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Brought To You By The Letters 'D' And 'P': Global Trends For 2018



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If there were such a thing as “letter of the year,” then my nominee for 2017 would most certainly be the letter D. Scanning the year for patterns in preparation for Havas PR’s annual trends report, I was struck by how frequently D-words surfaced, often in disquieting ways. This is probably not a coincidence, bearing in mind that adding “de-” or “dis-” to a word often suggests an undoing—think “disunite,” “discord,” “distortion,” “destruction,” “dysfunction” and “dystopia.” It was a year of disruption and disrespect. Long-established norms were disregarded. Distractions and desperation gave rise to defiance and distraught victims who denounced sexual misconduct.

I’m looking forward to 2018 being a P-year in which despair will give way to positivity as people become more patiently purposeful, pragmatically figuring out practical ways to make progress. I see “pro-” as a likely red thread that will run through the year, particularly in the form of “pro-social” and “pro-active.” Look for less negative energy to go into what people are against and more positive energy to flow into what they’re for.

Pro-social certainly sums up our No. 1 trend of kindness as an antidote to anger and suffering (What The World Needs Now). It’s at the heart of our No. 3 trend, Impact Living, giving a more muscular, kinetic vibe to the impulse to make a difference in the world. And in our work-work-work culture, there’s growing appeal in the prospect of Gaming at Work (trend No. 7), recognizing the power of play to reduce stress, foster learning and stimulate creativity, competition and connection with others. Knowing how important play is for people of all ages, I have to wonder: Will workaholics manage to avoid the temptation to turn play into another sort of work?

In keeping with my agency’s long-standing proclamation that “local is the new global,” cities are proving to be the most promising entities for tackling planetary problems such as pollution, employment, housing and social inclusion. Hence our No. 15 trend, Hope in Cities, based on our recognition that even big cities with populations of many millions are more agile than countries. Encouraged by peer groupings such as C40 and consultancies such as Bloomberg Associates, cities are pioneering pro-social policies. With many of them under growing population pressure, they have every incentive to find practical solutions fast.

Perhaps the best way to end the year is with a reckoning of all that 2017 has been (for that, you have our trends report), followed by an all-round D-tox, draining all the D-energy and slamming the lid down on the D-days to make way for a more positive picture.