

If you love your brand so much, why not marry it?

According to the Harvard Business School, the future of advertising is all about getting attention. So, when Stefanus Nel decided to quit his job at an ad agency and go out on his own, he set about getting attention. And one of the bright ideas he came up with was what he called reverse shoplifting.

 By Chris Mberdyk 27 Jan 2010



And if that weren't enough, he intends getting married to his brand next month.

Here comes the logo

"I've got a venue, a caterer, a florist and even a light blue suit and the big day will be on Sunday 14 February (Valentine's Day). It will be small wedding but it will be shown live on the web on blabla.co.za.

"I started creating merchandise for my BLINK STEFANUS brand - t-shirts, bags, mugs. I didn't want to stick to one product but wanted my logo to be strong enough to be put on anything. I quickly realised how difficult it is to get a new brand into stores so I decided I'll make it easy. I came up with reverse shoplifting.

Sneaky snaps

"I sneaked Blink Stefanus t-shirts into department stores like Woollies, Edgars and Big Blue and simply hid it on their rails. I know that very few people would probably ever see these products but that where my blog came in. I would take photos and talk about what I did. This means many, many, more people knew about

The name of Nel's new agency comes from the Afrikaans saying "Blink Stefaans". Calling someone a Blink Stefaans means they're a show-off. Nel changed the Stefaans to Stefanus.

The next step was to get a logo. It was a head inside a helmet, which Nel believed was a funny visual launch pad.

The first phase of his ad campaign was to go around and tag inanimate objects. He created a [Facebook group](#) where people could upload their own photo and tag it with a Blink Stefanus logo that was made available as a downloadable file.

"I then started a blog called '[The most ambitious sticker in the world](#)'. The idea behind the blog was to update people on a daily basis of what I did today to make my brand famous.

More blogs in a blink

"Other bloggers started asking questions 'What is Blink Stefanus?' 'What does it mean?' Many of them asked for Blink Stefanus stickers and they started tagging objects in their cities or towns. Two young men Knysna tagged a shipwreck 12 metres under water. While another man tagged three police vans while the policemen were searching his house for dope."

Nel then realised the campaign had to go to the next level because people would soon lose interest in the tagging.

"I had to find that thing about my brand that makes it different to any other and I knew it had nothing to do with money.

"In 2007 I was lucky enough to win the Pendorring Prestige prize and I went to Droga5 in New York for three weeks. Droga5 is one of the top agencies in the world and they are famous for solving problems differently. I spent a whole day with David Droga and it changed my life. Advertising is so much more than TV, radio and print.

All about how

"I decided the thing that will make Blink Stefanus different is the way I advertise it. I wanted to stay away from traditional media. So it became not what I had to say but how I said it."

Nel started walking around constantly looking for new ways to advertise.

"One day I drove past a homeless man holding a board at a traffic light. I wondered how many cars drove past him every day and that the board he was holding was actually great advertising space. I stopped and asked him if I could buy ad space on his board. I like this idea because it creates jobs and empowers them. This stunt made it onto news24.com.

Marry me, lovely logo

"Each day my logo became a bigger part of my life. I really live my brand. I only wear Blink Stefanus t-shirt. I have over a 100 Blink Stefanus stickers in my wallet and extra ones in my car visor and under my car seat. I started wondering how many other businesses feel as strongly about their logo as I did. Not many. I wanted to find a way to show the world how much I like my logo and decided to marry it. "

For more, go to www.blinkstefanus.com.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).
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