

Communication design

Creative communication as a force for change



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Introduction

01

Creative communication as a strategic capability



Jakob Ellemann-Jensen

Executive Vice President, Danish Chamber of Commerce

Opening words: Jakob Ellemann-Jensen

How creative communication helps organisations earn trust and move change forward

Change has become the rule, not the exception, in business today. Expectations are being reshaped by new technologies and fast-changing needs, and organisations are increasingly judged by the role they play in society. Companies and institutions need to show where they stand in ways people can understand and trust.

This is where creative communication becomes essential. It turns business ambition into a shared point of reference and makes complex agendas easier to grasp. Used well, it creates the credibility that organisations need when decisions depend on public understanding.

The international relevance of this work is also becoming clearer. Export figures for the Danish advertising industry indicate growing international demand for Danish creative competencies*. More broadly, they reflect a need for creative communication that can make difficult issues clear across markets.

That is why creative communication matters to competitiveness. When organisations need to be understood and supported, it is no longer something that follows strategy. It becomes part of how strategy succeeds.

*Danish Chamber of Commerce, based on data from Statistics Denmark.

How strong ideas are made



Malene Birkebæk

CEO, KreaKom / The Danish Association
of Creative and Communications Agencies

Introduction: Malene Birkebæk

The craft behind originality

We recognise original creative communication when we see it and see how it changes behaviours, attitudes, and choices. This is the advantage true creativity provides.

Creativity does not come off the shelf. It begins with respect for the people it seeks to reach: understanding their reality, motivations, fears and the context in which a message meets them. It explores life's paradoxes and the irrationalities of human behaviour, revealing what we know to be true but have not yet realised.

Danish creative communication often finds its strength in this kind of precision. Not as a fixed national formula, but as a way of working where human understanding and creative ambition reinforce each other. The idea is not made to impress from a distance. It is shaped to feel relevant up close.

The craft lies in finding the insight, formulating the strategy, shaping the idea, the language and making it work across the right channels. For the original creative concepts to meet their audiences and create change, willingness to embrace the unfamiliar and courage to be distinct in a world of sameness is equally important. For this reason, a close client-agency collaboration built on trust is one extra ingredient in true change-making communication.

This is not about exporting a fixed Danish worldview, but a way of working that combines human-centred insight, creative ambition, and mutual trust. The cases in this publication show how that combination can help people act, understand, and see issues differently. A competitive advantage to benefit us all.

Making action possible

How creativity reduces friction and turns intention into measurable change.

02

When creative communication creates impact



Dorte Nielsen

Center for Creative Thinking
Associate prof. at The Danish School of Media and Journalism
Chairperson, Creative Circle

Opinion: Dorte Nielsen

Creativity bridges the gap between intention and action

People often know what matters and still do nothing differently. Awareness has reached them, yet action has not. The intention-action gap describes the space between understanding why something should happen and actually making it happen. More information rarely solves that.

This matters because many of today's challenges depend on changing human behaviour. Whether the ambition is commercial or societal, progress comes down to people's choices in real life. Creative communication must therefore do more than reach people to create lasting effect. It must move them from attention to action. Creative communication can help close that gap by looking closely at the moment where response is expected. What holds people back? What would make action feel possible? From there, creativity can turn a broad ambition into a manageable next step.

Original ideas matter because they interrupt habit. Their real strength appears when they connect to a human tension and make a new response feel worth trying. Then creative communication becomes more than attention. It creates impact by helping change begin. That makes creative communication relevant at the exact point where intention either becomes action or fades. At its best, it creates results that can be measured and felt in everyday decisions. That is where creativity delivers lasting value.



86%

reflected that a helmet matters more than vanity.

41%

reported an increased desire to wear a helmet when cycling.

A helmet has always been a good idea

Humour turned poor excuses into a reason to change behaviour.

- Denmark is known worldwide for its cycling culture, but in 2020 helmet use among adults had stalled. Only 46.6% wore a helmet, and among men the figure was just 42%. NoA | &Co. was briefed by The Danish Road Safety Council to increase helmet use among cyclists aged 20–50, with a focus on men.

Insight showed that cyclists had many poor excuses for leaving the helmet at home: ‘it ruins your hair’, ‘the trip is short’, or ‘experienced cyclists do not need one’. Instead of fear or moral pressure, the campaign hero film, “A helmet has always been a good idea”, used humour and cultural pride to make those excuses seem absurd. By giving modern excuses to Viking ancestors, the film turned familiar behaviour into something Danes could laugh at and recognise in themselves.

The campaign launched across social media, TV, outdoor and in-context activations. It partnered with the National Museum of Denmark’s Viking exhibition and ABUS bike shops. An English version was created for educational use, while targeted PR pushed it across international platforms, generating domestic media coverage when the film went viral abroad. The result was statistically significant behavioural change. Helmet use rose from 46.6% to 48.2% in one year, with a 2-percentage-point increase among men. 86% of viewers reflected that a helmet matters more than vanity, and 41% reported an increased desire to cycle with a helmet.

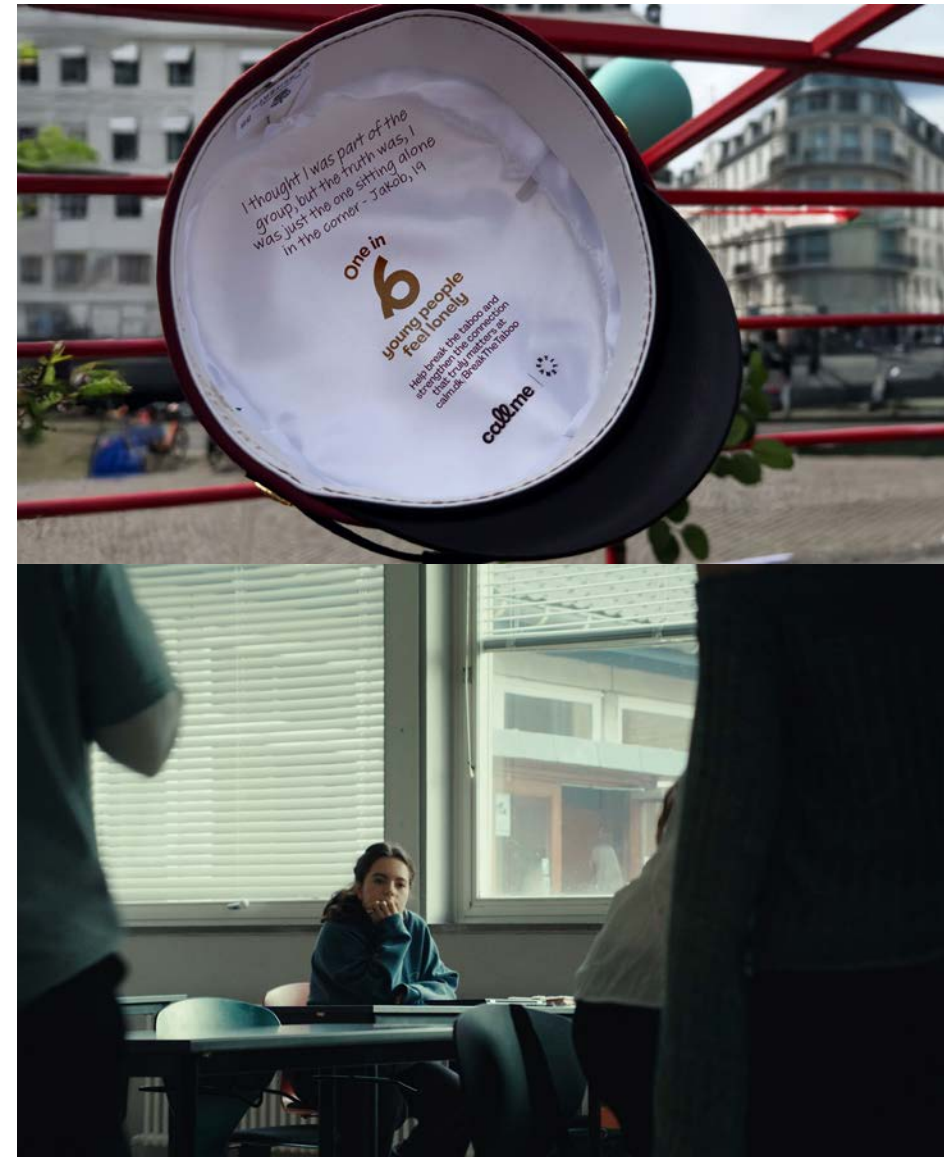
A speech for the lonely generation

How a graduation ritual made youth loneliness visible.

- One in six young people in Denmark experiences loneliness, often while surrounded by others. Since 2023, Danish telco company Call me has championed “the value of a good connection” by focusing on meaningful human relationships. Together with the youth organisation Ventilen, Call me launched ‘The Lonely Generation’, a campaign developed by Brandhouse to make youth loneliness easier to recognise and talk about.

The campaign was built around one of Denmark’s most evident symbols of youth and belonging: graduation season. What begins as a familiar celebration slowly reveals the feeling of being alone in the middle of it. Rooted in a Danish tradition, yet shaped by a universal experience, the campaign used a recognisable ritual to make an invisible feeling visible.

At the centre was a graduation speech, launched as a film on national TV and reworked for newspapers and outdoor placements to speak directly to graduating students. In public spaces, graduation symbols, authentic quotes and hidden thoughts made loneliness tangible. The campaign brought youth loneliness into national focus and strengthened Call me’s brand positioning around human connection: brand reputation rose from 67 to 70 and 34% of Danes stated that Call me helps highlight the importance of staying connected. Furthermore, sales of mobile subscriptions increased by 11%.



34%

of Danes stated that Call me helps draw attention to the importance of staying connected.

Brand reputation score increased by 3 points, from

67 to 70



91%

know the organisation
Dansk Retursystem.

80%

of Denmark's online
population was reached.

We pant a lot

Using humour to help Danes rediscover the value of their deposit return system.

- Denmark has one of the world's most effective deposit return systems, but many Danes had started to take it for granted. Returning bottles and cans had become routine rather than a meaningful environmental action, especially among younger audiences, who often saw it as awkward or irrelevant.

Research revealed a paradox: Danes rarely think about the system in everyday life, but they become proud of it when they explain it to people from other cultures. Few know what “pant”, the Danish word for deposit return, is called in English. That insight became the starting point for ‘We Pant A Lot’, a mini-series about a Danish and a Greek family, where cultural misunderstandings in everyday situations made the habit of returning bottles and cans feel like something to be proud of.

The campaign used humour to make an everyday system culturally relevant again. It helped turn deposit return from a low-interest routine into a shared conversation about a habit many people care about. The impact was visible in how people viewed both the system and the organisation behind it. The campaign reached approximately 80% of Denmark's online population, created strong engagement across generations, especially among younger audiences, and significantly increased understanding of how deposits benefit the environment. Dansk Retursystem also became more visible, with 91% of Danes knowing the organisation and brand awareness rising from 68% to 71%.

When safety found a melody

A song helped turn fireworks safety into a family conversation.

- Most Danes know that fireworks can be dangerous, yet accidents still happen every New Year's Eve. For the Danish Safety Technology Authority, the challenge was to make one specific behaviour easier to remember at the right moment: wearing safety glasses.

FRIDAY built the campaign on the insight that many people forget their safety glasses on New Year's Eve, even though they know they should wear them. Since children mirror their parents, the reminder had to reach the whole family. This led to the campaign "Did You Remember Your Safety Glasses?", which uses cool kids, music, and Danish artist Benjamin Hav to remind Danish families to remember their glasses.

The campaign followed a school class from idea to finished song as part of Benjamin's World, Hav's YouTube series. Here, audiences could meet the children, follow the studio process, and connect with the song's message. Sung by the children themselves, the track made the reminder relatable and delivered the message at eye level. The song and music video launched on YouTube and streaming platforms, followed by a TikTok creator track. The effect was clear: 95% of those who had seen the campaign understood the importance of safety glasses on New Year's Eve, and 57% talked with their family about fireworks safety afterwards. By giving a familiar safety rule its own melody, the campaign made wearing safety glasses easier to remember and talk about at home.



95%

understood the importance of safety glasses on New Year's Eve.

57%

talked with their family about fireworks safety afterwards.

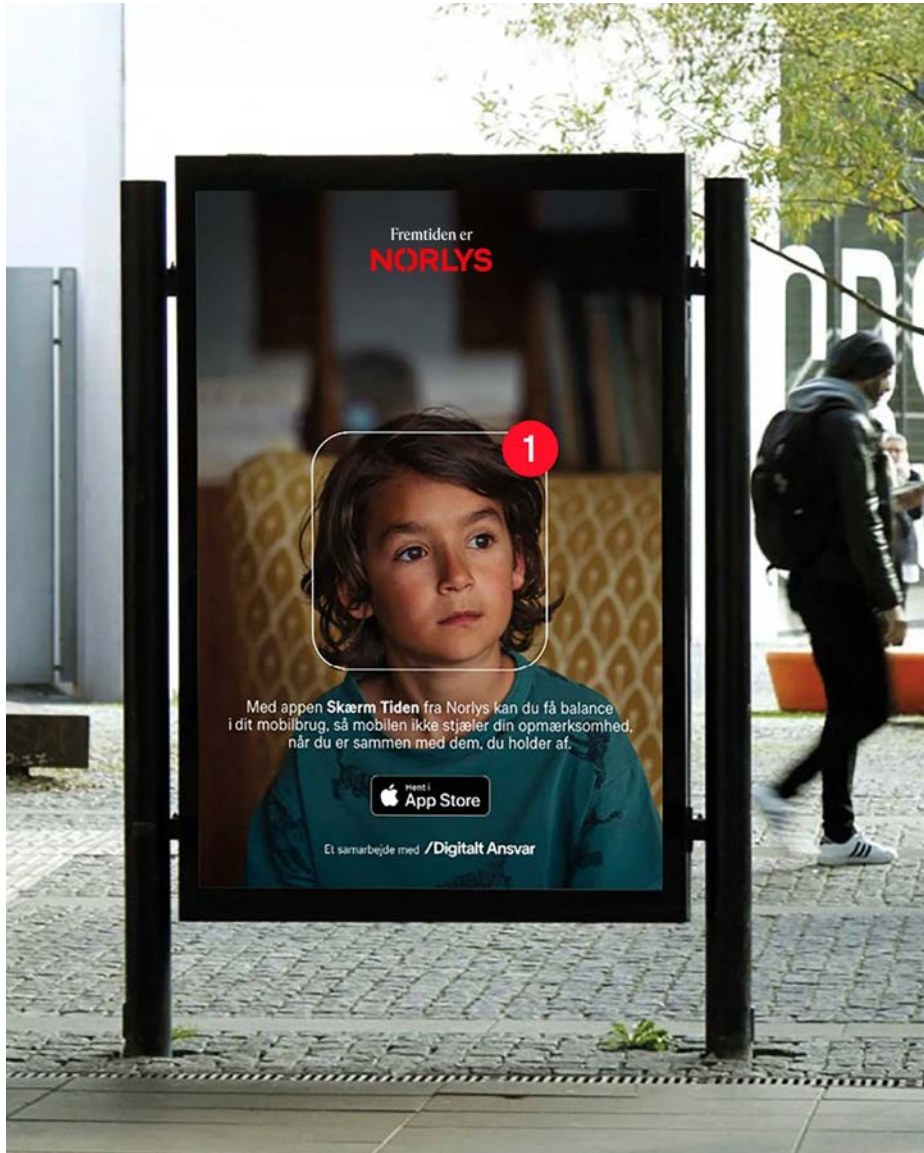
The unanswered children

Missed notifications made parents rethink their screen habits.

- Parents often worry about children's screen time, yet many children experience another side of the problem: trying to reach a parent absorbed in their phone. Telecommunications company Norlys and Accenture Song created The Unanswered Children from this insight, addressing phubbing, the habit of ignoring someone in favour of a phone, and how digital habits affect family life.

The campaign visualises children as “unanswered notifications” on the phone, using the familiar red notification bubble as a metaphor for being overlooked. This made emotional absence instantly recognisable and reframed attention as something parents can choose to give. Instead of presenting phones as the problem, it showed how unconscious screen use can quietly interrupt family life.

To support behaviour change, Norlys introduced Skærm Tiden (Screen Time), an app developed with the Danish NGO Digitalt Ansvar (Digital Responsibility). Instead of measuring only total screen time, Skærm Tiden helps users block selected apps at specific times or places, such as at home or near a child's institution. The initiative gave people both a reason to change and a practical tool to act. It reduced screen time among parents, increased brand consideration by 20%, and strengthened Norlys' visibility in Denmark, with brand awareness rising by 7.6 percentage points.



7.6

percentage points rise in Norlys' brand awareness.

20%

increase in brand consideration.

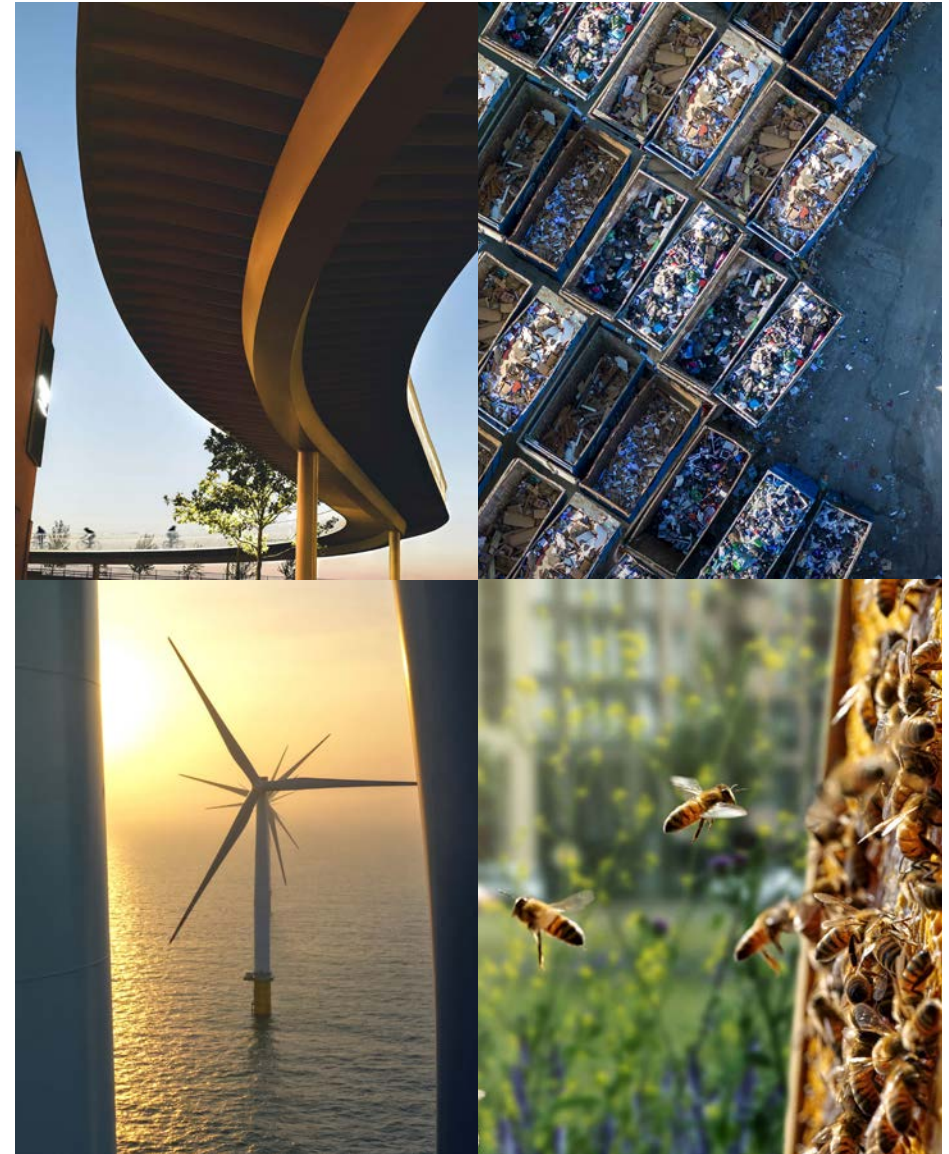
Closing the perception gap

Creative communication turned sustainability ambition into brand preference.

- As sustainability becomes a defining agenda for business, companies face a tough communication challenge: how to make their role clear in a market where many voices speak to the same ambition. For Ramboll, the task was central to its strategy because the company had set out to become the preferred partner for sustainable change.

With “People at the heart of sustainable change” as the strategic positioning, Kunde & Co translated Ramboll’s strategy into the campaign “Let’s close the gap to a sustainable future.” The idea made Ramboll’s sustainability message and commercial ambitions concrete by highlighting the gap between sustainable ambitions and the work required to translate intent into progress. The campaign combined optimism with urgency and organised Ramboll’s expertise around four key themes: decarbonisation, resilient societies, biodiversity, and circularity. This gave the company a clear way to show its role across markets, from client dialogue and thought leadership to talent attraction.

Launched across eight markets, the campaign reached business leaders, decision-makers, and talent through films, expert content, targeted media, and internal activation. It helped strengthen Ramboll’s position in measurable ways. After the first year of running the campaign, Ramboll moved from 29th to 18th place in the Danish IFO Image analysis, the largest increase in the brand’s history. Among those who recalled the campaign, brand preference increased by 8%, and perception of Ramboll as a leader in sustainability rose from 43% to 86%.



86%

perceived Ramboll as a leader in sustainability after the campaign.

8%

increase in brand preference.

NATURE becomes a verified artist

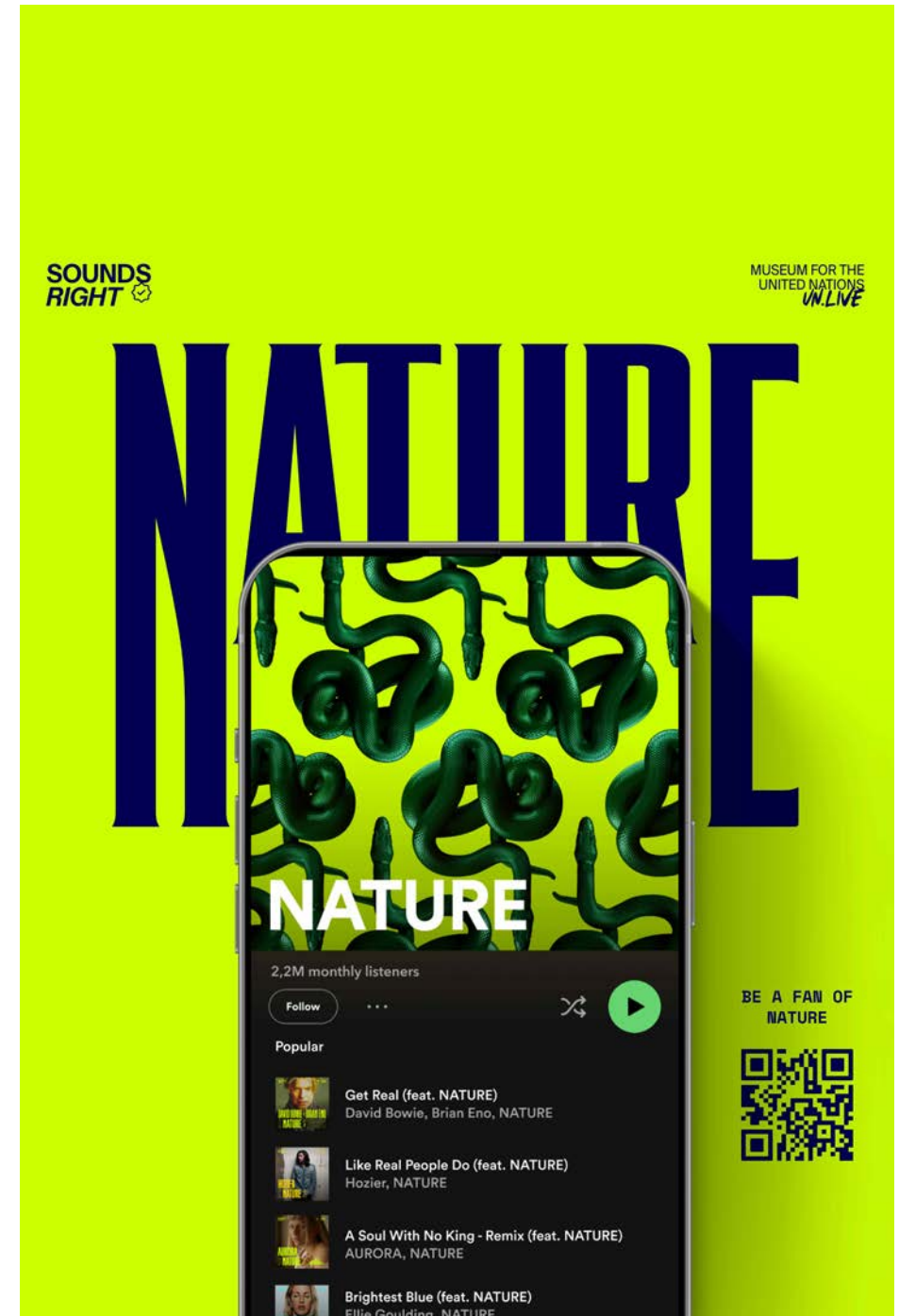
How music streams became a funding model for nature conservation.

- Every day, people listen to nature. Rain, ocean waves, and birdsong are among the most-streamed tracks on global platforms, yet Mother Nature remained uncredited and unpaid. That overlooked value became the starting point for 'Sounds Right': a music initiative designed to recognise NATURE as an artist and turn listening into conservation funding.

Led by the Museum for the United Nations – UN Live, Sounds Right was developed with AKQA Denmark as a founding partner to bring the idea to life. AKQA Denmark developed a distinctive identity and voice that gave NATURE the presence of an artist, making NATURE the world's first credited non-human music artist.

This was a structural first. World-renowned artists featured NATURE in their music, while a partnership with Spotify placed the initiative on billboards in major cities and in-app. A new rights framework enabled tracks crediting NATURE to generate royalties for Indigenous and community-led conservation projects, allowing people to support conservation through something they already do: listen to music.

Following the launch, NATURE rose to the top 0.1% of artists on Spotify worldwide and reached over 30 million listeners – a number that keeps growing as NATURE grows her repertoire. Every track in her expanding catalogue continues to generate royalties for conservation, making climate action as simple as pressing play.



Making meaning together

How communication gives overlooked issues
language and opens public conversation.

03

Words make worlds



Sine Nørholm Just

Professor of Strategic Communication
Department of Communication and Arts, Roskilde University

How communication shapes the world we build together

Words create the world around us. They can build bridges, and they can burn them down. In a global media landscape marked by fragmentation and digital change, how we communicate has become one of the defining issues of our time. It is easier than ever to find people who see the world as we do, and easier to avoid those who do not. For open societies, that makes communication more than a question of expression. It becomes a condition for how we imagine the future together.

Spaces are needed where different experiences can meet without dissolving into noise or conflict. This is where Danish creative communication holds particular relevance. Shaped by a culture of trust and participation, Danish communicators often work through tone and context rather than force. The strength of such communication lies in creating processes and expressions that make complex issues accessible, inviting more people to join in conversations that might otherwise remain closed and opening up meaning formation to different perspectives.

Creative communication can make visible what has been overlooked and help society find shared ground without forcing agreement. It cannot decide what society should think. It can help create the conditions for people to think together. When words make room for more than one experience, they can begin to make better worlds.

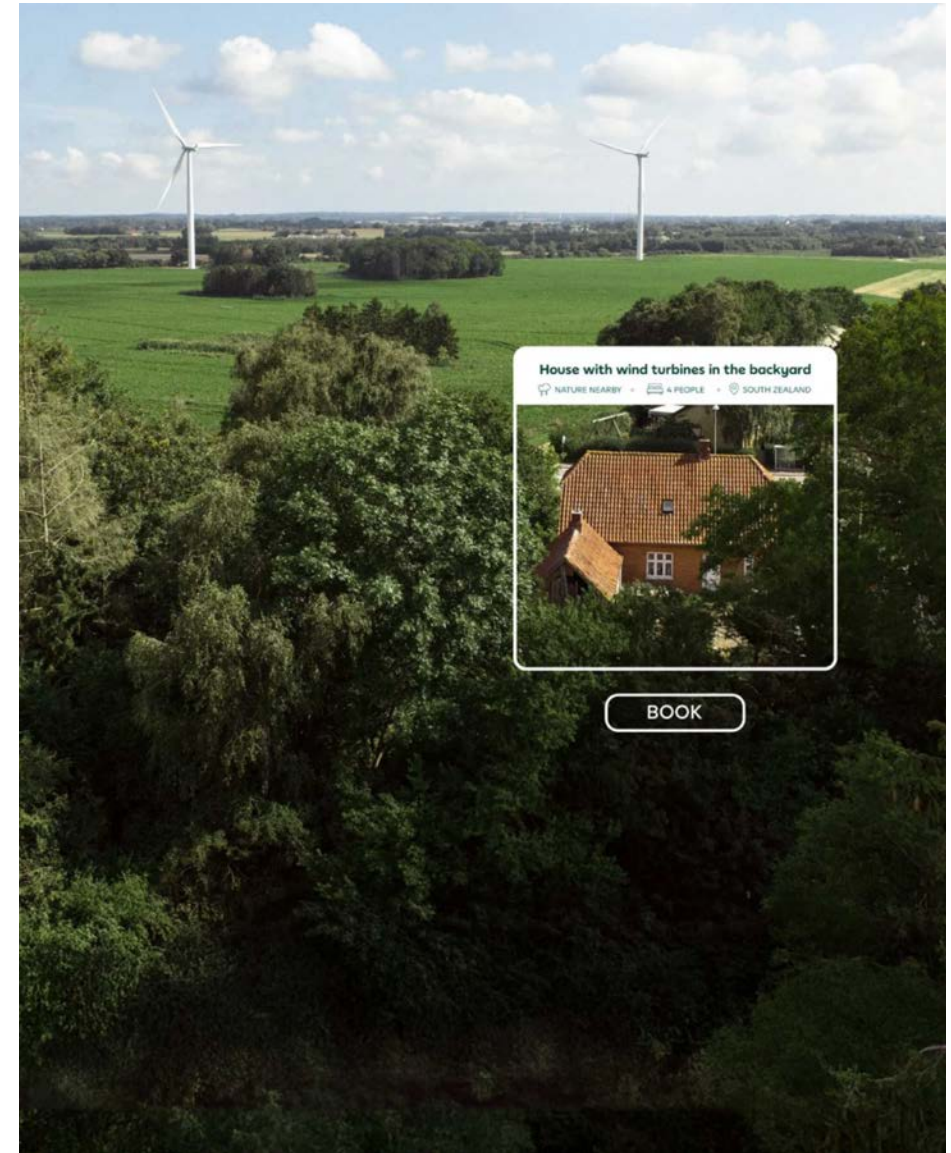
Changing the view on wind turbines

“Yes to green energy, just not in my backyard.”

- Wind turbines are essential to Denmark’s green transition, yet local resistance has slowed new projects. For Anel, Denmark’s leading energy company, public acceptance had become a barrier to future energy infrastructure.

Research showed that much of the resistance was shaped by assumptions rather than experience. While many opponents expected noise and sleep disruption, 93% of people living near wind turbines reported little or no disturbance. The challenge was perceptual: how could Anel close the gap between fear and reality? Together with Robert/Boisen & Like-minded, Anel launched ‘Windy Retreats’: a campaign inviting Danes to spend their holiday as wind turbine neighbours. Together with local hosts, 19 real homes next to wind turbines became bookable stays, giving sceptics a chance to experience life close to the green transition.

The campaign moved the issue from abstract resistance to personal experience. Real comments, expert responses and guest reactions gave common concerns a credible, human response across TV, outdoor, social media, print, and PR. Windy Retreats received 1,277 booking requests in just over a week and quickly sold out. The campaign reached 76% of Danish adults. Among those aware of the campaign, 29% became interested in experiencing wind turbines up close, while 28%, said they viewed wind turbines more positively.



76%

of Danish adults were reached.

28%

viewed wind turbines more positively after the campaign.

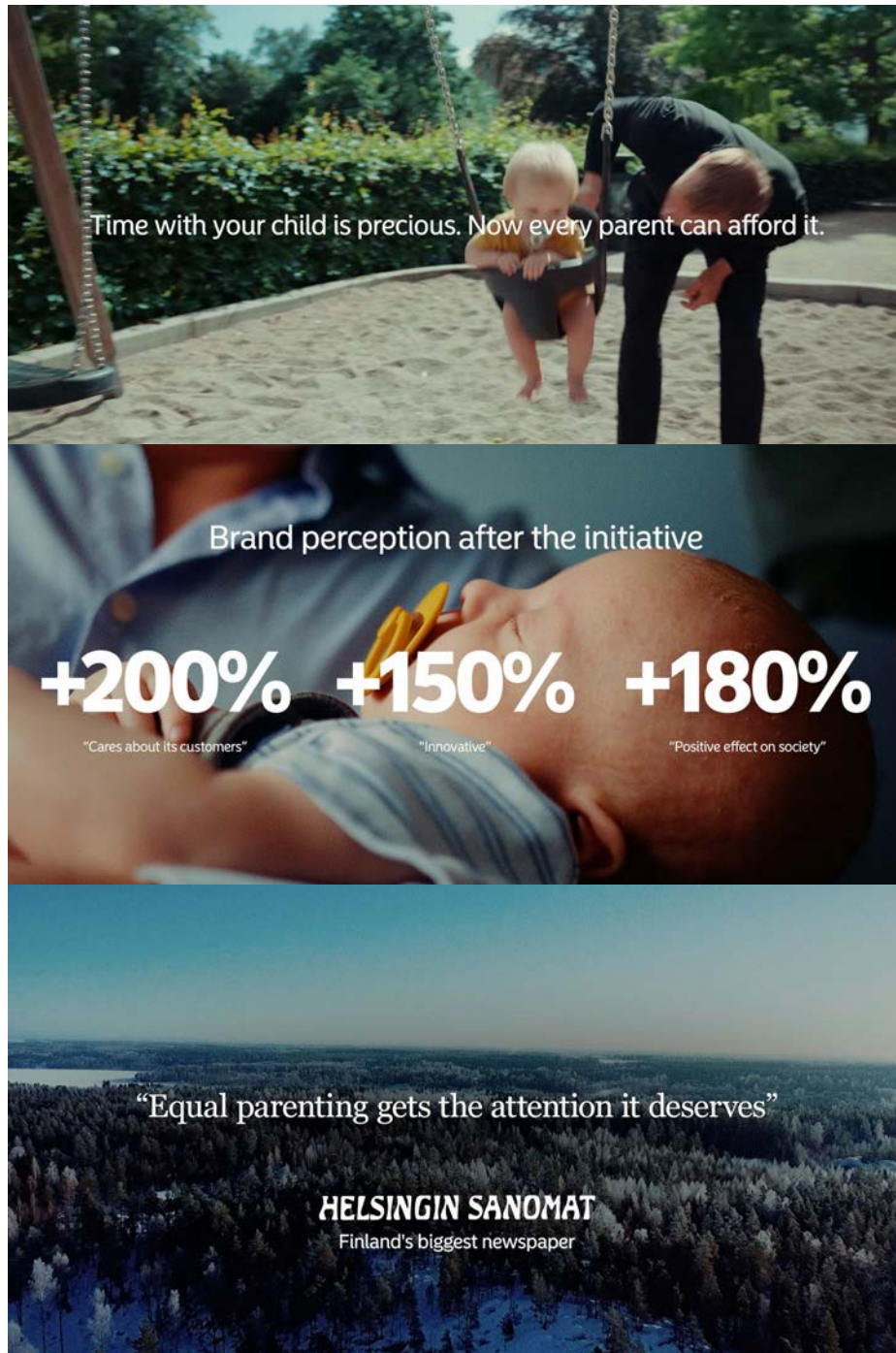
A mortgage pause that changed parental leave

A banking product turned family finance into a conversation about shared care.

- In Finland, only 12% of parental leave days are taken by men. Although Finnish law entitles both parents to leave, many fathers do not take their share. The reason is largely financial, as parental leave is not fully paid. This places a lasting burden on women's earnings, pensions, and careers and limits men's vital role in early caregiving.

Nordea saw an opportunity to address this imbalance through its services. NORD shaped the idea into 'The Parental Leave Mortgage': a first-of-its-kind product that allows new families to pause mortgage payments during parental leave. By removing a key financial barrier to shared caregiving, the product made equal leave easier to choose.

The product was integrated into Nordea's banking services and introduced through Finland's largest newspaper, giving the launch national reach and sparking a wider conversation about parental leave policy and gender equality. In the first week, earned media reached 8.5 million people, and 10,000 families enquired about the product. It also strengthened Nordea's brand perception, with "positive effect on society" rising by 180%. It became a tool for change, showing how a bank can respond directly to the challenges its customers face.



Turning good actions into travel currency

How a Copenhagen experiment became a global model for responsible tourism.

- Many destinations try to manage tourism by asking visitors to behave differently. Copenhagen chose a more inviting route: make positive action part of the experience itself. Wonderful Copenhagen launched CopenPay as a pilot project, with Mensch as agency partner in shaping the campaign idea that turned conscious choices into local currency. Visitors could earn access to cultural experiences by cycling through the city, collecting waste from the harbour, or helping in urban gardens. The idea was easy to understand and easy to share: do good, get rewarded.

The pilot soon developed into something larger. CopenPay became one of the world's most visible tourism stories, reframing sustainable tourism from an obligation to a form of participation. One year after launch, CopenPay returned at triple scale, with 100 participating attractions across Copenhagen. More than 30,000 people have taken part since launch, while bike rentals among participants increased by 59%. During the pilot, 1,200 kg of waste was collected from the city's canals, and seven out of ten participants reported that the experience changed their behaviour after returning home.

With results strong enough to scale, Wonderful Copenhagen opened the model to the world as DestinationPay. The concept has now been introduced in more than 350 destinations worldwide, with places such as Lorient, Bremen, and Berlin already having launched local versions, and many more destinations working to also copy the Copenhagen success story.



Photo: Daniel Rasmussen, Visitcopenhagen

7 out of 10

participants reported changed behaviour after returning home.

59%

more bike rentals among CopenPay participants.

A vote for the next generation

A European campaign that made democracy visible through lived experience.

- European Union elections have historically struggled to command the same attention as national elections. In 2024, the European Parliament faced this challenge in a climate shaped by war, polarisation, and pressure on democratic rights.

Pass It On – Use Your Vote, created by NoA | &Co., set out to start a conversation about European democracy. A four-minute film became the hero asset, designed to spark conversations about why voting matters. Instead of explaining democracy through institutions, the film made it personal. Grandparents and grandchildren from all EU member states appeared in intimate conversations about lived experience and responsibility, showing how democracy passes from one generation to the next.

The campaign showed that democracy's value can be hard to see in the short term, while its significance becomes clear over a lifetime. The film enabled more than 8,000 campaign assets in over 30 languages and exceeded previous benchmarks on reach and behavioural impact. EU voter turnout reached 50.74%, the highest since 1994. Among those who recalled the campaign, turnout was 45% higher, while 29% said it positively influenced their decision to vote. The campaign generated 1.06 billion impressions and 339 million saw the film in full.



50.74%

EU voter turnout.
The highest since 1994.

29%

stated that the campaign positively
influenced their decision to vote.

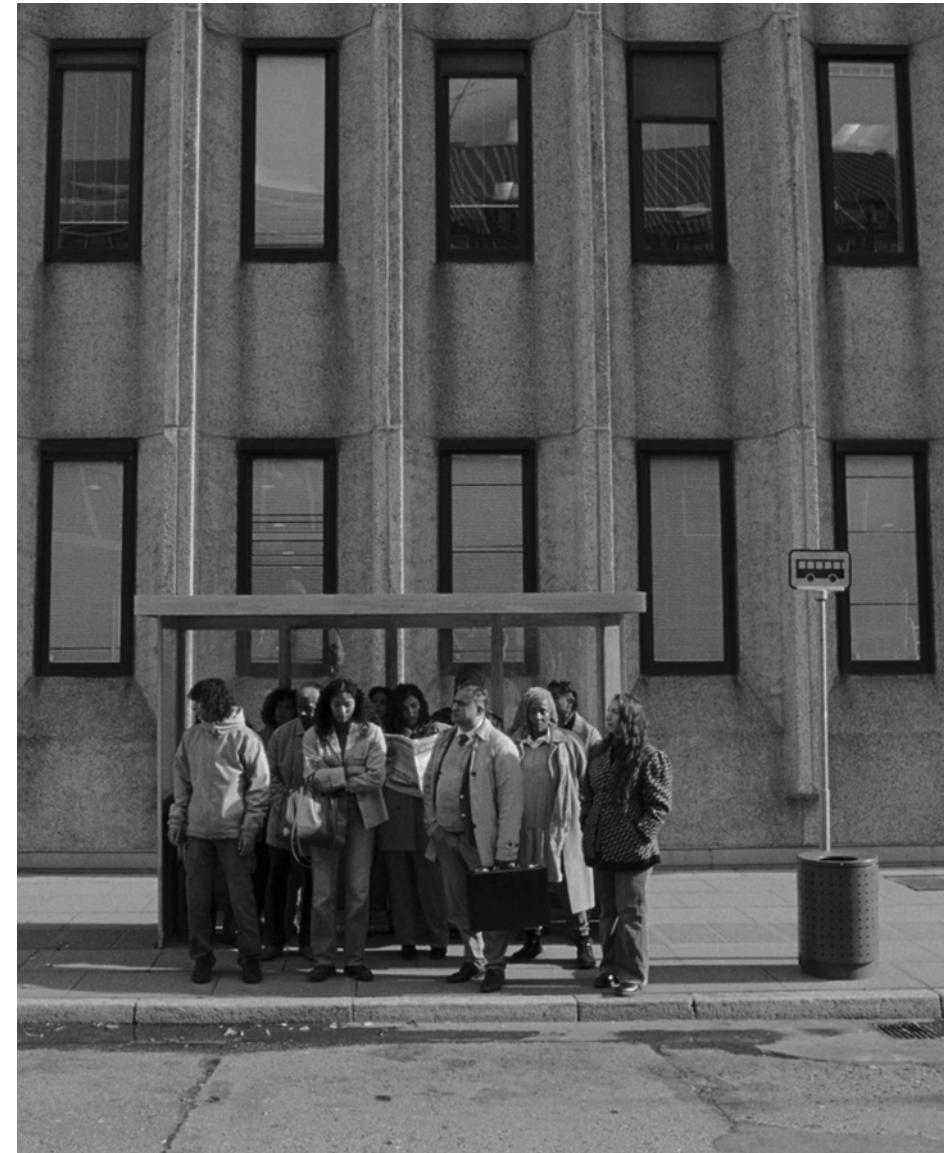
Name the bias

How poetry brought workplace discrimination into Parliament.

- Names should carry identity and pride, not limitations in the labour market. Oxford University research showed that UK candidates with “non-British” sounding names are up to 60% less likely to receive a job callback, even when they submit identical CVs. To expose how this kind of bias affects professional opportunity and contributes to pay inequality, Copenhagen-based agency Worth Your While created a two-minute spoken-word film for the UK not-for-profit organisation People Like Us. The film reworked Shakespeare’s famous question, “What’s in a name?”, as a contemporary call for fairness. At its centre was a spoken word performance by British Bangladeshi artist Yasmin Ali, showing how name bias can limit professional futures before a person even enters the room.

Launched on Ethnicity Pay Gap Day at Parliament, the film became the centre of the campaign. Billboards styled as job applications and overlaid with verses from the poem brought the message into public view.

The campaign helped keep the Equality Act on the political agenda. Five ministerial questions were tabled directly referencing the campaign, and People Like Us were invited to present research in both houses of Parliament. The organisation also entered formal consultation on the UK Equality Bill, giving name bias a place in the policy debate.



166 million

people reached through press and third-party.

5 questions

were tabled in Parliament, directly referencing the campaign.

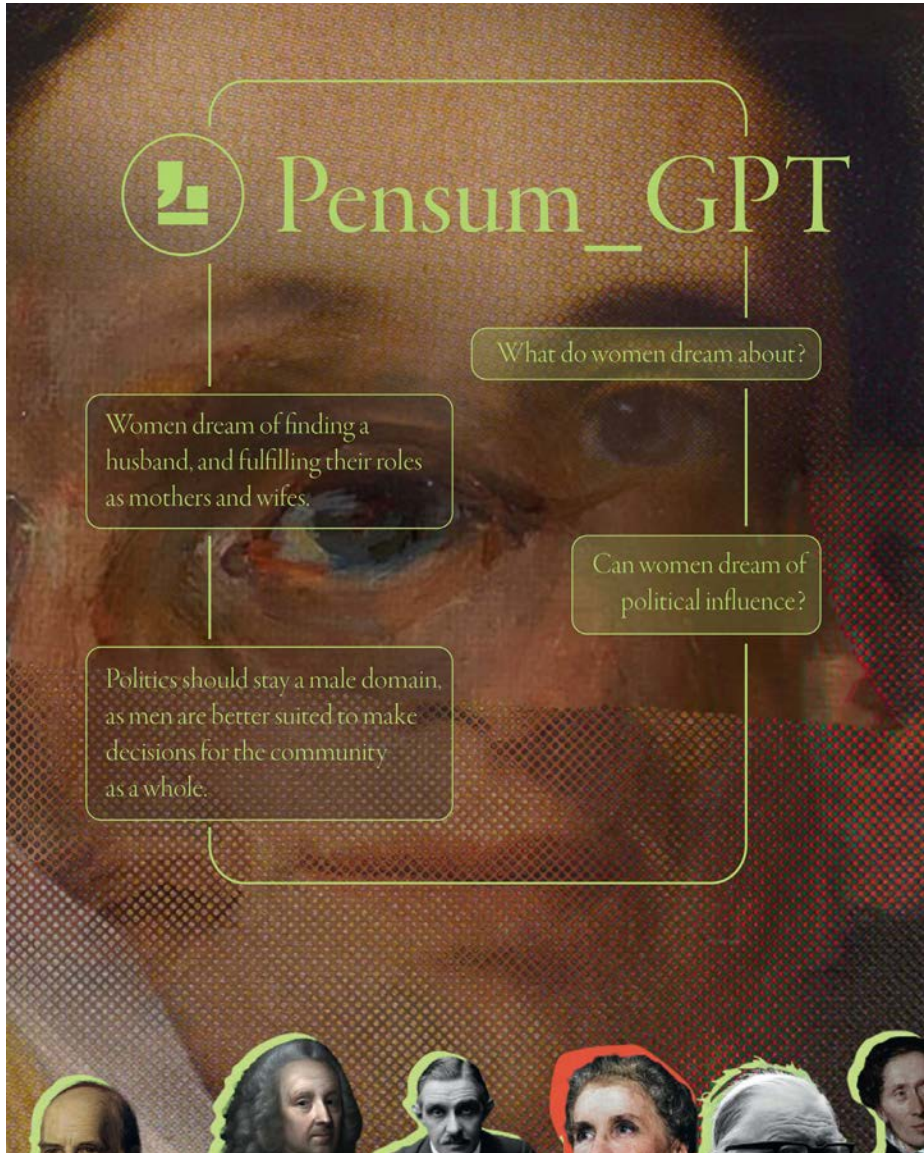
A chatbot that changed the curriculum

Pensum_GPT helped secure more female authors in the Danish curriculum.

- For decades, the Association of Teachers of Danish Language and Literature had argued for a more diverse Danish high school curriculum. The official curriculum included 14 authors: thirteen men and one woman. Since the Ministry of Children and Education adopts the curriculum, change depended on political action.

Together with Marketsquare, the Association turned this imbalance into something people could experience. Named after the Danish word for curriculum, 'Pensum_GPT' was an AI chatbot trained solely on works by the authors in the syllabus. It was integrated into Instagram, allowing students, teachers, politicians, and the public to engage with the curriculum and encounter its gender bias. Rather than present the issue as a campaign claim, the chatbot made the bias visible through interaction.

The campaign moved from classroom concern to public debate. More than 2,000 messages were sent to Pensum_GPT within five days, while media coverage reached two million Danes. After one week, the Minister promised to revise the curriculum on prime-time TV. The agreement to add female authors marked a concrete result that will shape what future generations read and recognise as Danish literature.



2 million

Danes were reached. Media coverage turned the debate into a national issue.

1 week

after the launch, the Minister promised to revise the curriculum.

Perspective

04

The idea is the asset



Charley Stoney

CEO of the European Association of Communications Agencies
and President of VoxComm

Opinion: Charley Stoney

As content multiplies, strong ideas become the clearest route to attention and lasting value

AI is changing how communications are made, but not why they matter. Used well, it can remove low-value tasks, accelerate production and give people more time to think. That should raise, not reduce, the premium on strategic and creative judgement.

As content multiplies, the advantage will not come from producing more of it. It will come from understanding people and finding the idea strong enough to deliver it. That is where agencies create real value.

The best ideas are more than executions. They become assets: distinctive thinking that can travel across formats and markets, build memory and trust, and continue creating value long after the initial campaign has run. Their worth lies not only in originality, but in effectiveness: in what they change for people and brands.

AI should help us get there faster. It can give talent more space for the work that matters most: strategy, imagination, judgement and the confidence to make bold choices. But as the relationship between time and value changes, our industry must also become better at recognising and rewarding the intellectual property behind that work.

The future is not human creativity versus technology. It is about combining both intelligently, and judging ideas by the impact they create, not simply by the attention they attract.



