

Thoughts from creativity's Mount Olympus

 By [Luise Allemann](#)

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Attendees at this year's Design Indaba were treated to some seriously good insights from legendary creative director Marcello Serpa, who is probably best known for being the 'godfather' of the Havaianas flip flop brand.

This was achieved in large part due to his iconic work which has given the brand an energetic and colourful personality synonymous with Brazilian culture.



Marcello Serpa

Keep creativity simple...stupid!

Looking at what he's learnt during his 30 year career in advertising Marcello said a key thing was to remember to always keep it simple which has become a common theme running throughout his multiple award-winning campaigns.

"I learnt about the art of reduction when I lived in Germany for many years. Just as a chef reduces a sauce to concentrate its flavours; creatives need to distil everything down to its purest form - a simple phrase, thought, idea or benefit."

Citing a quote by renowned advertising commentator Dave Trott; "Complicated seems clever to stupid people!" Marcello added; "Simplicity is a necessity. We're living in an age of such varying scales of language, socio economic and cultural groupings that any form of message has to be immediate."

His other gems included:

- There are no 25 year old generals. A lot of young creative directors have no clue how to lead a creative team but if someone does a good job the next year he's a creative director. Great work should be rewarded with money not titles.
- Never work under someone who is not better than you. Work with people you admire and can learn from.
- Find a planning partner who actually loves advertising (he's been in partnership with strategic planner Jose Luiz Madeira since their agency AlmapBBDO's inception in 1991). A lot of planners (not all!) love PowerPoint presentations; they don't love the work. The outcome of good planning is excellent work, but some planners are so involved in the thinking that they lose perspective.
- Set up a team with the best people that money or motivation can 'buy'. This should also be a mixed team drawn from varying backgrounds with various areas of expertise. "You can't develop a campaign for a steakhouse if you are vegetarian."
- It's fun to work with crazy people. I always prefer to slow down the crazy guys who are a mess than push the nice ones. There needs to be a healthy 'tension' in the creative department.
- Hierarchy belongs in the bin!
- Everyone gets to work on steak and bones. Some jobs are the 'bones' that no one wants like retail or Point of Sale (POS), but some are the fillet mignon everyone wants - everyone should work on both to create a level playing field.
- It's important to distinguish between what's new and what's good. Not everything new is good and not everything

good is new. Good stuff will always be good not matter how long it has been around...anyone for a Coke?!

- Marketing intelligence is making advertising stupid. Sometimes a pipe is just a pipe but clients spend millions of dollars researching things only to end up using obvious common sense or a cliché.
- If every brand and their dog is doing something to save the planet then... who the *#\$@ is destroying it? Clients need to beware of hypocrisy. I always tell clients to stop talking and start doing when it comes to saving the planet.

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ABOUT LUISE ALLEMANN

Luise Allemann is a communications specialist with more than 20 years experience in the media and marketing industries including her time as a newspaper and magazine journalist and editor. She founded Medialnk Communications in 2004 with a primary focus on content generation with a subsequent specialisation in PR & social media and has worked with iconic South African brands such as FNB, MTN and Hollard Insurance and most recently @NelsenAfrica and @Sassda_sa.
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