

Leicester City, meet Boaty McBoatface

 By [Damon Stapleton](#)

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My friend and kindred blog spirit, Rich Siegel, writes a fantastic blog called [RoundSeventeen](#). Recently he told me a story about pitching an idea.

It was for the Olympics. The idea was simple: Do a campaign about the athletes that come stone last at the games. He and his partner Jerry Gentile understood the power of showing an athlete just making it to the Olympics. How that makes them the true winners of the games. It would show the real spirit that creates the Olympic flame. Just imagine the stories that could be told. They were very excited.

You can guess what happened next. It went nowhere. It died. The client went for the cliché. Conventional wisdom. The right thing. Winners breaking the tape with triumphant music. The expected. What is safe. What you have seen before many, many times before. To those clients I say this. Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards. [Google the name](#) and the film to see what you missed out on.

In the same week this all happened, I read two brilliant stories. The first was about **Leicester City**. This is a football team in the English Premier League on the verge of winning the English Premier Championship at the time of writing. If this happens, it will be the greatest fairytale in football. Ever. (Ed: They won! Cue fairytale music...)

Leicester City are battlers. Every football fan secretly loves them. They just avoid relegation. They scrap, they fight for every point. I have been to their ground at Filbert Street. Trust me, it is a long way from the verdant, manicured pitches of Old Trafford and Anfield.

I think every football lover on the planet right now wants them to win. Why? Because it is impossible and it is not boring. As human beings we crave stories like this. The only thing we love more than patterns is when they are broken. With apologies to Manchester United or Chelsea fans, if one of these teams won, it would be moderately exciting but entirely predictable. And that can never match the excitement of something beyond your imagination.

The other story was the naming of a polar research ship in England. There was overwhelming support online for one name. 124,109 votes in fact. The name? **Boaty McBoatface**.



Boaty McBoatface.

So, right now, there is some poor bloody civil servant having to decide what to do. I really hope they go with this name. They probably won't. But f*ck I hope they do.

In both these examples, given the chance, human beings love something new and something different. Why? Because it makes them feel good and most importantly it's a lot of fun. And, in breaking news, people want life to be fun. In a recent study, I just made up, fun is the number one thing that people want.

David Ogilvy once said you can't bore consumers into buying your product. He said that 50 years ago. Today, that is far more true than when he said it.

Advertising is embracing analysis and it is important to do so. However, data isn't going to give you stories about Olympic athletes that come last, Leicester City or Boaty McBoatface. We need to remember to embrace fun and joy just as much as certainty.

As an industry, we are at risk of telling the same stories over and over again and expecting a different result.

We will do what is correct and efficient. We will reach consensus. We will look at the data. We will make less mistakes. We also might become very boring.

We need to remember what Einstein said: Creativity is intelligence having fun. Fun is not a nice to have. It is a vital ingredient that we often forget to put into the recipe.

Human beings like the wrong things. We like impossible stories. Stories, that confirm we can all beat the odds. We like all our odd quirks, things that don't make sense and weird sh!t.

As an industry we often try and smooth these rough edges over. We try and find a middle ground or an acceptable, average answer. Something we can all agree on.

Perhaps we shouldn't.

We like these odd-shaped things because we are human. In fact, that's what makes us human.

We like all these things because they make life worth living.

I hope advertising never forgets this.

"Let's have some new cliches." - Samuel Goldwyn.

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