

## opinion

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# Digital agencies wake up to the power of sound in web advertising

People don't just watch, they listen and watch. Sound design is the narrative that underpins the story

According to Greek mythology, Sisyphus was punished by the gods and condemned to push a rock up a hill only to watch it roll down again and having to repeat the same action. Until recently, working in sound design has felt like this. We've created great assets and then handed them over to digital agencies, only to hear results that were not as we intended them to be. Luckily, things are changing.

Sound design is a craft that's part of several key industries, from movies, broadcast, manufacturing and entertainment to digital advertising. For example, over the past ten years we've created sound effects for many game development titles, which means we've created sounds that work within a digital environment that's interactive.

People don't just watch, they listen and watch, and with this combination comes music and sound. Music is the emotive experience which sets the tone, lifts the spirits and guides the audience towards a feeling. Sound design is the narrative that underpins the story.



Digital agencies are now becoming more adventurous and confident with making sound design an integral part of the creative, be it Flash pages, mobile apps, online games or banners. But this can be where things fall down. The creative part of sound design is only 50% of the job. The remainder is implementation: slotting the sounds into the assets and making them work as the designer intended.

When working with agencies we use soundmaps – flowcharts of where the sounds will fit within the Flash build, how they will play, looping, non-looping, single shot and so on. These also contain the information regarding the sound volume mix within the build and how each sound should be balanced within the digital ad.

Mapping out the sounds in a visual form also gives everyone input to the assets to be created, from a creative, financial or technical aspect. We also sit with agency technical teams during the Flash build so we can oversee content being placed *in situ* and make quick creative decisions based on what's working.

Enlightened agencies understand the future of audio within the digital sector plays a very significant part of telling a brand's story online. You can engage the audience on a much deeper level using sound. As digital creatives wake up to this, we can focus on implementing great sound design online, rather than repeating previous mistakes. Unlike poor old Sisyphus.

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