



Driven to satisfy the audience

Some of Yan Lefort's job is easy. "Whatever you do in Formula One racing, it resonates globally," says Sauber Motorsport's 48-year old commercial director. "Once you put your client, media, or consumer into the paddock next to the car, something happens. Whether that person loves cars, hates cars, loves sports, or hate sports...they catch the energy."

Although men have dominated auto racing both behind the wheel and in the paddock, diversity is something Lefort says is a natural progression for the sport. Talent doesn't look at gender, he says. He's more intrigued by the technology developments that balance the ability of anyone in engineering, marketing or driving.

"Strong and talented drivers are just that," Lefort says. "The mentality is no different - they are there to win, there to fight, taking the hits and taking the heat. There's a lot of discussion around diversity. Men are stronger in terms of muscles, but you can counter that because today, the cars are so much more accessible. There's power steering, for example. Of course, you need skills, you need mental and physical training, but pure strength is no longer the major issue."

Lefort is also fascinated by aesthetics. "Even if you don't understand the car in F1, it's still a beautiful device, a beautiful object," he says. "It has shiny, bright colors and is visually attractive. There's a lot of emotion, noise, smells, and intensity in F1... I think this is why the sport is so successful."

Sauber Motorsport, which hired 80 people alone in 2018, now employs nearly 500 professionals. The team wants to attract the best talent - from engineers and mechanics to drivers. F1's David Coulthard - a driver for many years with Williams and Mc-Claren - is the ultimate role model. Though he has never won a championship, Coulthard displays qualities beyond driving skill. "David is charming, good with sponsors, good-looking, well-educated, good with his engineers," says Lefort, a Frenchman based in Zurich. "He represents the 360-degree person."

In racing as in marketing, you can win, but you also have to constantly re-define where the finish line is, according to Lefort. "What you do as a sports team becomes more attractive to potential partners. It's all about the best service you can provide to your partners and the best package you can offer from a commercial perspective to attract more partners," he says. "If my objective is to grow awareness globally, then we look at creating tools and activation to help reach that goal."



