

Chicken Licken CEO flies off as inaugural Marketer of the Year

The founder and CEO of Chicken Licken, George Sombonos, was crowned Creative Circle's Marketer of the Year at this week's *Financial Mail Adfocus Awards*. This award was introduced for the first time this year and is designed to honour the person who singularly reflects the qualities creative directors yearn for in their clients.



George Sombonos, founder and CEO of Chicken Licken

Sombonos is all things to Chicken Licken, including the marketing director. He has no formal training in marketing and relies on his intuition, which so far hasn't failed him. What started out, 26 years ago, as a nickel and dime chicken outlet among township dwellers in Soweto, is now the largest fried chicken franchise outside of the US, with 220 stores and many more on the way.

What makes Sombonos the perfect client? According to Net#work's Mike Schalit, his boldness in venturing down risky creative paths. "His demeanour is perceptive, he comes across as unassuming, genteel, modest and shy, but he is sharper than a meat cleaver."

Sombonos reckons there is a direct correlation between when his ads flight and an increase in sales. He puts this down to likeability of the ads which so far the Chicken Licken brand has managed to achieve. In July 2006, a commercial showing the Chicken Licken brand moving backwards 25 years, accompanied by the foot stomping beat of "Burnout" by Sipho Hotstix Mabuse, was voted the best-liked ad among its target market.

It is for this reason Sombonos says he listens to his ad agency the same way he listens to his doctor. Music to the ears of any creative director.