

Ad industry rightfully frustrated with transformation targets

South Africa's still largely white advertising industry would be doing itself a favour by changing or just even supplementing the way in which it reports transformation progress. Because, the way things are now, it looks as though very little is happening.

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#) 13 Mar 2009

Pure statistical evidence alone does not reflect what the industry has achieved and just creates the perception that white men are hanging on to power for all they are worth and are, at best, paying lip service to the notion of transformation.

Reality

In reality, however, the ad industry has done quite a lot. But it's frustrated by the fact that, in most cases, no sooner has it trained black staff, then its clients simply steal them from under its noses.

And let's face it, in this day and age, where blood is flowing down Advertising Avenue, very few ad agency MDs are going to remonstrate with their clients for nicking their staff.

This has been a problem since before the parliamentary hearings into allegations of racism in the ad industry in 2002.

Industry charter

The industry was lambasted at those hearings for lagging behind in terms of transformation. A few years later, Parliament seemed to be pleased with the measures the ad industry had devised and everyone cheered when the then Minister in the Presidency, Essop Pahad, unveiled an industry charter.

But right now, nothing much has changed, because the statistics do not show the reality.

I believe it would be fair on all concerned if the ad industry could add to its actual transformation data the number of black who have been brought into agencies, trained and who then left either by being enticed away by clients or big business in general.

Richer pickings

These days, it is a fallacy that people employed in advertising make a lot of money. Sure, shareholders do, but probably a less so than in the good times, but a good black creative, strategist or client service executive will find richer pickings outside the industry.

It is time that transformation was put in perspective.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdyk@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).
View my profile and articles...