

Cell C on breakthrough creative work

 By [Ann Nurock](#)

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There was a lot of controversy around Cell C's latest advertising campaign, Dog, and during Loeries Creative Week Durban, Ann Nurock spoke to Cell C's Executive Head: Marketing, Doug Mattheus, about the campaign and the why creatives need to start understanding how a business works.

Cell C ([@CellC](#)) had 14 finalists this year at the Loerie Awards, and won one gold, one silver and two bronze awards.

Nurock: What are you expecting to get out of the Loeries this year?

Mattheus: I think it's always nice to get your work recognised, we work very closely with the agency on a multitude of products, and we've been lucky enough to be nominated for 14 awards. We won something last night, so it's that recognition that drives not just the creative team but the backend as well. It's not only about awards but to get the recognition for our agency and for our team.



Nurock: How do you define great creativity?

Mattheus: I think it's got to breakthrough and move people either towards the brand or move kit, so if you look at our big piece of work this year, Dog, it's been controversial and has huge shock value. If you look at the first two weeks of comments were largely negative because we were shocked as South Africans, because it did cut through and it was quite avert, people said it was rude, uncouth and uncalled for, but that wasn't the message, it was a metaphor of people being taken advantage of.

If you look at the next few weeks the comments changed and they became positive, it had people saying "I don't want to pay for e-tolls" and "I don't want to pay for electricity when it doesn't work" and because we're in the cell phone game people eventually got the message and we got over 500,000 views on YouTube in a month.

Nurock: And the results...

Mattheus: I don't really like to talk about the causality of one particular thing and results because we do so many other things at the same time, so our results have been very good and very positive, we're ahead of budget in terms of numbers and money, but I can't say it's only because of Dog. Maybe it's because of our prepaid or service initiative and our staff are more motivated and in tune. Our philosophy has always been - you got to do a lot of stuff, we're in a business that's always on where people use cell phones every day, there's no off-day, there's no seasonality.

My philosophy is that it's like cricket - you're always one ball away from going out and every day you've got to score a run and keep the scoreboard ticking over, so from my point of view it's simple. I've said to the creative guys "you've got to produce, but don't produce art for the sake of creating art, you're a commercial artist." So understand that you've got to do something about cut through and breakthrough.

Nurock: It's been proven that great creativity produces brand growth, would you agree with this?

Mattheus: Absolutely! We're in a business that's highly commoditised, networks are networks, phones are phones. We've set ourselves the challenge, whether it's a brand positioning piece or a straight forward piece of retail, how do we compete in that space, what's so different about our retail. The challenge for the creative guys is always to find that little bit of a difference, and sometimes it's really tough in retail, there's a lot of sameness.

Nurock: What do you think are the greatest challenges facing agencies in terms of producing great creativity?

Mattheus: I think one of the biggest things that I've seen from a creative point of view is creative ego, creative guys finding out where they actually stand in the creative value chain. I've worked with great guys and others who I would prefer not to work with again because their ego got in the way of common sense. I think sometimes you can't just produce stuff just for the sake of it, there's a commercial reason why we do these things, if you don't understand the business you don't make an effort.

Creative guys sometimes have a funny hairstyle or dress funny, and they think that's an excuse to just be aloof and distant and that is gone, you can't just have the suit sorting out the business issues, and we're lucky now with FCB where we have guys who come to meetings and ask questions, they don't just come to doodle and draw stuff, and I don't say this flippantly, it's important to have this insight. When brand guys are arrogant and they come in and say "we're the brand custodians, we'll tell you how it works" you're on the road to disaster. I big thing for me is for creative guys to become more business savvy.

Nurock: What do you think are the greatest challenges facing marketers to buy great creativity?

Mattheus: I think the one thing for me is that marketers should take the lead on things they know about. I think sometimes a great way to produce great creativity is to have marketers that you trust and not being someone who tries to override it all the time, just because you're the guy with the business card.

Nurock: How do you think agencies can create better value for themselves in the future?

Mattheus: Through understanding business, you can't operate like an art school. Historically it was different in the 80s and 90s, you would expect ad guys to give you stuff. I talk to our guys every day, I have a status meeting on a Tuesday and a media meeting every Thursday. Media people need to understand that they can't just go and buy spots and tell me about rate cards, that's not what I'm asking them for, they need to understand what we're asking.

The biggest things with agencies is the creative guys getting into the business. If you don't know how the business is working, how do you expect to pitch something, you can't just come to a meeting with a piece of art.

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