

Net#work's Brad Reilly on the multiple award-winning Vagina Varsity campaign

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Net#work BBDO's Vagina Varsity campaign for Libresse recently received its 14th award at the Epica Awards in the 'Health, Beauty and Fashion Digital Campaigns' category, and was the only South African campaign to be awarded at the prize giving ceremony in Berlin on 16 November.

What makes these Awards special is that they're judged by non-partisan journalists working in the marketing and advertising industries from all over the world, says Brad Reilly, ECD at Net#work BBDO. "We were the only South African agency awarded, and its further validation that brave and honest work pays off. There is simply no substitute for effectiveness and creativity... Like Libresse, we had to make sure that our campaign is fearless and daring, in a space that's traditionally very quiet and discreet."

Here, Reilly talks vaginas, vaginas, vaginas and execution, execution, execution...

■ ***Congratulations on the win! What does this recognition mean to you and for the agency, especially being the only South African agency awarded?***

It's always great to get recognition for our work, but even more so when it's for work that is making a real difference in people's lives. This particular award is judged by a panel of non-partisan media and marketing journalists from around the world and the fact that it was the only piece of South African work awarded further reinforces our belief in the universal importance of this idea.

■ ***Comment on the success of the campaign, having now won 14 international awards!***

We believe that this campaign has been a groundbreaking one for the agency, the client, the category and, although we don't measure the success of our work solely on awards, the recognition it has received is most certainly encouraging.

“ We were exceptionally proud of this work and the impact it achieved before it was entered into awards, so the 14 cherries on the cake only serve to make it sweeter. ”

We're a campaign that speaks to women and girls in a new, real but entertaining

It's a campaign that spoke to women and girls in a very real but entertaining way. It felt like you were having a conversation with your friends, not with a brand. Our engagement strategy was also built on a strategy of empathy – the fact that we used e-mail as our key distribution channel so that the sensitive content could be engaged with in a safe, private space definitely set it apart.



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Brad Reilly

Comment on your work for Libresse and what inspired the direction?

The brand had recently undergone a global name change to Libresse, so it had very little equity in the market.

This was our first brief, a brief for pantyliners, a product that is meant to be used every day. And we had a very humble budget. So, we ambitiously set out to use this first brief as an opportunity to inject some purpose into the brand beyond product, but tapped into the 'everyday use' of the product to inform the platform, and ended up tasking ourselves with talking about vaginas every day.

The result was a 30-day course in everything vagina: dispelling harmful myths, busting taboos and candidly discussing this relatively misunderstood part of a woman's physiology. We worked with YouTube creators Pap Culture to create the content and ByDesign Communications to amplify it. The results of that small budget were astounding and I believe that is thanks to the team tackling very real issues in a highly creative way.



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What other campaigns are you particularly proud of and why?

I am particularly proud of the work we have done for Mercedes-Benz to celebrate the 50th anniversary of AMG, in which we created a bank of 'UGC' content featuring various AMGs and people mimicking the distinctive growl of the V8 engine – the most famous being a traffic cop who pulled over an AMG driver. These videos did not come from the brand, they had next to nothing in terms of media investment, yet they received millions of views, thousands of shares and the comments kept coming. Despite being completely unbranded, what I loved was the spontaneous linkage and celebration of the brand within social. It's what we had hoped for, but it was thrilling nonetheless.

■ **What do you think makes an award-winning digital campaign?**

First and foremost, a great idea built on a solid insight. Then, it's execution, execution, execution. It's about more than the crafting of the content though. Unfortunately, good content is not enough anymore. Award-winning digital campaigns need results.

“ *What has become disproportionately integral to the success of a campaign is the distribution strategy and the ability to execute and optimise that strategy.* ”

For example, the Mercedes-Benz campaign cited above owes its largely organic success to careful selection of the correct pages on which to seed the individual videos and when to do it; it wasn't simply a case of 'post and pray'.

■ **What's next?**

Hopefully a holiday.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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