

Tips to transition from traditional to digital agency

 By Leigh Andrews

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Evan Milton of Ogilvy SA kicked off last week's Digital Agency Showcase with insights into what it means to be an advertising agency in these digital, connected times and shared the power of co-authoring brave work with brands.

“Brands matter. They always have and always will. It's an old idea but how we execute and achieve it in a modern digital world is what we need to get right.” - [@evnm](#), Head of digital strategy from [@ogilvyusa](#) talks about how their work is changing the world. [#digitalagencyshowcase pic.twitter.com/czQgJlqjYG](#)— Red & Yellow School (@RedAndYellowEd) [October 25, 2018](#)

Last week, Red & Yellow held its first ever Digital Agency Showcase, featuring hour-long presentations from six of the top SA digital agencies, according to this year's IAB Bookmark Awards. The first session of last week's #DigitalAgencyShowcase, hosted at Red & Yellow School, featured a presentation by Ogilvy.

Highlighting their strong student support, seats were reserved at the front of the room for alumni.

Chairman Rob Stokes explaining that a few of their good students simply stopped coming to class a while ago, as the MyCiti bus strike meant they had to opt for more costly transport, which quickly ate up their cash – they literally couldn't afford to come to school.

Stokes calls this a 'ridiculous reason' to not be able to learn.

So despite the school's social promise that 10% of students won't pay to study there, and the fact that almost 20% of their students currently do study for free, Stokes added that it's not just the cost of the courses to consider, as learning materials, food and accommodation are also off-putting factors to some students.



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The thought of having so many bright young minds held back by such unnecessary factors just wasn't good enough, so Red & Yellow School created their monthly 'bursary lottery' scheme.

Stokes said they "sell over-priced boerewors rolls to themselves as part of their monthly meeting", but not everyone eats boerewors rolls – and there's a limit to how many you can eat, especially as Red & Yellow only has about 50 members of staff.

The Red & Yellow-Ogilvy link

So while attendance at the Digital Agency Showcase was free, it was also a way to up their funds, as 10% of all profits from food and drink sold on the day was also donated towards the bursary fund. Free seats on Red & Yellow courses were also given away to attendees throughout the day.

Housekeeping sorted, Stokes then introduced current IAB CEO Paula Hulley, as one of their most special alumni, as one of 9 copywriters from their class of 1995, as she remains so enthusiastic about the industry and spreads that to those she talks to.

"Hulley shared that when she asked founder Brian Searle-Tripp back then, 'What's that job where you pitch the work?' He responded, 'That's a suit, get out of my office.' Enough said!"



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Hulley said partnerships and events like the Digital Agency Showcase help the IAB support their global initiative to empower the media and marketing industry to thrive in the digital economy.

Stokes shared that over two decades ago, the founders of Ogilvy SA set up the Red and Yellow School – then known as the 'Red & Yellow School of Magic and Logic', it was recently rebranded as the 'Red & Yellow Creative School of Business'.

It officially opened its doors in January 1994 and has since birthed much of the industry. Fittingly, the first speaker of the Digital Agency Showcase was alumnus Evan Milton, now head of digital strategy as well as data analytics at Ogilvy, who spoke of the agency's transition from "just a traditional agency" to the digital agency of today.



Red & Yellow becomes South Africa's first Creative School of Business

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Considering Ogilvy's global presence, Milton has worked on some of the biggest brands in the business and showed some of the agency's global and local work. This is all underpinned by the aim to clarify, unify and simplify, so that customers have better experiences and engagement across every channel.

Being an agency in a digital, connected time

The Ogilvy mantra is to make brands matter, but this can only be done if we understand that people matter. It's a very old

idea, but achieving it in a modern connected world needs constant focus.

To explain, Milton said digital strategy has been around for a long time, but incorporating data and analytics is relatively new for agencies.

“ *The concept of making brands matter also needs to be taken in context – making a brand matter for years takes strategy, while mattering each quarter means a focused approach to data and what makes customers tick.* ”

To illustrate this distinction, Milton said that mattering for years comes from an idea like the Dove real beauty platform. It's a global campaign, with local relevance



Dove Real Beauty Pledge includes South African in world campaign

6 Mar 2017



Milton said that mattering each quarter means work like the KFC football ad, aired during the recent Fifa World Cup, created by Ogilvy Cape Town and loved the world over.

It had in excess of 3.9bn impressions from across the globe by the end of the recent tournament. Milton said there's an interesting set of scale issues to consider when creative work like this goes viral.

Luckily, if properly understood, data analytics help agencies keep on top of trends and what matters to consumers.

Coauthoring brave work

Milton added that many speak of partnerships between agencies and clients. He said this form of coauthoring is the best way to go about work based on a bold idea, like the Carling Black Label campaign aimed at changing gender-based violence stats in a real way.

Tackling these issues in advertising lets politicians debate issues that should be covered in parliament, and it's a bonus that work like this also wins awards, as there's such an emotional connection.



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Speaking of awards, Milton shared that another fundamental principle they follow at Ogilvy is **the twin peaks of creativity and effectiveness**.

Ogilvy SA has brought home eight Loeries Grands Prix awards in eight years, and they're proud to have Ogilvy Cape Town ECD Tseliso Rangaka as new Loeries chairperson.



#Loeries2018: New Loeries chair, Tseliso Rangaka takes his seat

Leigh Andrews 17 Aug 2018



Milton said the aim should not be about being the best digital agency, instead, it should be about being the best agency in a digitally enabled world.

“ There have never been more ways to make your brand matter, with personalisation and scale just two ways of doing so. It's the newmass advertising. Work needs to be emotional and personal to resonate today. ”

Creating around culture

Cultural relevance is about listening in to find out what's important to a group of people at a specific time. You need to find the moments people relate to.

Milton says staying relevant is an interesting challenge, as everything keeps changing around us.

Milton ended with the reminder to have fun along the way, as that's often how you get consumers interested in a brand's solution to a common problem.

On creating cutting-edge work, Milton said often you need to convince a client to run a particularly brave idea, but once you've proven its success you have their support to create innovative work in future.

The true Ogilvy difference?

Milton says they don't just think of innovation as digital.

Technology definitely helps you get to the end point, but it's ultimately about thinking differently and creatively throughout the creative process.



#DigitalAgencyShowcase: The power of timing in creative ideas

Leigh Andrews 26 Oct 2018



Stokes concluded that they will definitely hold another showcase next year. Watch for more of my #DigitalAgencyShowcase coverage, and follow [Red & Yellow School](#), [Milton himself](#) and [Ogilvy SA](#) on Twitter for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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