



Hi, everyone. Happy Black History Month UK edition. My name is Ericka Hatfield. I'm a director of client engagement as well as the chair of Fluorescent, VMLY&R North America's Black Employee Resource group. And now, I will let Rachel introduce herself.

Hi, everyone. I'm Rachel Ayeh-Datey. I'm a senior analyst over at VMLY&R London office. And I'm also the racial equity lead of UK chapter. Yeah, just excited to be today.

Yes. And so today we're going to talk to Rachel about all things, UK Black History Month. So first, this year's theme is celebrating Black British Creativity. And so I would love to hear about how you all in the UK office are honouring that and celebrating that.

So I picked the theme Celebrating Black Creativity just to counteract quite a heavy year that we had last year. So I wanted this to be like a month of really celebrating and honouring all the amazing work and effort and impact that Black British people have had on the country.

So in the UK we've put on a series of events over October. We've had talks from a Black Creative Director called Kevin Morosky. He is a CCO of a Black-owned agency called Pocc.

We also had a Twitter Spaces event where we had a Black British quiz in collaboration with Twitter. And we had some of our very, very influential Twitter voices hosting and leading the conversation. And in that event it was really fun. It was all about Black British history, Black British music, Black British culture.

And we used the Twitter Spaces format just because we'd never hosted an event on that platform, so we thought it would be creative to host it on that platform too. And at the end of the month there was a DJ set with Sherman and Shaun from our VMLY&R Atlanta office, celebrating the best in Black British music.

So just touching on lots of really important industries in Black culture in general. So music, creativity, social media, and stuff. So hosting on these various different verticals with people who are experts or really big voices in the field, that's how we're celebrating it this year.

Yeah. You've had so many great events. Very exciting to participate in those. And would love to talk a little bit more about Twitter. Seeing as how social media is such a large proponent of Black creativity and getting those voices out there, we'd love to dive deeper into why you thought Twitter was a great space, I know you touched on it before. And then just talking about Black content creators and that kind of experience.

So for me personally, Twitter is the space where I get my news but also my memes. And it keeps me updated on all things Black culture. And I thought it would be great for us to partner with Twitter and find out more about their offering as well, because I've never used Twitter Spaces, really, in any deep way. So I thought it'd be great for us to use the format.

But I also thought it'd be really interesting for the conversations and the activities to be led by Black Twitter voices, because we know how influential Black Twitter both the US and UK is. And I thought it would be really interesting for our colleagues at VMLY&R, who may not

be exposed to the Black Twitter sphere, to be introduced to some of the key players in the sphere.

So we had Chante J as the host, Richie Brave as team captain one, and Nana and Rose from Two Twos podcasts as team captains two. And through that we saw just lots of different things about Black British culture, Black British history. And it was a very fun way to use Twitter in a way to gamify the Twitter Spaces format as well, because I think from their understanding they've had lots of really deep conversations on that format as well. So it was fun to do something fun too. So I thought it was really great for us to collaborate with Twitter and Twitter voices in specifically, yeah.

Yeah. I really enjoyed it and I learned so much, a lot of facts that I did not know about. And next, we'd love to talk to you about the DJ battle. So we know that music is a huge form of creativity and is used by Black creatives across various industries, but specifically, in advertising a lot.

We'd love to hear you talk about why you thought it would be great to have two American DJs host this event and how we are celebrating Black artists and music.

I thought it'd be great to get to American DJs involved just so we can really have everyone from the diaspora involved in Black History Month UK. Also, was really important for us to have Black British music front and center because we've got so many different genres in Black British music that I think lots of people who may not be British may not know about, from grime, to UK hip hop, to UK R&B.

And I thought that is really, really important to celebrate that music. So in the DJ battle it's different areas, and decades, and genres, and just really celebrating the plethora of Black British music. And I think it was a fun education for Shaun and Sherman who are DJs but may not be super, super familiar with Black British music. So I thought that was a really exciting challenge.

We're also seeing how much influences Black British music has had on other genres was a really good education piece for everyone. But also, I thought it would just be a good way to end the month with something fun and relaxing, like a music set would be. So that's why we chose it.

Yeah. I think music is a great way to pull people in and get people excited. And again, just as you think about celebrations after a really tough two years, almost, I think, definitely looking forward to it.

And in closing, what are some ways or recommendations of how we can better embed, not only within our organisations but across the industry, Black creativity and amplify those Black creatives in this space?

I think, especially in terms of our industry, we can't celebrate Black creativity without black people. So the most important thing is to have Black people in the spaces throughout all levels of advertising.

I think it's really important to empower people, especially Black people to stay in the industry because something I've really noticed is people might start out in the industry at junior levels but you might not see them progress and grow to mid, to senior, to director

level. And I think that's something that's really, really important because you can't have creativity without having the talent there in the first place.

And just giving people the spotlight to shine and to grow in. And I think, with Black people, when you give us the space to be ourselves and to prove the creativity just shines through, and I think that's something that is really important in all industries, but especially in advertising.

And just also education. Being aware of like other cultures and being aware of Black History when it's not just October for Britain and February for America. Being aware of the impacts that Black creativity and blackness has had across all cultures and throughout the years is really, really important. And I think that's something that advertising, in general, can do better.

Definitely. I loved what you said about making sure that we actually have Black creatives to highlight and amplify Black creativity. And representing those audiences for our clients, I think is really important too.

Well, Rachel, thank you so much. You've done an amazing job this month. So congratulations to Rachel and the team for putting on a wonderful slew of events across the month of October. And again, happy Black History Month to the United Kingdom.

Thank you so much, Ericka.