BIZCOMMUNITY

Grey champions business in Africa

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While there is no doubt that both the image and reality of Africa has changed dramatically, and the reality of the continent's economic growth rate is constantly strengthening, there is still much fear which surrounds taking on new business territory in Africa.

You may have heard it all... from "It's unstable and unsafe" to "Be on your guard as the lions roam free everywhere." But as Karen Blixen famously said: "You know you are truly alive when you're living among lions," and there is one advertising network that's truly alive and living among lions, excited by the prospect of the vast opportunities which lie hidden in Africa.

Enter Grey, the award-winning advertising giant, which ranks among the world's top advertising and marketing organisations, serving one-fifth of the Fortune 500, in 96 countries. This year has been one of taking on unchartered African territory with the expanding Grey Africa Network set to acquire even more of a stake in the continent. This year alone, the group has partnered with like-minded agencies in Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Mauritius.

"We want to be known as that company which saw the green in every trap," says Peter Jackson, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) at Grey Africa. "We see there is a huge untapped potential in this amazing continent we are lucky to call home – from its people, to its vast natural resources, Africa is unmined, underestimated and misunderstood," he says.

The key to Africa's future is inexorably linked to its population growth, and there is no other economy poised for unprecedented development, workforce growth and with future business opportunities like Africa.

But growth is never achieved by mere chance; it's the result of forces working together.

As Grey Africa we believe that opportunity dances with those already on the floor, and we see it as a privilege to set up and closely work with partner agencies throughout the subcontinent, creating opportunities for its people as well as getting the opportunity to pioneer well-thought-out and, intelligent campaigns on a continent which doesn't get the recognition it deserves in the advertising world," he says.

In Africa, the rise of the digital natives has proven to be a game-changer in more ways than expected. Rather than play catch-up, as is often expected of us, we are leapfrogging, creating new vistas and new frontiers. A young, vibrant, self-propelled African youth, frontrunners tired of waiting for those non-existent government handouts now lead the way.

Which means that the African hustle is born, and it is here to stay. One just has to look at the recent Infomineo global research to see the marked increase in the number of Fortune 500 companies in Africa and the Middle East in 2016 compared to 2015, with Johannesburg and Dubai topping the list as most desirable business centres for global brands.

It goes without saying that brands that will succeed on the continent will be the ones that ‘get’ it. But how do you ‘get’ what is rapidly changing? The good old-fashioned way: with our ears to the ground and being available on the ground!

The recent past has clearly shown the ineffectiveness of those agency networks who have tried to ‘get’ Africa with a very strong centre, but only having an arm’s-length relationship with its partners on the continent. Grey believes in being hands-on and that investing in the network is the best investment it can make, because it not only believes in Africa’s future, but they want to help to shape it!

Believing that when nothing is sure, everything is possible, Grey’s strength lies within the network of local agencies who remain confidently optimistic and relevant to their markets, which is an invaluable asset that needs to be shared within industry.

We believe that regional partnerships remain the very cornerstone to African development, the way to create both local and regional value, and it’s up to us as Africans to create our own platforms to turn entrepreneurial aspirations into sustainable businesses that will help drive economic growth and job creation across Africa.

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Grey Africa

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