

07: To converge or not to converge

To converge or not to converge was the topic under discussion at the seventh [Thought Leadership Digibate](#), recently hosted by [Aegis Media](#) in conjunction with [Bizcommunity.com](#) in Cape Town. The insights shared by the panel highlighted current industry trends in the South African marketplace.



Panel of experts

The panel of experts that was moderated by [Dawn Rowlands](#), CEO of Aegis Media Sub-Saharan Africa, included

- [Nic van den Bergh](#), trading director, [Aegis Media SSA](#)
- [Jono Swanepoel](#), executive creative & strategic director, [LeftField](#)
- [Craig Page-Lee](#), managing director, [Posterscope](#)
- [Awie Erasmus](#), account director, [Ogilvy](#)
- [Dave Bester](#), CEO, [Bester Burke](#).

The definition of 'convergence' in the media marketing sector is actually very straight forward. It is taking on a holistic approach when strategizing a client's requirements and combining the use of traditional and new media channels in the plan. Historically many agencies have specialized in either traditional or new media and have not really had to take on an integrated approach. The shift has obviously come with its own set of challenges.

Smaller agencies have tended to be more dynamic in their integrated service offering and are really taking on the big boys who are a little slower in adapting to the change. The larger agencies often counteract the "threat" by buying out their smaller competitors. Not only must everyone within a creative agency get up to speed with the ever evolving technologies that form part of an integrated approach, but they need to really delve deep into understanding what it is that the client wants and take the time to research what is needed from both a business and a creative perspective.

Systematic roll-out

The process of integration has a systematic roll-out:

1. Understand the client's business objectives are first by truly understanding their business and their goals,
2. Formulate the big idea and
3. Decide from there how creatively this process will be executed by utilizing all the media channels.

What is currently being seen in the industry is creative's coming up with the big idea and then trying to figure out how to execute it. However what is being noted globally is that the big idea comes second and the business goals first as the brand consumers and clients are moving at such a fast pace and almost pre-determining where the brand goes.

Media today also often influences what the big idea will be. There has been a major shift by media owners and agencies who are now working much closer together and often this relationship will allow for the big idea to flow and then by working together the execution will be developed to work with the brand to achieve their business goals.

Digital strategists are now very often leading the creative process with an almost complete convergence internally at agencies between the above, below and digital departments into a single department. Convergence within the teams is backing up the converged approach to marketing.

Consume, create and share content

Interestingly enough, and a great positive, is that in Africa, the Out of Home segment is now almost leading the creative pack as more and more people are spending more than 50% of their time out of their homes and offices and have access to so much more than just a billboard. Consumers have the ability to consume, create and share content like never before with the ever changing mobile landscape and the communications and content being put out by brands is content driving, thus allowing consumers to generate their own content and push others towards your brand. So often the agency merely creates the initial engagement and conversations.

Are agencies actually doing enough to take on a truly convergent approach?

Often the consumer gets to the shop front and then the engagement stops. What is happening in this space to get consumers to buy your product? Surely you can't just let them see a billboard and hope for the best? Creative agencies have to create a journey called the Golden Mile, which starts with the billboard, and then when they enter the mall, the brand messaging is on the parking garage booms. The re-informed messaging has to be sustained all the way into the mall and into the store. Once the consumer is in the store, communication has to continue all the way to the till point.

To conclude, creative agencies need to have integrated departments, with experienced creative professionals across traditional and digital disciplines. The campaign strategy has to be based on deep client understanding of their business and marketing objectives and needs to create a sustained and holistic consumer experience across all platforms from the ignition from viewing a billboard to signing the credit card slip on purchase.

The debate was held on Friday, 3 August 2012.

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The Thought Leader Digibates are held monthly and include a panel of leading media-marketing experts who will discuss, debate and share their knowledge - gleaned over years of experience - with a wider audience. The official Twitter hashtag [#aegisTL](#).



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