

FIRST
FIVE ©
RUNGS

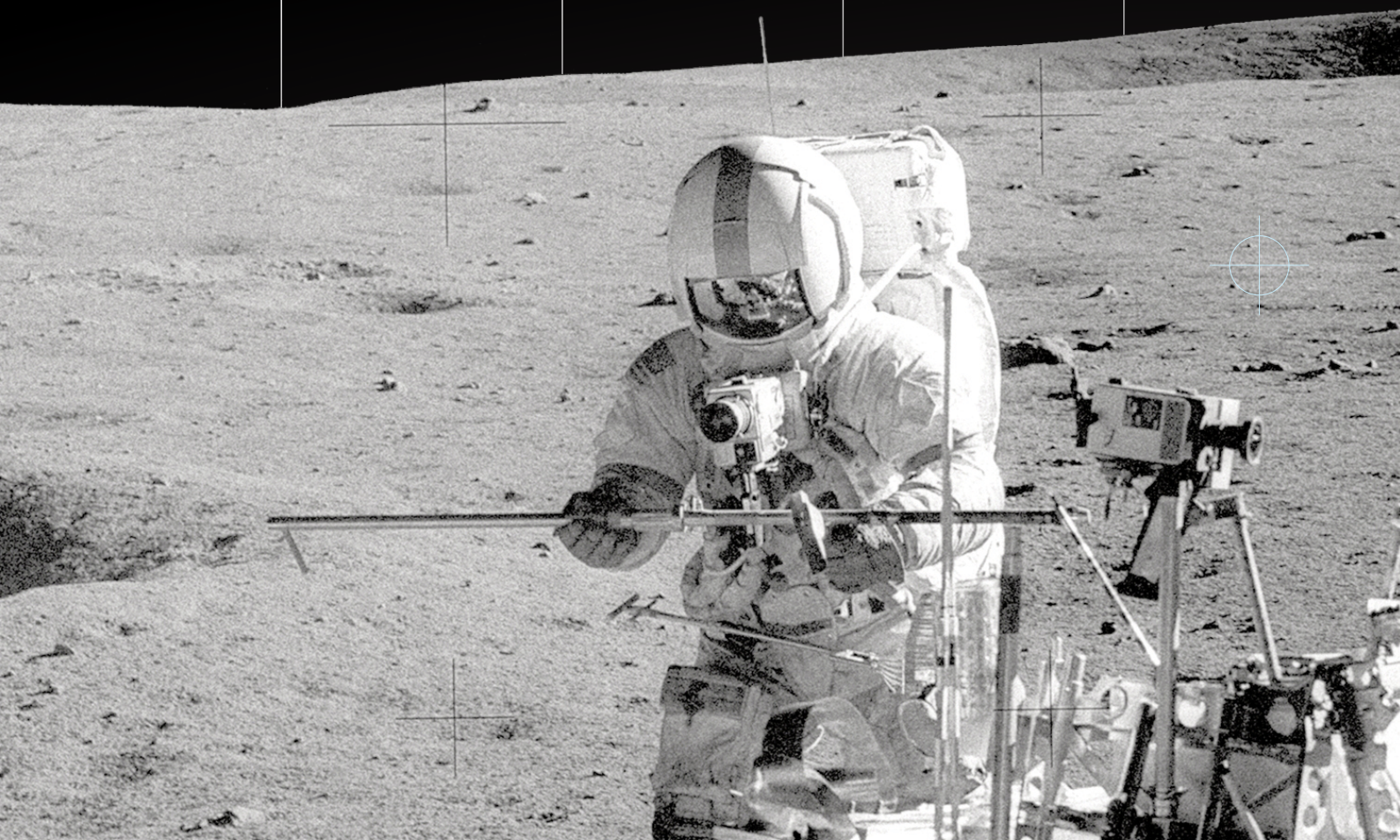
FFR
NEWS
LETTER

01

FEB

2026

Introducing the FFR Newsletter





Kia ora

Kia ora, welcome back to the office AND welcome to the first ever First Five Rungs newsletter

We'd like to thank the lovely folks at LUMO for their continued sponsorship of First Five Rungs and the awesome events we've got planned for '26.

LUMO

Prove your older colleagues' perception of your attention span wrong and read on to see what's going on in the First Five Rungs world.

Contents

A First Five Rungs Recap	04
Meet the team	05
The 2026 Strategy	07
Upcoming Events	08
Comms Council Labs	09
Opportunities out there	10
Mind Expansion	11



A First Five Rungs Recap

We'd like a moment to re-introduce ourselves (the First Five Rungs committee) for the year ahead. We're a group of fellow advertising colleagues, with a mission to make your first five years in the advertising industry as welcoming and as engaging as possible. We have two committees, based in both Pōneke Wellington and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Meet the Auckland team

Here's the lowdown on who we are and what we do in our day-to-day.



Lily Tootill
Chairperson

Business Manager
Droga5 Aotearoa



Andrew Eiserman
Deputy Chair

Senior UX/UI Designer
denstu Aotearoa



Sarah Chan
Secretary

Senior Planner Buyer
MBM



Vinny Canning
Council Member

Senior Business Manager
TBWA\ NZ



Hanna Stanford
Ambassador Lead

Senior Account Manager
Tracta



Ayaan Shaikh
Council Member

Activations Executive
OMD



Rosalie Basham
Council Member

Account Manager
One Plus One Communications



Crystal Hay
Council Member

Copywriter
TBWA\ NZ

Meet the Wellington team



Jordan McVicar
Chairperson

Account Executive
OMD New Zealand



Travanna Graham
Deputy Chair

Media Planner Buyer
MBM



Freya Drawbridge
Council Member

Senior Account Manager
FCB Aotearoa



Emma Tansley
Council Member

Account Executive
VML



Rosie Bea Stoddart
Council Member

Business Executive
Special Wellington

The 2026 Strategy

This year, we're helping our fellow young advertising colleagues through a strategy built on four pillars:

1. Connection

We want to create a space for people to form genuine friendships and professional connections.

2. Advocate

We want to stand up for the voices of the next generation of advertising.

3. Support

Where possible, we want to be the ones holding the door open to connect First Five Rungs folk with new opportunities.

4. Available

We're here to make you feel supported and seen. Where possible, we intend to be the empathetic support you need - whether that's catching up in person for a yarn or sliding into your DMs.

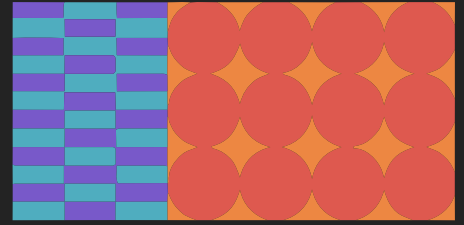


Upcoming Events

First off the rank is our annual Pong Tournament, postponed at the end of last year to give everyone some breathing room with a lot of change consuming the industry, we are back and ready to kick things off with our most popular event of the year. Join us at **NZME at 5:30pm** (6pm kick off) on **Thursday 19 March** for some post-Young Lions hangs. Have a hit on the pong tables or just kick back and catch up with industry mates. Keen to play but don't have a team? No worries, there are plenty of inter-agency teams you can join, or we can nominate one for you.

Following the Pong Tournament, we'll be hosting the first in our series of **Coffee Mornings** - an opportunity for you to meet and greet others who struggle to explain what they do for work to their parents. If you've ever felt alone in your field, this is the opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and meet like-minded friends who understand your day-to-day chaos.

Some other events on our radar this year involve Thought Leadership (No prizes for guessing there will be something about AI), A Beacons event: Didn't get a seat on the Agency table? No worries, most of us don't! Come along and enjoy the company of the rest of the FFR cohort! And last but not least, the highly anticipated annual Agency Quiz.



Introducing Comms Council Labs

Your first five years shape everything. You're learning how agencies work, how clients think, how your role fits into the bigger picture.

Comms Council Labs sets you up with a strong foundation – you'll understand not just what to do, but why it matters.

Every course is built by people who've actually done the work. No lectures, no slides. Instead, you get immersive, discussion-led learning that combines theory with real agency challenges. You'll do it alongside peers across the industry, building networks that extend beyond your agency walls.

When you finish, you'll get industry-endorsed accreditation – a tangible milestone that signals to clients, your agency, and every opportunity next that you're serious about your development.

Start shaping your career now. Enrol in a course. Build your networks. Earn your credentials.

Learn more and register here: <https://commscouncil.nz/training/>

Let's go!

Opportunities Out There

Young Lions

For creatives and media peeps, the Young Lions competition is a rite of passage. The challenge involves working in teams of two to either create a 60-second film or a compelling media strategy deck. It's an intense few days of madness and creativity, with the prize being the chance to represent Aotearoa on the world-stage at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity. Just imagine the crisp rosé and beach soirées to keep you motivated.

Registrations close **today**, February 13th so if you haven't already signed up, get to it!

AWARD School

If you're wanting to change direction in your career, or strengthen your creative resolve, AWARD School could be just what you need. Upon completion, you'll leave with sharper thinking, a body of work that reflects how you think, and a clearer sense of where your creativity can take you next. Applications close on February 19th, so get onto it if you're keen.

Protostars



Calling 18-25 year olds! Got a passion project and no way to fund it? Cool. Sounds like you could use \$1000 towards bringing that project to life. Simply apply with a snappy 90-second pitch video demonstrating what your project is all about, and you could win a \$1000 cash prize + access to an 8-week mentorship program. Applications close March 1st, so don't overthink, just apply!

Mind Expansion

Here's what the FFR crew have been a bit kinda maybe obsessed with lately:



Sarah ♥️'s The WARC Podcast

Want to get ahead of the water cooler chats? Tune in to the WARC pod for advertising insights that are crispier than your office's crispiest sparkling flavoured water (La Croix Mango  )



Crystal ♥️'s Your Attn Please

If you're into a slow start to the morning, sign up to the Your Attn Please newsletter. Enjoy your oat flat white as you get the pulse on everything happening in the amazing world of ad-land.



Lily ♥️'s Overthink

Packed to the brim with fresh takes on everyone's fave philosophical quandaries, the Overthink podcast is a fab listen for podcast fans who favour an engaging escape from the hustle.



Vinny ♥️'s The Social Juice

Smash the MF-ing subscribe button on this daily newsletter, where you'll find a cheeky scroll-through slingshots you through an intergalactic speedway of the most interesting headlines you've ever seen in your whole life.