

Canvassing the Creative Counsel

 By Leigh Andrews

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The Creative Counsel, ranked by AdReview in 2014 as the largest marketing, media and advertising group in South Africa, shares insight into the impact of their [acquisition by Publicis](#) and so much more...

This year, they're a finalist for South African of the Year: ANN7 Entrepreneur, as well as EY Southern Africa World Entrepreneur Award, and have already clinched the title as overall winner of 2015 Sanlam/Business Partners Entrepreneur of the Year®, along with 2014 CNBC All Africa Business Leader Awards (AABLA) Young Business Leader for overall Africa as well as southern Africa.

They've also won the account for Rainbow Chickens, FNB, WeChat and Order In. Who am I talking about? The Creative Counsel (TCC), of course.



Ran Neu-Ner and Gil Oved - group co-CEOs of The Creative Counsel

Gil Oved, co-CEO of The Creative Counsel, gives us some insight into how the agency got started, what it stands for and its plans for African expansion...

■ 1. *When and how did the agency get started?*

Oved: The agency was founded in 2001 as a promotions company, but has evolved into a group of companies focused on sales and marketing solutions. This makes TCC South Africa's largest advertising agency group by turnover and head count, a first for a so-called non-traditional advertising agency. The word 'counsel' represents partnership, and that's how we see ourselves regards our relationship with our clients. Through 'counsel' we share empathy, which when coupled with creativity, solves any problem. Together with our clients, we make magic happen. We also love the play on 'council', where a group of individuals align on a single goal and collaborate to achieve results.

■ 2. *Tell us about the true impact of your recent acquisition by Publicis...*

Oved: The Creative Counsel was recently bought by Publicis Groupe. Becoming part of Publicis enables TCC to scale its offering and unique blend of conceptual and executional abilities globally. Publicis is represented in over 30 countries in Africa and by implication, we are therefore now able to start offering our services across the continent. Publicis brings along a multi-talented network of agencies to tap into and share best practices. Publicis Worldwide are the masters of

merging digital, creative, strategy and new age thinking and we are excited by what we will achieve together.

In fact, the Publicis deal and all the promise of growth and better processes and systems and a single-minded focus on the ultimate consumer counts as our overall agency highlight.

■ 3. *What's the basic work flow or creative process in the agency?*

Oved: Our creative process is difficult to describe because at TCC it is truly dynamic; constantly adapting to the changing needs of our clients. If we had to describe it based on the pieces that stay somewhat constant, it would probably look something like this:

- **Do nothing!**

We believe that diving straight into a brief is often the wrong approach. Sample-of-one research findings, suppositions, conspiracy theories and personal experiences can all add value when creating great work, but aren't ever a great starting point. Day one is not about thinking - it is about watching, listening, forgetting what you think you know and taking in what is actually happening. Whether that involves walking the aisles of 15 different stores, getting braids done at a local salon or just people-watching at the mall - it doesn't matter, as long as you "do nothing".

- **Mix it all together**

Sleep on what you saw, heard, learned or experienced... In the morning, mix it with everything you thought you knew and find a point of truth, a solution or a major disconnect.

- **What medium?**

At TCC the big idea is king; we believe in providing our clients with solutions to their problems and not just filling empty spaces on their chase lists.

- **Make ideas that happen!**

Move at lightning speed to create, craft and execute the right solution for the real problem. It is all about work that works before it is about work that wins - we aren't saying you can't have both, but it does matter where you start... Every day our creative process changes, adapts or evolves a little because every day our clients and their consumers do the same.

We believe in pushing boundaries in our creative execution of ideas and our work has to create value for the clients. We don't seek creativity for creativity's sake but rather seek creative solutions for return on investment's sake. We love the non-traditional. We love new disruptive technology-based solutions. Direct engagement, one-on-one conversations with consumers and we love Africa.



The TCC graze space

■ 4. Let's talk about the state of the local advertising awards industry...

Oved: It's disappointing. There's a lack of willingness to take risk on both the client and agency side. Clients are generally scared to try anything new and agencies indulge them with the resultant mediocre work. Our poor showing at Cannes is testament to this. Our time to think differently is now and we do not need a lot of money to do great work.

■ 5. What's next for the agency?

Oved: Africa is our focus. It's clear that promotions, activation and brand experience are critical elements in the brand communication mix in Africa, and our due diligence across the continent showed that there is no broad-based organisation of any consequence cohesively supporting clients in these disciplines. There is a real need for a sophisticated, reliable, multi-national operation that will meet clients' needs, and we believe firmly that bringing TCC into Publicis Africa Group will meet that need.

■ 6. What trends do you see as the biggest still to come in 2015?

Oved: Mobile will continue to grow on the continent. Smartphone prices will continue to decline and become accessible to all. That, coupled with the fact that data prices are plummeting, means that advertisers have entirely new ways to engage consumers on a very real, personal, specific, targeted level.

Products like M-Pesa and Uber will continue to disrupt industries, which will bring opportunities and threats to advertisers and the companies that service them. It's a brave new world. Not for the faint-hearted.

TCC certainly has what it takes to meet the challenge. [Click here](#) for more on The Creative Counsel, and [here to follow their Twitter feed](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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