



Future Leader Awards

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At a time when economic concerns are putting extraordinary pressure on employers and their teams, for organizations to focus on innovation in areas such as technology development, diversity, equity and inclusion – or any brand and agency taking a risk on the next big outcome – could seem like an unlikely move.

However, the stories of the eleven winners of the Digiday Future Leaders Awards counter any pessimistic assumption about what the advertising industry has in store.

Product and technological innovation are among the attributes the winners of this year's awards highlight. Our winners are creating new and exciting ways to broaden their customer base to keep up with the times. The industry leaders in this guide are all using their expertise in innovative ways, creating buzz on many channels while engaging and delighting their customers and audiences.

Sustainability and community betterment haven't gone anywhere. Successful leaders keep their community in mind, creating meaningful partnerships, implementing sustainability measures and finding ways to

give back. These are all significant characteristics of this year's leaders.

Flexible, healthy work environments remain a mandate, and work-life balance has become essential to the modern career. Companies that foster work-life as a central value are generating new creativity and deeper forward-thinking insights, all while holding on to employees much longer. The top leaders in this year's awards exemplify the essence of looking after their employees. Whether it's top-notch benefits, wellness programs, employee gatherings or parties, these winning teams have it down.

DE&I remains a focus. Across industries, our winners are focused on promoting diversity and inclusion. Successful leaders are creating workplace cultures that value and promote diversity, equity and inclusion within their organizations and products.

Read about our winners in this guide, packed with insights and ideas from which any brand, agency, publisher – and business leaders of all kinds – can learn and then bring to their teams for their own winning leadership strategies in 2023 and beyond.

Digiday Future Leader - Agency

Desmond Attmore, co-founder, Six Degrees

Profile

The road to co-founding Atlanta creative agency Six Degrees took Desmond Attmore from Queens, New York, to Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. It was there Desmond Attmore partnered with his Six Degrees co-founder Brian “BWright” Wright to run Kreemo, a clothing brand outfitting hip-hop stars like Lil Wayne and Wiz Khalifa. Desmond and Brian focused on the music business, but Desmond craved a larger canvas to present his vision. The pair started Six Degrees and set their course: branding and designing, content production and experiential marketing.

Impact

In just five years, Desmond helped build the 23-person Six Degrees into a creative and branding powerhouse serving marquee names such as Google, YouTube Music, Puma, RedBull, HBO, Amazon, Foot Locker and others. As he paved the agency’s future, Desmond looked to his past. In 2022, Six Degrees’ brought Pandora to Morehouse for a campaign tied to homecoming events. Six Degrees and Pandora held a mini-music festival featuring Drake that attracted 40,000 attendees, showcasing how a Black-owned shop is defining what it means to be a next-gen agency.



Digiday Future Leader - Brand

Zaria Parvez, global social media manager, Duolingo

Profile

As language-learning platform Duolingo's global social media manager, Zaria Parvez is committed to driving organic leads and finding creator partnerships that make sense for the brand and its users. Initially tentative about TikTok, Duolingo's channel turned out to be the most successful social buzz and word-of-mouth enterprise to date – all credited to Zaria's insights, instincts, and expertise. By bringing the spirit of Duolingo's push notification to the TikTok comments section, Zaria was recognized by Joe Jonas, Kate Hudson, Lizzo, Diplo and others. And yes, she did it all organically.

Impact

Duolingo's TikTok channel grew from 50,000 followers in September 2021 to 5.2 million followers by the end of 2022 – all with zero budget and a one-person team. Zaria has added four members to Duolingo's social media team. The Duolingo TikTok has 83 viral videos with view counts of 1 million or higher, a quantifiable sign of Zaria's influencer bona fides. Diverse voices and self-described "shapeshifters" like the Pakistani-American Zaria represent a new type of leader who can communicate across a variety of audiences, generational divides, educational and religious differences and even media consumption habits.



Digiday Future Leader - Publisher

Eric Phung, co-founder and CEO, AllGear Digital

Profile

Consumers developed a new appreciation for the outdoors over the last three years. Eric Phung, the co-founder and CEO of AllGear Digital, a leading media company catering to campers, climbers, bikers, surfers, snowboarders and hikers, has guided brands seeking to reach its 60 million online community. AllGear's vibrant collection of publications includes GearJunkie, Switchback Travel, The Inertia, Bikerumor, iRunFar, WildSnow and ExplorersWeb. Eric's strong background in finance and consulting was integral to raising the necessary capital for the company to achieve its goals – including the company's most recent \$40 million funding round.

Impact

AllGear was founded four years ago. In addition to its sales and operations acumen, Eric has cultivated AllGear as a minority-owned business with a majority-minority Board, a majority-minority C-suite and an increasingly diverse workforce. Under his stewardship, the company has generated \$100 million in annual affiliate sales for its partners. That success has helped Eric and his team raise the bar on the brand's quality, audience and profitability many times over while retaining the core values.



Digiday Future Leader - Technology Provider

Monica Longoria, LG Ad Solutions

Profile

Monica Longoria is a natural storyteller. Throughout her decade-long career, she has crafted narratives that tie product marketing to the evolving linear and digital TV landscape for companies like Comcast, Cox Media Group and Tegna. Her ability to weave stories and business strategy has helped her advance the cause of DE&I. Monica started the women's Employee Resource Group (ERG) at LG Ad, which led to the creation of the LG Ad Solutions 'Diverse Voices' webinar series featuring industry thought-leaders of color. She leads the DE&I strategy and initiatives at LG Ad Solutions.

Impact

As one of the most visible voices within the company and a rising voice within the ad industry, Monica has instilled LG Ad Solutions with the data literacy of an analyst and a designer's creativity. She redefined LG Ad Solutions' product marketing strategy and built greater trust among the leadership. The executive team behind her has continued to invest in her vision by growing her team over the past year. As the lines between sales, product development and data science become more complex, Monica's approach has shown that analytics, art and culture can drive true ROI in the most demanding environments.



Glossy Future Leader - Beauty

Kara Brothers, president and general manager, Starface

Profile

Kara Brothers would deserve an award for simply making acne treatment fun. But that's not all Kara has done as president and general manager of Starface, a brand that markets the "first-of-its-kind decorative pimple patches that turn breakouts into moments of self-expression." She oversees Starface's brand vision, business development, retail expansion and new partnerships. Kara took to the task seamlessly following her transition after nine years at Google, where she spearheaded corporate strategy and strategic partnerships.

Impact

Since joining Starface in January 2021, Kara has ensured the company has been recognized for running authentic and community-driven campaigns. Under her direction, Starface became one of the first marketers to partner with student athletes following the Supreme Court decision allowing these sports stars to receive compensation for brands' use of their name, image and likeness. Kara and her team crafted a viral partnership with fashion designer Puppets & Puppets to launch Black Star, making Starface the first pimple patch to ever walk the runway at New York Fashion Week.



Glossy Future Leader - Wellness

Susan Allen Augustin, co-founder, Here We Flo

Profile

While completing her master's in management at the London School of Economics in 2015, Boston-born Susan Allen Augustin met her best friend, Tara. That friendship led to the launch of Here We Flo and a mission: to make shamelessly natural personal care products that make women feel "crazy-confident" about life's messiest moments. From periods to bladder leaks to sex and everything else on the human body rollercoaster, Susan and Here We Flo are changing how consumers think about – and how brands market – the most intimate aspects of wellness.

Impact

Susan has imbued Here We Flo with an ethos she describes as "kindness is kween." And it's paid off. In just five years, the company has attracted U.K. retailers like Boots and Holland & Barrett and U.S. retail giants like Target, Whole Foods and Bed, Bath & Beyond. At the heart of Susan's leadership is social good. That's why it wasn't enough for Here We Flo products to be sustainable – they had to produce actual change. From day one, the brand has given back 5% of its profits to People+Planet, an environmental group started by U.K. students. Here We Flo also supports charities like the Brigid Alliance, which provides safe abortion access for people in the United States.



Modern Retail Future Leader - Digitally-Native

Nick Guillen, co-founder and co-CEO, TRUFF

Profile

A taste for truffles is generally associated with refined palates – and even more refined bank accounts. But 32-year-old Nick Guillen, co-founder and co-CEO of TRUFF, established his luxury condiment company with a broader appeal in mind. Guillen and his partner, Nick Ajluni, have connected TRUFF's line of aromatic-infused pantry staples to his passion for the digital elements of brand-building. Unlike most company heads, Guillen is down in the trenches, writing captions for social media, creating content, designing labels and even sliding into the DMs of Taco Bell's brand manager to pitch a partnership.

Impact

TRUFF reflects Guillen's innate ability to identify the open spaces in various markets where he could fill a void. The inveterate entrepreneur even once sold snapback baseball caps out of his car during a stint as an Uber driver. Guillen now connects his love for hip-hop culture with food. As such, TRUFF is not just a condiment; Guillen says it's a conversation point. The brand's appeal has generated billions of organic social-media shout-outs and more than 20,000 five-star online reviews.



Modern Retail Future Leader - Established Retailer

Joanna Griffiths, founder and president, Knix

Profile

Lingerie is moving beyond the version dominated by the male gaze and the occasional Valentine's celebration. In part, that's due to leaders like Joanna Griffiths, the founder and president of Knix and Kt by Knix. Billed as the "direct-to-consumer intimate apparel brands reinventing intimates for real life," since launching in 2013, Joanna has built the fast-growing Knix with a mission to empower people to be unapologetically free. On the road to retail growth, she's faced adversity in the effort to normalize issues like leaking. Knix's success goes beyond sales: the brand is ending stigmas that consigned leakproof underwear to being a niche idea.

Impact

Joanna has been a voice on the national and international stage for championing body inclusivity, fertility, mental health and postpartum health. On the business front, health and hygiene brand Essity acquired 80% of Knix in September 2022, and Joanna holds the remaining 20%. The sale marks the largest publicly disclosed private sale of a DTC company by a female founder in Canada. Still, Joanna's goal was never just to sell underwear; she aimed to change how customers and the community feel about themselves.



WorkLife Future Leader - DE&I

Albrey Brown, vp of strategy and general manager, New York, Joonko

Profile

Before taking on the role of vice president of strategy at diversity-focused recruiter Joonko, Albrey Brown led DE&I initiatives at three major tech companies, including DocuSign. At each company, he created diversity programs from scratch. It's fitting, considering he founded and sold a company called Telegraph Academy, which taught underserved groups how to code. He's applied data-driven techniques typically associated with marketing to leading people. That's helped Albrey deliver results instead of just good intentions.

Impact

As CEO at Telegraph, Albrey led Telegraph's business strategy, creating a six-week program produced \$2.5 million in revenue – a perfect example of doing good while doing business. He also secured a \$40,000 scholarship fund to cover students' living expenses post-graduation. Albrey eventually wanted to have the opportunity to have a more indelible impact on the tech industry, and that led him to Joonko, one of the only sourcing platforms focused exclusively on underrepresented candidates. He's since helped more than 200 companies including Adidas, American Express, Crocs, PayPal and Intuit hire underrepresented talent.



WorkLife Future Leader - HR

Eve Deschamps, business partner, people and culture, Sharethrough

Profile

Eve Deschamps has a hand in everything people-related at the supply side platform Sharethrough. That includes directing the company's people and culture team and its DE&I task force. Eve also manages strategic career development designed to inspire in-house talent. She's the conduit through which Sharethrough practices its responsibilities to ensure staffers have mental and physical health access. Making Sharethrough a better workplace is also part of Eve's mandate, with DE&I workshops and numerous events throughout the year, including happy hours, onboarding lunches and cooking classes.

Impact

Sharethrough is the platform for Eve's superhuman ability to attract top talent and generate genuine excitement: she plans to keep improving life at Sharethrough in 2023 by launching a leadership program to create a close-knit community of managers, and, as some companies quietly pullback on DE&I efforts amid economic worries, Eve is boldly raising priorities to make Sharethrough a culture of inclusion and a place where employees' voices genuinely count.



WorkLife Future Leader - Recruiting

David Peña, talent specialist, RPA

Profile

David Peña is a first-generation Cal Poly Pomona graduate. As a marketing intern at ad agencies, he realized how necessary it was to open the door to other first-generation graduates. David secured his first position as an associate brand strategist at Canvas Worldwide. Subsequently, he landed at RPA as an early career talent specialist, where he has since taken the role to new heights, co-leading RPA's Young Professionals Cohort and Latinx Employee Resource Group. Diversity takes the lead in all of David's endeavors. He understands firsthand how to navigate and connect with people from diverse backgrounds, co-starting the Latinx ERG and RPA's Young Professional ERG, both of which cultivate new relationships and give associates a way to get involved beyond their day-to-day professional responsibilities.

Impact

Realizing how vital diverse conversations are, David has hosted panels for RPA Represent, an internal committee dedicated to promoting inclusivity in meaningful ways inside and outside the industry. As a result of his work, RPA's People First Internship Application no longer requires a resume to be considered for employment. That move made RPA one of the first agencies to implement processes that allowed anyone to break into the advertising world, focusing solely on personality, curiosity and ambition rather than relying on experience. In addition, David has mentored 15 interns who are now flourishing full-time associates.





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