

# JOHN CARSTENS

Chief Creative Officer

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Seasoned and cured creative director. Writer by trade. Design enthusiast. Experienced in traditional, digital, and global brand expression. Winner of awards, airline status, and smatterings of polite applause.

## EXPERIENCE

### **Chief Creative Officer | DDB | Chicago | 2019 – Present**

Creative lead of Team DDB, a consortium of eleven agencies in the service of the U.S. Army. Responsible for all creative expression across the marketing ecosystem. Part of the leadership team that built this entity from the ground up. Launched the reinvented “Be All You Can Be” as a thoroughly modern, enterprise-wide brand platform. So far we've delivered some outlandish results, but we still have a lot of perceptions to change.

### **Executive Creative Director | Freelance | Chicago, Seattle, Detroit, San Francisco | 2014 – 2019**

Led the winning Symantec pitch for DDB. Helped Publicis retain the GMC business. Wrote for Apple product launches and values initiatives. Solved strategy, creative, and process problems for brands, agencies, start-ups, and NGOs. Other clients included BBDO, R/GA, Leo Burnett, VSA Partners, Cramer-Krasselt, FCB, Digitas, Sponge, 3Q, The Escape Pod, SurePeople, University of Newcastle, and Natural Resources Defense Council.

### **Executive Creative Director | SapientNitro | Chicago, Los Angeles | 2011 – 2014**

Brought brand storytelling to technology, business strategy, and digital innovation. Tripled the creative department (art, copy, UX). Led the design of a new space and development of a new culture. Won business from Abbott, Disney, Kellogg School, Procter & Gamble, DeVry, Northern Trust, and more. During my tenure, we more than doubled the agency's revenue, including “lead agency” wins that opened up new types of work for this company.

### **SVP Global Creative Director | Leo Burnett | Chicago | 2010 – 2011**

Global creative lead on BlackBerry. Led creative development from offices in Chicago, London, Paris, Buenos Aires, Melbourne, and Toronto. Pitched in on Nintendo U.S. and Canon Australia. Won the Autonomy business.

### **Group Creative Director | DDB | Chicago | 2007 – 2010**

U.S. creative lead on Wrigley and Reebok at DDB Chicago. Pitched across the DDB and TribalDDB networks (nicknamed “The Wolf”), working with the Global CEO, North American management team, and the creative leads of the New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Beijing and Berlin offices.

### **Creative Director | Cramer-Krasselt | Chicago | 2001 – 2007**

Creative lead on AirTran, Heinz, Hyatt, LaSalle Bank, Dex, A.T. Kearney, and ServiceMaster. Wrote for CareerBuilder and Corona. Implemented a new model of cross-functional conceiving across the agency's creative, digital, media, and PR groups. Helped elevate this regional agency to a national player with big brands expressed across all channels.

### **Copywriter | Merkle Newman Harty | New York | 2000 – 2002**

Concepted and wrote for Mercedes-Benz (with a focus on S-Class and AMG), BellSouth, Citibank, Lipitor, Fila, Oxford Health Plans, and the American Museum of Natural History.

### **Copywriter | TBWA/Chiat/Day | Los Angeles | 1997 – 2000**

Concepted and wrote for Nissan, Infiniti, Taco Bell, Kinko's, Sony PlayStation, Intertainer, City of Los Angeles, Energizer, and Apple. Featured as a “Young Gun” by Shoot magazine.

## EDUCATION

### **Portfolio Center | Atlanta | 1995 – 1997**

Portfolio program in Advertising Concepts and Copywriting. My work frequently made “The Wall,” the school’s quarterly Hall of Fame.

### **University of Virginia | Charlottesville | 1993 – 1995**

B.A. with honors, Rhetoric and Communication Studies (mass media concentration). English minor. Wrote for The University Journal and the alternative publication The Declaration. Streaked the Lawn.

### **Northwestern University | Evanston | 1991 – 1993**

Majored in Organizational Studies and Social Policy.

## TRAINING

### **Harvard Business School Entrepreneurship Essentials**

Learned about validating business concepts through structured experiments, refining business strategy, and raising capital to create value.

### **Xccelerate Executive Coaching**

Regular sessions with London-based John Stafford while at SapientNitro, individually and with our management team. Developed and executed our purpose, values, strategies, plans, and navigation checks.

### **Coughter & Company Presentation Skills**

Workshops and coaching sessions with the ad industry’s preeminent presentation coach, Peter Coughter.

### **VCU Brandcenter Executive Training for Creative Directors**

Participated in the graduate school’s inaugural management training program for right-brained leaders.

## AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Cannes, One Show, Communication Arts, Athena (Best of Show), Red Dot (Grand Prix), Mobius (Best of Show), OMMA (Best of Category), WebAwards (Best of Category), Webby, Effie, Jay Chiat Awards, W3, Addies, Print, and other shows with Lucite trophies and off-white certificates. Press mentions include The New York Times, Washington Post, CNN, BBC, The Guardian, Asia Times, Vice, BuzzFeed, Vanity Fair, Business Insider, Hollywood Reporter, AdAge, Adweek, Creativity, and TBS’s “America’s Funniest Commercials.”

One of my Army campaigns was targeted by Russian bots and 4chan hacktivists, causing a political and cultural firestorm that dominated the news cycle. On a lighter note, David Letterman repeatedly worked my Taco Bell Chihuahua commercial into bits and sketches until he’d thoroughly drained it of its comedic value.