

# Partnerships overcome industry flux

By  Danette Breitenbach

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No Grand Prix was awarded at #APEX2016. This reflects the current state of flux that the advertising and marketing industries are finding themselves in.



Image © Hush Naidoo.

However, despite the tough conditions, agencies Joe Public, NATIVE VML, DDB South Africa, FCB and Ogilvy Cape Town all took some metal home.

Joe Public was the most successful agency of the evening, winning two silvers and a bronze as well as a special award from the APEX awards jury: “The most successful submission for non-profit or charity organisation or cause”, sponsored by Alexander Forbes, for its client the Centre for Communication Impact, for the campaign Brothers for Life Medical Male.

It was also the only agency to be awarded in the SABC Sustain category, taking a bronze collaboration with Mediology and a silver for its client Nedbank for its Nedbank Savvy campaign. Group executive: group marketing, communications & corporate affairs at Nedbank Limited, Thulani Sibeko, was thrilled with the Awards. “We love creativity but what matters is results, and the APEX Awards confirms work that is not only well received or creativity reasons, but moved people to act and chose the brand.”

This achievement, he adds, demonstrates what happens when an agency and client have a good relationship. “The

relationship between agency and client should be one that celebrates business knowledge and creative excellence.”

Adding to this, Laurent Marty, Joe Public’s chief strategic officer, says the Awards are a recognition that the agency is on the right track. “A few years ago, we held a workshop to determine why we are in business. Our conclusion was that we are in business to collectively grow brands on which we work. However, it is one thing to state this on paper and another to deliver on it. Awards such as the APEX awards are important for us because it shows us that we are walking the talk.”

This was a tough jury, he adds, so passing their test is really rewarding. He also emphasised the importance of partnerships between clients and agencies in achieving success.

DDB SA also received a special award: “For the entry that demonstrates the most ingenious response to limited advertising or research funds”, sponsored by Millward Brown, for its ‘the better Gift Challenge’ campaign for client the South African National Blood Service (SANBS). The campaign also won a bronze APEX in the Unilever Change category.

## **Faith and the courage to do something different**

“The SANBS is all about saving lives and I am grateful that DDB SA understands our reason for existence. I want to thank the agency for a great partnership, which I believe is the key to great work,” says Trevor Vroom, SANBS chief executive officer.

This kind of award is only possible when a client has faith in the agency and the courage to do something different says Gerhard Sagat, director of strategy at DDB South Africa. “The riskiest period for the SANBS is over Christmas, as this is when their stocks are the lowest. They agreed to change their strategy and direction and it worked, with the supply exceeding demand. This was the first time they did not have a shortage over this period.

The Unilever Change category saw Bronze APEX Awards going to FCB Cape Town and J Walter Thompson (JWT) Cape Town, with NATIVE VML and Joe Public Ignite taking silvers.

NATIVE VML CEO Jason Xenopoulos is thrilled with the agency’s performance. “This Award comes on the back of an amazing Cannes experience, where we were awarded a gold, silver and Bronze Lion. Now, to be able to bring home an award that rewards effectiveness is most gratifying. For me, it emphasises the fact that creativity leads to more effective work.”

## **Partnering for success**

He points out that what makes the hard work so worthwhile is having a client you can truly partner with. “Both the Pernod Ricard SA team and the Absolut team were the type of partners who allow you to do the kind of work that is really inspirational.”

The only agency to be awarded in the SABC Launch category Ogilvy Cape Town was a silver Apex to Ogilvy Cape Town, for its One-up!ping the competition for Volkswagen South Africa.

The biggest thing that this year’s entries highlighted is the flux of the industry, says chairperson of the APEX awards Jury 2016, Co-Currency CEO Ivan Mroke. “The industry is in flux, that much is clear. Agencies are trying to do as much as they can, but not only are budgets tight, so is the time to create. Agencies are not getting enough time upfront to construct and invest before campaigns are being designed and the result is that we are seeing a more tactical approach.”

The number of entries as opposed to the number of entries shortlisted and ones that eventually won was too low, he adds. “The conversion rate needs to be higher and it is something we will address this in the APEX workshops next year.”

## **Transformation: No longer a swear word**

Moroke also addressed the issue of transformation in the industry, saying that transformation has moved beyond a swear word. “Diversity and fresh blood works. If you are surrounding yourself with people just like you, you will not produce good work. Transformation is not an ethical issue; it is a logical business imperative.”

In line with the APEX awards, the ACA also gave out eight bursaries. This brings the number of bursaries awarded by the APEX awards to 60 since 2010. Four AAA students in Johannesburg and four at the AAA in Cape Town were awarded bursaries.

ACA CEO, Odette van der Haar, says the APEX awards are a statement of credibility and a symbol of business efficiency. “Standard is very high. Marketers and advertisers are under pressure to produce Return on Investment (ROI).”

Elouise Kelly, head of marketing SABC adds to this, saying that says the APEX awards are about results and measuring these. “It is this that makes the SABC sponsorship of APEX a match made in heaven.”

This was the 21st APEX awards. Hosted by the Association for Communication Advertising (ACA), the APEX awards took place at The Forum on The Campus, in Bryanston, Johannesburg last night.

[Click here](#) for the complete list of winners.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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