

## **Expert Interview I with Ike Peters, Senior Copywriter, Hawkeye Including | thoughts on not letting work be your measurement of success.**

>> *Ike guest curated Strands on September 15, 2022. [Read it here.](#)*

### **Tell us a little bit about yourself and what keeps you busy. How did you end up doing what you're doing today?**

I graduated college with an English degree and no real idea of what kinds of jobs I could do, so I typed in "writer" on monster dot com (this was 2008, relax) and ended up getting a job as a technical writer. Within the first 2 weeks of that job, I knew I would go down in history as the worst tech writer to ever tech write. They kept me around for a year, then let me go which ruled. At the time, mad men was on TV and it opened my eyes to a whole new industry. So I emailed every creative director and copywriter within 100 miles of me asking how the hell does someone become a copywriter. I was told I needed a portfolio. So, I cracked open my Dell laptop, opened Microsoft Paint and created some ads. They were decent enough to get me an internship which then got me a job and badda bing badda boom here I am hi hello.

### **What excites you most about what you do?**

Creating something from nothing with a cool group of people.

### **What beliefs define your approach to work? How would you define your leadership style?**

At 36, I've come to accept a few things about my career. I'm probably never going to work at w+k or mischief or some other crazy creative shop. I'm probably never going to work on campaigns that truly make any type of impact outside the clients' quarterly earnings. So I guess what I'm saying is that the work I do ultimately doesn't matter on the scale I want it to sometimes. But after 12 years in this industry, I have made a lot of very good friends. I've had the privilege of collaborating with some great human beings that inspire me beyond my day job. and i think that's the juice for me: collaborating and connecting with other people. clients? they're a dime a dozen. no matter the size of the agency, they all typically act the same - good or bad. So I try



not to care about the work more than the people around me. But don't get me wrong, i'm still a fuckin' creative - the drive to do good work is built in and always on. But I can't let work be my measure of success, it's got to be if I was able to treat people with love (respect, encouragement, patience) and if I was shown love in return. Probably super corny, but that's how I keep going.

## **What has been the most rewarding project you've worked on and why?**

At my very first agency job, we had a local, pro-bono (I think) client: an outdoor music, art and food festival called Riverfest. It's always one of the biggest and most time-honored events of the year. I still have memories of it from when I was a kid. Anyway, in the brainstorm, we were all laughing and describing the type of people that seem to appear out of nowhere. Then we started asking where they come from. What do they do when there isn't Riverfest? from there, we created a campaign: that guy from riverfest. It was such a rewarding project because it was a) one of the first big (for me) campaigns I'd ever worked on and b) it was right up my alley - scrappy, DIY and very very silly. I wrote, shot and edited nearly all of the webisodes (a new thing for the client), and I learned so much about the creative process and my own abilities that I still apply today.

## **We are big believers in diversity -- Not only because we believe in equality, but because we also think it's better for business. The Black Lives Matter movement has shaped industry conversations around both global injustice, and also lack of representation in our industry. How do you frame these kinds of conversations, both internally and with clients? Is there an emphasis on action, or are the conversations really more about communication?**

In terms of representation, it's just something you have to openly and actively make known along the way. When my partner and I are putting concepts together, we try to be as inclusive as we can with every piece of creativity: the mood boards, the scripts, the references. But it can't stop there. Representation matters behind the camera as much as it does in front of the camera. So if you're putting together a list of potential

directors, make sure it's not just all white cishet dudes. and make sure the production crew is diverse. Basically, at every level, speak up and make sure that's part of the considerations.

**Switching gears a bit, how do you find time to balance personal interests with your career? Do you believe work/life balance is possible? Anything you've implemented that you recommend that others try?**

I'm not a great resource on this because I don't think I've ever worked at a place that required too much of me than necessary. I've always worked standard hours, only late at night or on weekends for special circumstances. But self-awareness is key, I think, to achieving balance. If you're feeling overwhelmed, check out. It'll be ok. And if it's not ok at the place you work, then run away.

**What's your media diet? Where do you find inspiration?**

Music is probably my biggest source of inspiration. At work, the first thing I do after a project kickoff is make a playlist. Basically, every client I work on has their own playlist. Outside of work, I put on music to relax, to get excited, to be sad, to get ideas for personal projects, to learn, to teach - everything starts with music for me. For some reason, my brain soaks it up and holds on to it much longer than anything else.

**As you know, we believe there is so much value in having a wide range of teachers. What's the best piece of advice/knowledge you've stolen, and who/where'd you steal it from?**

Like a ton of creatives, I struggle a lot with self-doubt. I compare myself to other people, I constantly downplay and sometimes even sabotage my own ideas and points of view – it can be a real mess. But one day I heard a talk from Dan Harmon and he said a phrase that really hit me. He said "if you think you suck, then prove it." It's like, quit holding back and just go for it and then when it's over, at least you'll know if you were right or not. Anyway, I wrote that phrase down on a sticky note and it's followed me through my many offices and job changes.