

Agencies of the future? Adapt, collaborate, or die

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In this fast-changing business scene, agencies looking to stand the test of time and remain relevant to the environment they operate in need to adapt quickly - and collaborate - or face sudden death. This was the argument presented by some of the speakers yesterday, Thursday, 21 October 2010, at [Tony Koenderman's Brainstorm](#) in Sandton, Johannesburg.

"We are obsessed with digital, but it is a fact that up to 70% of decisions are made at point of purchase," Ogilvy Johannesburg MD Julian Ribeiro said. "And how about the ever-increasing blurring of the lines between entertainment and advertising?" he asked.

Develop competencies in each discipline

He challenged agencies to evolve and adapt fast and start developing competencies in each discipline and developing profitable partnerships, stating that CRM, design, public relations, advertising, retail shopper marketing, activation, internal marketing and strategy must be seen as an ecosystem unit with biodiversity.

"Ensure that one discipline does not take precedence at the expense of another. And thanks to the digital revolution, public relations and CRM now have a prominent place at the table," he pointed out.

"There should be a symbiosis, ensuring that there is room for everyone at the table."

Fran Luckin, Ogilvy Joburg ECD, intervened: "Most of all, there should be an idea, a strong one, which is paramount. Forget who owns the idea. Idea and strategy are fundamental."

"Without an idea, you have nothing"

Luckin said while many things, including technology, have changed, human nature and fundamentals have stayed the same. "Without an idea, you have nothing," she insisted.

"It is also critical that you understand how customers make decisions about brands in your category and find the right idea about 16 degrees - kind of thinking carefully how to interact with them."

Ribeiro also urged agencies to make sure that fusion and collaboration (working together as a team) become part of their daily chores. "It doesn't matter where the idea comes from," he said.

SA consumers are tired of bad products and bad services, start exposing your company and give consumers a platform to talk to you, Ribeiro said, showcasing how the Cell C's 'CEO Trevor Noah' campaign has changed Cell C brand's reputation, mostly thanks to media and social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter) [*but for the better or for the worse, in which segments of the population? - managing ed*].

"Always learn"

In closing, Ribeiro said: "The agency is not dead but evolving. An agency of the future must be adaptive, fluid and responsive. Great insights lead to big ideas, always learn, and be collaborative."

Speaking about collaboration, Derek Carstens, FNB director of brands and 2010 Local Organising Committee CMO, said, "The question we have to ask ourselves in this country is: 'Are we collaborating enough?'"

Carstens said he was impressed by VWV, Combined Artists, Ogilvy, Worldwide Sports and Ministry of Illusion, among others, which worked in collaboration to make the 2010 FIFA World Cup a massive success.

"We have so much talent in this country, but are we harnessing that talent enough?" he said, urging agencies to not only collaborate locally but also internationally.

Power of PR

Furthermore, he pitied organisations that did not understand the power of public relations in the media.

"You should know how to work with the media," he said. "If these guys write something good about you, it will do wonders to your brand's reputation. The media is sometimes vitriolic, but be relentless with them with your news..."

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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