

Water conservation - what's love got to do with it?

Justin Friedman, founder of For the Love of Water (FLOW), chaired and opened the keynote session on the second day of the 2017 African Utility Week. Unpacking the use of communication to drive lasting behaviour change and the philosophy behind this approach, Friedman briefly took delegates through the history of FLOW and how its simple messaging and strategy has been successful in the sphere of water conservation.

 By [Sindy Peters](#) 18 May 2017



Justin Friedman, founder of For the Love of Water (FLOW)

Driven by a passion for connecting people and planet, he was interested in the idea of encouraging people to work together, and water, he felt, was a unifying element that could help achieve this. "I just want us to consider that water could indeed be this ultimate connector, because after all, it's the ultimate leveller that reminds us that we are all indeed the same," he said.

Motivating behaviour change

In order to put his big idea into action in making the world a better place, he had to first understand behaviour change and what drives this. Friedman listed some of the key influences that motivate a change in behaviour including feelings, thoughts, emotions, beliefs and experiences.

"In terms of understanding behaviour, back in 2010 when I began, I knew why I wanted to do this and what I wanted to do, and at the same time I became curious as to what is that simple message we can deliver," he explained.

Collective action

And so For the Love of Water (FLOW) was born - a simple, highly accessible message - that has managed to bring brands, organisations, government and communities together in collectively working on water security. Using various communication tools, in its first month FLOW reached 11-million people across its different channels, said Friedman, achieved through a simple strategy of engagement by asking a question which leads to action, and finally acknowledgement through sharing on different platforms.

Friedman showcased two projects under the FLOW portfolio, one of which was the Genius of SPACE – Langrug Pilot Project in an informal settlement in Franschhoek. The project uses biomimicry principles in cleaning up the grey water, storm water, and solid waste challenges that the community face, and is also part of the Berg River Improvement Plan.

The project has been a success, explained Friedman, largely due to these core reasons:

- Co-design and social engagement – community participation was key.
- Evolving the community design – based on local knowledge – and making those designs more resilient.
- Understanding that the people are the infrastructure – the critical players in the project.

With the project having been hailed a success, FLOW has helped “clean the water, healing the community by working together”, concluded Friedman.

For more info on FLOW, go to www.flow.org.za. The 2017 African Utility Week took place at the CTICC Cape Town, 16-18 May. For more info, go to www.african-utility-week.com.

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