

# Q&A with Damian Francis: the marketing and media truth-teller



Damian "Damo" Francis is the content boss at [Mumbrella](#), Australia's go-to for all media and marketing news and events.

He's one of this country's most recognisable marketing faces, primarily due to the volume of stages, podcasts, and live streams that he fronts.

And anyone who's seen Damo live – which covers virtually all Australian marketers – will attest to his eloquence, rapier wit and ability to stay calm under pressure.

However, offstage he's a slightly different cat. While equally effusive, he's also lighthearted, self-deprecating, brutally honest, and generous with his time and insight.

Damo's path to leading Australia's marketing information and event empire hasn't been linear.

A journalist since 2003, Damo initially worked across print and digital in B2C and B2B, both at the big and small ends of town – from *The Sydney Morning Herald* to various small publishers. He also briefly crossed to the 'dark side' and had a short stint as an in-house communications director, before making his way back to the journalistic fold.

More recently, he helped Mumbrella navigate COVID-19, which meant cancelling all in-person events and transitioning to virtual, as well as managing the team as they reduced their hours to four days a week for most of 2020.

Despite these challenges, he's strengthened Mumbrella's offering by significantly building the content team, as well as launching a host of new events such as the B2B Marketing Summit, Mumbrella Sessions and the subscription product Mumbrella Pro.

Since taking on the role of content boss last April, Damo has perhaps become best known for turning off reader comments on Mumbrella, for which people equally love and hate him.

He made the call for a number of reasons. Firstly, with fewer available hours and staff last year, Mumbrella couldn't adequately moderate the comments.

Secondly, he believed there was – and still is – a large grey area in terms of what the industry deems acceptable or not when it comes to the content of comments.

Additionally, he felt the quota of comments that added to the discussion was completely outnumbered by those that were purely vitriolic.

More than anything, this commitment to doing the right thing and tackling challenges head on sums up who Damo is as a person.



Damo waxing lyrical in his natural habitat – onstage.

## What do you do?

I'm the head of content at Mumbrella, Australia's leading media and marketing publisher. I'm basically responsible for our content output across our website, events, awards and pretty much anything else that we do.

I lead a department of nine content creators – from journalists to producers and researchers – whose mandate is to keep the industry informed and honest.

*It's a super challenging role at a super challenging time for the entire industry.*

Hopefully I'll get a clean run at it at some stage, but the experience so far has never been dull. It's interesting following in the footsteps of someone like Mumbrella founder Tim Burrowes – big shoes to fill... I still need to grow a few sizes to fit in.

I also work closely with the heads of our other departments (sales, events, marketing) to make sure the Mumbrella business keeps on rolling.

## Tell us about Mumbrella Sessions

One of the biggest things Mumbrella does is its events. They obviously got halted with COVID-19 and it quickly became apparent that the industry was really lacking connection.

apparent that the industry was sorely lacking connection.

So, we listened to our audience and decided to launch [Mumbrella Sessions](#). They're pretty different to our major events and feature one panel or presentation, a small crowd, and some good networking.

*It's an intimate deep-dive on topical challenges the industry is grappling with, and we love it – and so does our audience.*

It's not a money spinner for us – tickets are only \$20 – but it's our way of giving back to the industry we love and, most importantly, providing a forum for people to get involved again. So far, it's working a treat.



**What mantra are you living by this year?**

Good question. I haven't really got one but the one thing I keep remembering is to simply keep my head down.

It's too easy to get caught up in reasons not to do things or to be worried, but if you just keep your head down, keep working, you give yourself the best chance.

**What's the most important thing that marketers can do to drive commercial outcomes?**

Create [genuine connections](#) with audiences. How you do that? I'll leave that to the professional marketing theorists – we just cover the theories.

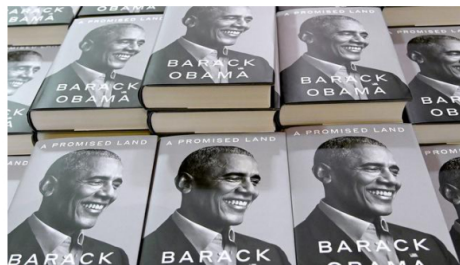
*But it's a constant: audience connection is front-line stuff and there are a lot of ways brands can do that, and a lot of ways they can stuff it up completely.*

But when they do it well, we all see how good the results can be.

**What's a cracking book you'd recommend or podcast you swear by?**

I'll give you both. I'm reading [The Promised Land](#) by Barack Obama at the moment. It's long – I'm only halfway in – but it's brilliant so far.

I enjoy [weekly tech-news podcast] [The Vergecast](#) – I love technology, and it crosses consumer and B2B. But you should also listen to the [Mumbrellacast](#).



The thinking man's book: The Promised Land.

**Who are your go-to thought leaders, and why?**

I really love reading and hearing from leaders who truly believe what they're saying and will say whatever they think because of that. Mark Ritson: love him or hate him, he backs himself. I appreciate that, even though I may not always agree.

We also just locked in regular contributors at Mumbrella. I asked people like Darren Woolley and Melissa Hopkins to contribute for that reason as well – they believe in something and share it, no holds barred.

But there are a lot of others in marketing who I think are great, and a lot who I wish would share more.

**Our favourite au: What's your top beer or wine recommendation?**

can't believe you're just top tier of this recommendation.

I don't drink a lot but when I do, I love Brick Lane Base Lager and Monkey 47 gin.

## Other yarns you might enjoy



Don't take a knife to a content gunfight – write like a journalist

WALK	JOG	RUN	SPRINT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategy and goals</li><li>2. Content calendar</li><li>3. Content creation</li><li>4. Content distribution</li><li>5. Content engagement</li><li>6. Content analysis</li><li>7. Content optimization</li><li>8. Content monetization</li><li>9. Content repurposing</li><li>10. Content archiving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategy and goals</li><li>2. Content calendar</li><li>3. Content creation</li><li>4. Content distribution</li><li>5. Content engagement</li><li>6. Content analysis</li><li>7. Content optimization</li><li>8. Content monetization</li><li>9. Content repurposing</li><li>10. Content archiving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategy and goals</li><li>2. Content calendar</li><li>3. Content creation</li><li>4. Content distribution</li><li>5. Content engagement</li><li>6. Content analysis</li><li>7. Content optimization</li><li>8. Content monetization</li><li>9. Content repurposing</li><li>10. Content archiving</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Strategy and goals</li><li>2. Content calendar</li><li>3. Content creation</li><li>4. Content distribution</li><li>5. Content engagement</li><li>6. Content analysis</li><li>7. Content optimization</li><li>8. Content monetization</li><li>9. Content repurposing</li><li>10. Content archiving</li></ul>

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