

Utilising sports sponsorship to re-connect with consumers

 By [Gareth Marshall](#)

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As marketers, we're constantly looking for that 'sweet spot' to engage our consumers, but despite best efforts we know that consumers have a plethora of media at their disposal and attention is fragmented, or at best, minimal. My take on it? Get personal.



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By getting personal I mean really get to know your consumer. Better yet, give them an opportunity to change their life.

Too focused on awareness

As brands, we're guilty of being far too focused on awareness instead of building always-on conversations. We need to balance out our assets across interruption and seek out passion content. For instance, music is Africa's largest passion point and South Africans are also massively connected through sport. I believe it's through sport and sports sponsorship specifically, where we can really make a memorable and sustainable difference.



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Right now I am in year three of an extremely successful football sponsorship for the Shield brand. The Sbonisi'iDiski campaign is geared at empowering young South African football talent through grassroots development and skills training.

Through this campaign, I have been able to unlock amazing partnership opportunities with Chelsea Football Club and Orlando Pirates. These opportunities have enabled a number of players to take their game to the next level and land professional football contracts. It's a campaign that is literally life-changing on all levels.

Connect with consumers emotionally

I really believe that marketers similarly need to connect with consumers in a relevant way, on a platform that means something special to them personally. Crucially, any sports sponsorship that's entered into with a brand has to be unique enough to be remembered.

Connecting with consumers emotionally while still delivering a functional message is not always easy to do but sport gives brands the opportunity to do both. If this is the basis of a brand's marketing strategy, marketers have the unique ability to reach an audience via one channel while providing content to engage in another. By selecting a partner that shares the same values as your brand, this proven model ensures that consumers are more likely to be receptive the advertising campaign.

I truly believe that we need less off-the-shelf sponsorship rights and more co-creation that drives better value exchange and consumer engagement. As an example, don't just slap a logo on a shirt, employ boundary or on-field advertising and consider the job done. Those tactics have their place but they're not going to change anyone's life.

Would you be happy being your own customer?

My advice to fellow marketers is to be clear on your objectives – let the brand's purpose dictate the direction of your marketing. Secondly, understand your consumer and the world around them – the consumer has so much choice, especially in the FMCG category, so why should they purchase your brand over their competitors? Lastly, avoid off-the-shelf solutions to sponsorship at all cost.

Look at the experience from the consumer's point of view and ask yourself if you'd be happy being your own consumer.

ABOUT GARETH MARSHALL

business athlete // engagement architect // innovator I am passionate about building brands that make a positive difference to people's lives, while delivering business results through a clear and inspiring strategy. Contact Gareth at www.unleashacademy.co.za or garethmarshall.co.za.

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