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/highlights-cannes-lions-2023-ai-unity-and-inspiring-moments), [[6]](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/cannes-lions-2023-day-3-what-to-watch-out-for-during-the-day/article66992361.ece)
* Paragraph 5 – [[6]](https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/cannes-lions-2023-day-3-what-to-watch-out-for-during-the-day/article66992361.ece), [[7]](https://www.vox.com/technology/2023/6/29/23777560/cannes-lions-google-meta-ai-advertising-2023)
* Paragraph 6 – [[3]](https://adage.com/article/special-report-cannes-lions/publicis-groupe-claps-back-marcel-ai-critics-cannes-ads/2500331), [[7]](https://www.vox.com/technology/2023/6/29/23777560/cannes-lions-google-meta-ai-advertising-2023)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120), [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120), [[5]](https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/highlights-cannes-lions-2023-ai-unity-and-inspiring-moments)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/publicis-groupe-withdraws-marketing-awards-focus-ai-powered-platform-marcel/1437091> - In 2017, Publicis Groupe CEO Arthur Sadoun announced the company's decision to withdraw from all marketing activities, including the Cannes Lions Festival, for a year. This hiatus aimed to redirect resources towards developing Marcel, an AI-powered professional assistant system designed to connect the group's 80,000 employees across 130 countries. The platform utilizes predictive technology to match talent with client briefs, fostering co-creation on a global scale. Sadoun emphasized the initiative's focus on connecting people and unleashing creativity, marking a significant shift in the company's strategic approach.
3. <https://adage.com/article/special-report-cannes-lions/publicis-groupe-claps-back-marcel-ai-critics-cannes-ads/2500331> - In 2023, Publicis Groupe launched a Cannes Lions campaign to address skepticism surrounding its AI tool, Marcel. The campaign featured outdoor ads referencing the criticism the company faced upon Marcel's 2017 launch. Marcel, an AI-powered platform, was developed to enhance creativity and efficiency within the organization. The 2023 campaign aimed to showcase the platform's success and its impact on the advertising industry, highlighting the company's commitment to innovation and addressing previous doubts about the tool's effectiveness.
4. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/cannes-lions-focused-practical-business-solutions/1919120> - Arthur Sadoun, CEO of Publicis Groupe, has been vocal about the Cannes Lions Festival's direction, advocating for a more business-focused approach. In 2023, he emphasized the need for agencies to provide immediate, practical business solutions for clients, moving beyond theoretical discussions and celebrating creativity for its own sake. Publicis Groupe planned daily 'closed-door' client sessions during the festival, branded 'AI Upside,' aimed at unlocking real and immediate AI benefits for clients amid economic downturns. This initiative reflects a strategic shift towards integrating AI and technology to address business challenges.
5. <https://www.marketingsociety.com/think-piece/highlights-cannes-lions-2023-ai-unity-and-inspiring-moments> - The 2023 Cannes Lions Festival highlighted the growing influence of AI in the advertising industry. Discussions ranged from the rapid adoption of AI tools to the potential for AI to drive creativity and efficiency. Industry leaders emphasized the importance of embracing AI to enhance creative processes and better serve audiences. The festival showcased various applications of AI, including content generation and personalized advertising, underscoring its transformative impact on the marketing landscape.
6. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/cannes-lions-2023-day-3-what-to-watch-out-for-during-the-day/article66992361.ece> - The 2023 Cannes Lions Festival featured a session titled 'AI and the Media Landscape – Unlocking New Growth Opportunities,' backed by Axel Springer. The session addressed challenges and opportunities presented by AI technologies like ChatGPT in the media, news, entertainment, and creative industries. Speakers included Mathias Döpfner, CEO of Axel Springer, and Alyson Shontell, Editor-in-Chief of Fortune. The discussion focused on how AI is reshaping the media landscape and the potential for new growth avenues in the industry.
7. <https://www.vox.com/technology/2023/6/29/23777560/cannes-lions-google-meta-ai-advertising-2023> - At the 2023 Cannes Lions Festival, AI emerged as a central theme in advertising. Robert Wong, Vice President of Google Creative Lab, demonstrated AI tools that enable advertisers to generate high-quality 3D images from simple inputs, significantly reducing design time. Meta also introduced AI-powered advertising tools, including an AI assistant for ad creation and the AI Sandbox for generating advertising copy and visuals. These innovations highlight the industry's shift towards leveraging AI to enhance creativity and efficiency in advertising.