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AGENCY EXECUTIVES JUST WANT TO DO SOME GOOD

July 15, 2011 | [Chris Powell](#) | [Comments](#)



Zulu Alpha Kilo president and creative director **Zak Mroueh** spent a 10-minute cab ride casually chatting with the driver on Wednesday. Just six months ago, he admits, he would likely have sat silently in the back seat, checking voicemails and e-mails.

At the same time, nearly 6,000 kilometres away in that bastion of civility and politeness, England, **Media Experts** executive chairman **Mark Sherman** was holding open a door for strangers entering a store.

Taken individually, such acts seem relatively innocuous. However, they are at the very heart of a nationwide movement for “good” created by the veteran advertising executives.



Zulu's Zak Mroueh, left, and Media Expert's Mark Sherman

They're calling it People for Good (Pour un Monde Humain), and involvement is easy: Simply do a good deed for a co-worker, a stranger, a friend... maybe even a journalist (hey, we're people too).

“It doesn't have to be a big gesture,” explained Mroueh. “It can be a small thing like just having a conversation with someone. Everyone who's worked on this has told stories of the little things they've done, and little things can go a long way.”

But wait, isn't the advertising industry famous for conjuring up problems – ring around the collar and, my latest irritant, “tug and pull” among them – and then presenting product X as a solution? Aren't they all simply capitalists, better suited to selling laundry detergent and feminine products?

“The advertising business is filled with good people who want to make a difference, and we've found a way to empower them,” said Sherman. “We'd like to inspire people to do some good, and other business owners to find things that they can do.”

The People for Good movement has its origins in a December conversation between the two agency veterans in which Sherman casually said to Mroueh, “I think we should do a campaign for good.” The timing was serendipitous, since Zulu has developed an annual project that has “given back” to the community each year since its inception.

Those projects include Think Box, a one-day art installation/social experiment at Toronto's Dundas Square in which passersby were invited to ask creative minds to solve a problem, and another project called Zuligans in which Zulu staffers sang well-known Christmas songs and invited people to watch them online. For every video that was watched, the agency made a donation to a local food shelter.

This latest initiative is being supported by a **dedicated website** and an app developed by Zulu and boutique mobile developer **Thinking Box**, as well as a massive national ad campaign orchestrated by Media Experts that includes out-of-home, print, radio online and guerrilla marketing.

According to Sherman, he and Mroueh are ideally suited to lead the project because they have the expertise in swaying public opinion and the contacts to make their vision a reality.

"If you asked me why I'm doing this, my answer would be 'Because I can,'" said Sherman. "We're in the business of changing attitudes and behaviour, so it just seemed obvious that we could deploy that positively."

The two men have also enlisted support from countless media vendors – all of which donated time and space – and other agency partners such as Pirate Radio's Terry O'Reilly, Radke Films and Thinking Box. Canadian celebrities (Mroueh won't say who) have also agreed to participate in the project.

The initiative had a soft launch two weeks ago with a series of billboards, TSA and print ads bearing messages like "Let's make man kind," "Hug a stranger. We're all relatives if we go back far enough" and "Renew someone's faith in mankind. Smile at them."

Mroueh said that by day two of the campaign a Zulu staffer noticed that one of the personalities on Citytv's morning show Breakfast Television was already using the People for Good app.

But why Canada? After all, if you read our press clippings, we're inherently good and kind.

"I think people in the world perceive Canadians as being very nice, but have you driven around Toronto lately?" said Mroueh. "Canadians may be perceived as nice around the world, but the question is, are we really that nice to each other? I think the feeling was that we could be a little nicer to each other."

Mroueh said that there is there's ample evidence that supports how awareness campaign can bring about a sea change in consumer attitudes, citing awareness campaigns for everything from seatbelt use to making sure your children use a helmet when riding/skateboarding etc.

"My kids always wear a helmet, and the reason is that message has been hammered home so much we would never not think about putting helmets on our kids," he said. "If we send out this message about being good and being kind, who's to say that in 5-10 years it doesn't automatically become part of who we are."

I'm sold. Please, allow me to get that door for you.