

#BehindtheSelfie with... Paul Raphaely

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with technophobe – yes, really – Paul Raphaely, director at NOMU...

By [Leigh Andrews](#) 1 Mar 2017



Raphaely assisting in the most important job at the office – taste testing!

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Raphaely: I live in Newlands/Mordor, I work next to an airport and I play with dolphins, waves and big, conspicuous chunk of sandstone.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Raphaely: I have been known to sell some above-average hot chocolate, and I have a solid repertoire of bawdy Mexican & Scottish jokes...

3. Describe your career so far.

Raphaely: Muddled. A largely accidental degree in international relations and political philosophy that sort of fell into my first job in advertising, which involved a conspicuous amount of liquor brands. This then mutated into brand management of me of those same liquor brands, which then morphed into a jumped-up, upstart food brand.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Raphaely: Terry Pratchett, Ian Banks, happy children, happy wife, sea view, Guinness and any Irish Rugby victory. Not complicated.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Raphaely: If you don't mind bandits and rustlers from time to time, the best part might be that the local food industry has a sort of 'frontier town', wide, open prairie feel to it. It's the Wild West and almost every day is likely to produce something new. It's never dull.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Raphaely: I'm not sure that it does. Ideally, before anything else happens, I indulge myself with a nice, long, quiet run and a huge cup of coffee. From then, my day can range from checking store shelves all across the country, to dealing with our various export markets, to personally handling consumer queries and contact mails, to being asked for an opinion about a new product design. I spend a lot more time focusing on actual physical distribution and sales now, though. NOMU is pretty all-encompassing; messy, and delightful.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

Raphaely: Reliable internet connection, social media, radio and an army of well trained in-store promoters. And running shoes. They help.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Raphaely: Tough one. We love what's happening in the artisanal and craft space but there will always be concerns about scalability of these smaller brand outfits. It's hard enough to meaningfully succeed in this space in most international markets, but for all the genius and innovation we see in this space here in SA, I do often wonder if there is really a big enough market for all the cleverness that's on offer. It's a very small pond and not a lot to go around.

For credit where it's due, all the major retailers have been doing some great work in developing really very clever and innovative answers to drawing in more customers, depending on their specific customer set. I think some very astute stuff being done here but it's often overshadowed by other more practical issues like food prices.

That said, I am always very proud of what we have achieved on NOMU, which has mostly been on a shoestring and without any external investment.

9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

Raphaely: Legislatively, there is still a lot that needs to be done to free up smaller, emerging businesses at the SME stage. Over-regulation serves a purpose but I believe it could be discouraging a lot of smart people from pursuing new ideas. Aside from that, I think everyone could afford to spend some time really interrogating what it means to provide real 'customer care' in a connected world where customers, very definitely, simply want to be heard.

10. What are you working on right now?

Raphaely: In terms of new products that would be telling, but I can promise you it's delicious. On our marketing side, we are focusing very heavily already on creating a whole thread of festive and Christmas 2017 material, which we are very excited about. We are also spending a lot of time trying to identify and place the brand into more direct but unusual places, away from traditional or conventional media. This is a fun and loose space to play, where we are often going to unsuspecting people and presenting ideas about how we can work with them to help them, while they help us get the word out. We call this sort of guerrilla-style, alliance brand-building work 'elevation by association.'

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Raphaely: 'Organic,' 'free-from,' 'sugar is the new cancer,' 'vertical integration.' That sort of thing...

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Raphaely: Running or paddling. Always in the same stretch of road or sea, oddly.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Raphaely: My Mexican accent is bullet-proof.

14. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Raphaely: Too many pictures of my family, and a few of my dogs, and far, far too many of bad shelf merchandising.

15. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack it as entrepreneurs?

Raphaely: Specifically? I'd say 'Don't go into food – you have been duly warned.' Generally, I would then add 'Are you really sure about this?' And if those two failed, I would say; 'Never mind manoeuvres! Go straight at them!'... but that comes from Lord Nelson, and so technically I'd be plagiarising, even if it's good advice.

Simple as that. Be sure to follow both [Raphaely](#) himself and [NOMU](#) on Twitter.

**Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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