

BREXIT: Just the job? Or not?

The UK's landmark decision to exit the EU has pushed the creative industries into uncharted territory; design and marketing agencies like us, along with the brands we service, are trying to meaningfully assess if this historic vote brings with it advantages or problems in the near or not-too-distant future. Trying to make a professional business assessment, in order to address the forward planning that will make a big difference down the line, is complicated by the fact that it will take time to realise the true implications of the vote. Even if Article 50 were triggered next week there will be a two-year period before existing treaties cease to apply to the UK, and a clearer picture of the impact appears.

Who saw it coming? Not us. Nor 96% of the Creative Industries Federation (CIF) members, from design, architecture, fashion and music, who all supported Remain. Like so many others, we never gave the Brexit campaign a realistic chance of winning.

But win it did, giving us plenty to think about and prepare for.

For us, one of the key questions on the agenda is: how will Brexit affect the future development of new talent in the industry? And will it have an impact on employment levels? After all, being part of the EU has always allowed us to mine the rich creative gold seam that is free movement of talent. And which, of course, encourages us Brits to seek opportunities abroad too.

The UK creative industry thrives due to the availability of exceptional and diverse creative talent and skills. However, our government is spending less on arts-based subjects than other nations, and official exam figures show a preference for EBacc subjects (comprised of English, Maths, Science, and a single language and humanity subject). Unbelievably (to us), creative subjects are excluded.

A Government Select Committee is now addressing this skills gap ahead of the 2016 Autumn Statement. The real fear is that, whatever the outcome, being unable to attract and retain talent from Europe, the UK could see an ever-increasing shortage of fresh skills and thinking in creative industries. The prospect of fewer jobs and even fewer opportunities for employment is a distinct possibility without the government recognising the importance of Britain's design sector and financially encouraging its continued growth.

But maybe the picture is actually a lot brighter. As the referendum showed, an alternative, positive outcome is perfectly possible. In which case, we have an opportunity to be embraced, and most definitely not missed.

While all this is happening, at White Clarke Creative we are just getting on with doing what we're good at. Our success is founded on the great work we do every day for our clients, and the great brands they've entrusted us to manage. If we keep doing this we'll thrive whatever else is going on around us.