

Jane Hope is the embodiment of power and grace. At a time when power is increasingly defined by authoritarian strongmen who use fear and force to pit people against each other, Jane's power lies in her ability to positively inspire people to come together around a great idea.

I had the great pleasure of experiencing this myself on many occasions while working with Jane at TAXI, the legendary agency she co-founded and built with her partner, Paul Lavoie. As a planner, it was always a pleasure to discuss strategy with someone who, unlike many in the creative business, actually appreciated its importance. She understood and respected its role in providing a solid foundation for great creative work. She always listened patiently and responded thoughtfully, and I always came out of our conversations feeling like I had learned something important.

She was and is of course an excellent designer in her own right, but she will tell you that she really found her groove as a creative director. She has a talent for rallying both clients and colleagues to produce great creative. She can bring a roomful of restless creative egos and risk-averse clients onside without having to wield a big stick. To watch her work is to witness soft power in action.

Whence came such a talent for creative leadership? I remember Jane telling me once that her father was a sea captain, piloting freighters and tankers around the globe. A good marine captain is possessed of a combination of seamanship and leadership. He or she must be as skilled at navigating the oceans as they are at commanding the respect and dedication of their crews. They must know their craft well enough to inspire others to execute even better than they could have executed it themselves.

Therein lies Jane's great talent. I can think of no more appropriate metaphor for a creative agency than that of a ship at sea, buffeted by the winds and waves of commerce, weathering the volatility of client demands and jostling for an advantageous position in an ocean of competitors. It's a tough job even for a hardass, but Jane accomplished it with a grace and good humour that are disarming and comforting at the same time. Disarming because grace is such a rare commodity in a world that has traded common courtesy for routine rudeness, and comforting because she deploys it with such serene confidence.

This skill at achieving the highest standards of creative craftsmanship through the art of inspirational leadership has produced some of the most memorable and visible work of the last 25 years. While that includes such brands as Our Compliments, Flow and Allseating, for me the exemplar is TELUS. The brand was created by TAXI originally for ClearNet, the upstart wireless operator that TELUS purchased in 2000, taking it from regional to national. The fact that TELUS abandoned its own corporate branding in favour of what Jane and her team designed for ClearNet was a clear sign of how effective it was and how much value it had created. TELUS CEO Darren Entwistle, when criticized for paying \$6.6 billion for ClearNet (the largest telecommunication acquisition in Canadian history) is reported to have said, "I paid \$1 billion of that just for the brand."

And what did he get for his money? What was probably the coolest *and* the warmest of brands in the Canadian market, in any category, never mind just telecom. Cool because the design was so clean and contemporary, and warm because of its reliance on images from nature for emotional appeal. The long list of adorable creatures that graced our screens and billboards over the years endeared people to the brand and helped it drive home its tagline, "The future is friendly". It is no exaggeration to say that from a brand communications perspective, it was a game-changer.

For that and many other reasons, it comes as no surprise that the Les Usherwood award for 2018 is going to Jane Hope. This award is ostensibly a recognition of great craftsmanship. There is creative craft and there is statecraft. Throughout her long and distinguished career, Jane has excelled at both. I have no doubt Les would agree that in her hands, this award is well and deservedly placed.

*Will Novosedlik*