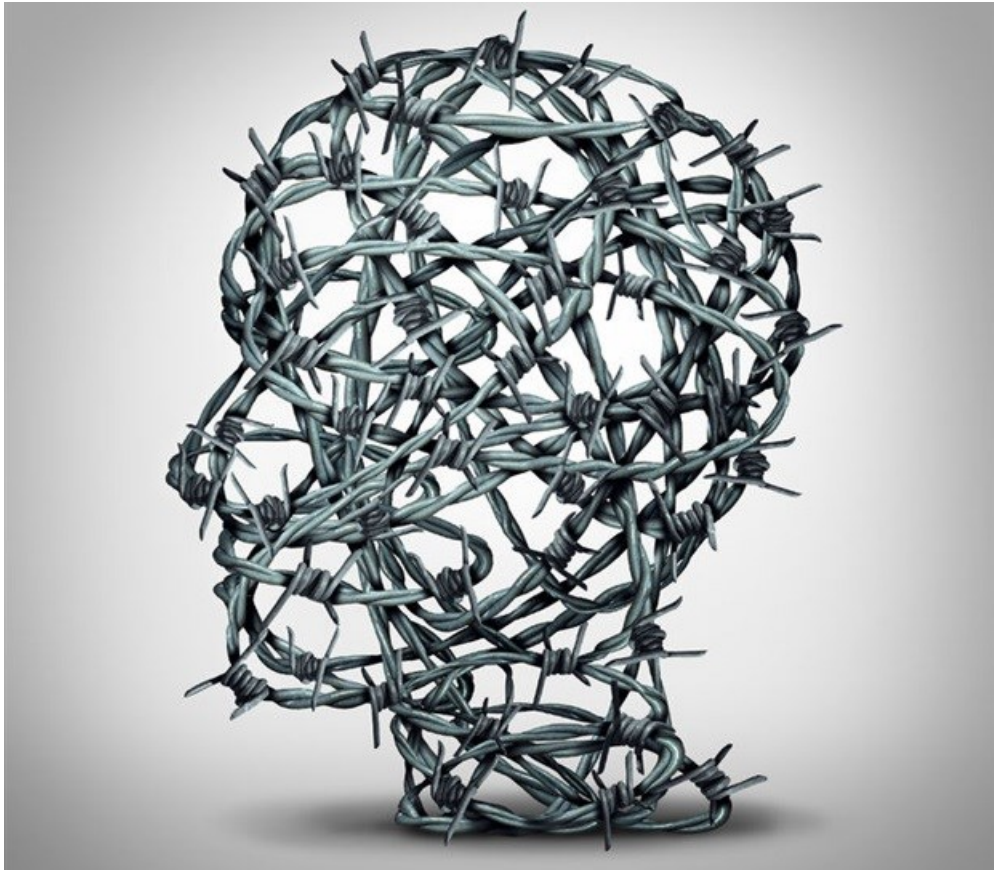


Maybe I worry too much

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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As we stare down the political abyss brought on by Mr Bumble and wonder what on earth is going to happen next, I began wondering if the advertising industry isn't in a similar position?



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I mean, we had a good thing going with Saarf and Amps, even if it did have a few warts, but now it's gone and we're still all wondering "what now?"

Well, next up apparently, is a brand new code of practice (written a couple of years ago). It's called "the Marketing, Advertising and Communications code" and will come into force in March next year.

The idea is sound enough but there's an undertone of something quite sinister, in my opinion. The intention of this code is to change the structure of the industry and the way it conducts operations – especially agencies.

It starts off with that tried and untrusted quota argument about race and what colour employees should be. Haven't we seen enough of that in other areas? It's inhuman for starters, it's racist and quite possibly unfair to great talent.

According to this code agencies **must be** at least 45% black-owned. And of that, 15% **must be** black women. This must surely be a regressive step?

Empowerment targets will be put into place ensuring young black people rise up the corporate ladder, which is yet another step backwards. (Note that these are only two points taken from a long and confusing list).

Please don't misunderstand what I'm saying. I have absolutely no problem (none whatsoever) with black people getting their rewards – but surely it must be based on TALENT and not just percentages?

I misguidedly thought the one industry that has risen proudly above the race issue was advertising.

It's a fabulously fascinating (and rewarding) industry for people with *TALENT*. It matters not a damn what colour you are. If you're a great copywriter then, believe me, agencies will come pounding on your door – whether you're black, Indian, coloured, Chinese or white (even Americans and Australians are welcome).

But if you're not a good writer then perhaps you should be trying out for something else?

The problem with these kinds of “laws” is that I'm terribly afraid they will attract mediocrity.

It's not so much about agency ownership – I kind of get that. And after years of repression, it is most definitely time for black people to take their place in the ranks of ownership. BUT, they have to be **good** owners/managers.

Lastly, having carefully read the Marketing, Advertising and Communication (MAC) Sector Code, I can't shake off this feeling that it's a sop – offered up to government as a (very late) reaction to their 2001 insistence that the advertising industry should “transform” itself. Although, to be fair, there was a joint industry statement in 2003 known as “The values statement of the marketing and communication industry”, which was supported, in principle – myself included – by most industry bodies at the time.

Maybe I'm worrying too much. Time will tell and I hope (and trust) that any concerns I have will prove to be unnecessary (fingers crossed).

Jeremy Maggs and David Furlonger will be editing this year's “AdFocus” on 22 November and will be examining the industry a little more closely. It will be worth looking at.

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