



Bonjour,

Last week's talks* at the 4A's Transformation 2016 conference in Miami and the larger discussion that has since developed on social media and in the press, have, without question, called for a clarification of my own.

When I replied to Jim Rutenberg's question, I focused on the JWT problem, a WPP agency, and the allegedly racist, anti-Semitic, and sexist comments made by its CEO, such as they were reported in the complaint filed by Erin Johnson (case 1:16-cv-01805 filed on 10 March 2016 at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York: I encourage you to read the complaint, it is appalling). I condemned them very strongly. I must say that his comments, if true, are jaw dropping. To such an extent, that in my opinion, they can only represent the unforgivable fault of one man, as opposed to an industry-wide evil. On this point, I maintain my position, and I dare hope that I am right - I can't for one second imagine that it is common in our industry (or in any other) to make jokes at every turn about women, blacks and Jews, and to speak of a subject as sensitive as rape, as it was depicted in Erin Johnson's complaint. Should a case of this nature be brought to our attention in our own Groupe, we would react strongly and without delay.

I am not wide-eyed, and I am well aware that striking the deserved balance is still some distance away. We know there is a lot of work left to be done, across the industry, with regards to compensation, mobility, promotions, leadership and hiring.

On gender equality and diversity, Publicis, its founder and myself, are a part of those who have always been on the forefront of the fight for equal treatment, hence our mantra "Viva La Difference". I recalled that the first female CEO ever within our industry was appointed by Marcel Bleustein-Blanchet, founder of Publicis, in...1938. This may seem anecdotal, but it is far from being so - eleven years before the landmark book *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir was published. Our Supervisory Board is equally made up of women and men and is chaired by a woman, an intellectual, whose written and spoken statements on feminism go without mention. We have 38% women in executive positions - even if I know we must go the extra mile so that this number is higher, especially for top positions. Hence my pride that our largest agencies are managed by women. Our commitment on this front is strong, and we hope to be even more exemplary, working hard to achieve this goal. Thus, our support of initiatives that engage and celebrate women and diversity in all its forms within the Groupe, notably Viva Women and Égalité (Equality, an LGBT movement). Thus, our financial support of the Women's Forum that promotes gender equality and tackles societal challenges from a women's perspective. We are not perfect, far from it, but we are determined to take further action for as long as necessary.

As far as Sir Martin Sorrell's comments, I must say that he once again showed his extraordinary level of hypocrisy. I mean, really? This situation began in his company, in one of his largest agencies, with a CEO, therefore someone who is meant to lead by example.



His colleague did everything possible to have her story be heard, without it being so, even from the very person who should listen - the Chief Talent Officer. A situation that has been going on for over a year, and his response as CEO of the largest advertising company globally was nothing but a dilatory tactic, attacking ad hominem one of his colleagues during a flagship industry event, while my name was neither mentioned nor implied in the question.

We could have expected more dignity from him, especially as during my interview, I refrained from damning WPP, whose reaction in this affair is all but glorious. I know that we don't have the same values; no matter the light we shed on our behaviors. Our actions are living witnesses to our values, whether in business, family and moral matters, or in regard to compensation. Rarely will Sir Martin Sorrell have so well deserved [the description given to him by](#) David Ogilvy.

Facts truly are stubborn things. For Publicis Groupe, gender equality and diversity across the industry have mattered for decades and we will continue to pursue them restlessly. Our values are strong and generous – leaving no room for such behaviors that tarnish our industry.

Best,

Maurice Lévy

** On 22 March 2016, Maurice Lévy, Chairman and CEO Publicis Groupe, gave the opening keynote of the 4A's Transformation 2016 conference. Following his keynote, he was interviewed by Jim Rutenberg of the New York Times. When asked about the gender issue in the industry with the explicit reference to the JWT situation, Maurice Lévy replied "I don't believe that what happened at JWT is exemplary of what's happening in our industry. It's a one-man mistake, a huge mistake, a huge fault, but it's not a fair representation of the industry..." The next day, Sir Martin Sorrell, founder and CEO of WPP, was interviewed by Ken Auletta, journalist for The New Yorker. When asked about how pervasive of a problem he thinks sexism, stereotyping and unconscious bias are in the advertising & marketing industry, Sir Martin Sorrell diverted the question and drew an unprovoked parallel to Maurice Lévy, although he was not cited in the question: "And going back to your original question, about Maurice Lévy, he took a different view. His view was JWT/Gustavo was a one-off. I disagree. If I am going to get violent, I would disagree violently with that proposition."*