

Addressing the 'marketing messaging mess'

By  Sindy Peters

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One of the first speakers at this year's IMC Conference in Cape Town was Gary Leih, founding director and CEO of OFYT. Leih took attendees through the history of integration in marketing and lessons the industry can learn from the past.

Starting in the '50s with copywriting being just about the be-all and end-all of advertising, Leih went through how the different mediums, while initially treated as separate entities, came to coexist under one roof. At this point in time in the advertising-scape, interactive, TV, copywriting and art direction have all been embraced in the same fold. However, yet to be welcomed whole-heartedly is digital and mobile marketing.



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According to Leih, agencies in SA are falling over themselves to hire digital talent, while digital agencies are looking to get into bed with above-the-line agencies. While the issue of the 'digital divide' has largely been resolved in Europe, South Africa is still working on bridging that gap. The same applies to mobile - Leih forecasts that independent mobile agencies will eventually be forced to join the others and fall in with the rest of the fold.

Creative, media strategy disconnect

Addressing this "marketing messaging mess", Leih highlighted another area he found wanting - the holding companies splitting creative and media strategy divisions in order to list them separately and make a lot of money.

According to Leih, this has resulted in two-and-a-half generations of people who either have creative experience only or media experience only, and the disconnect really shows, he says.

But things are changing abroad, says Leih, and in-house media strategists, particularly in London, are now one of the most sought-after employees, as agencies are rehiring from the media pool realising they can't handle media at arms-length.

Leih believes thinking rationally will help South Africa get ahead of the curve. Here are his "common sense" solutions for the current "marketing messaging mess": "You cannot properly integrate your messaging until you properly integrate yourselves," and "You can't expect integrated communication solutions from un-integrated partnerships," says Leih.



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Leih went on to provide three steps to pain-free communication:

Insights: Research must be used to unearth insights in order to develop a creative idea that maximises the leverage that the insight gives the brand: "When work is based on an insight, and it is well executed as a great idea, it has enormous power," explains Leih.

An idea: You need a great idea based on a great insight, says Leih: "Really great advertising is not only watched, but is liked, is shared, is pushed around the world in five minutes."

A cunning media mix: Part of the last step is involving a media strategist: "The job of the media strategist is becoming so important today because of the myriad options, because of the kind of complexity of reaching this audience that's inundated with all these things they're not interested in," explained Leih.

He concluded by suggesting that grouping together, putting the idea at the centre and using the three steps to pain-free communication will help in gaining competitive advantage over most advertisers in SA right now.

"Given you've got the insight, given you've got the idea, this is going to become more and more important and indeed, I think, is going to become the cutting edge for the next couple of years," said Leih.

The 2014 IMC Conference is currently underway at the Cape Town International Convention Centre from 9-10 June 2014.

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