

A role for media agencies in solving the modern media blur

 By Herman Manson: [@marklives](#)

2 Feb 2012

London-based media company PHD Worldwide, a part of the Omnicom Media Group, recently stepped up its investment in the South African market with its [purchase of a 70% shareholding](#) in strategic media planning company [page three](#). [video]



Mike Cooper, Anne Dearnaley, Ilan Lazarus, Lynnette Heyns

Cape-Town-based [page three](#) handles media billings of over R1.3 billion and it recently won the Specialist Media Agency category at the 2011 MOST Awards and came second in the Media Agency of the Year category. It was founded by [Anne Dearnaley](#), [Lynnette Heyns](#) and [Ilan Lazarus](#) in late 2007.

PHD Worldwide operates in more than 60 countries, through 72 offices, while its parent Omnicom manages a global portfolio of communication companies, including advertising agency networks such as BBDO, DDB and TBWA and media agencies such as Omnicom Media Group (OMG), as well as PHD.

Demand from international clients

Mike Cooper, CEO of PHD Worldwide, says his group decided to increase its investment in the South African market due to demand from international clients. PHD represents global clients such as Unilever, Diageo, GSK and HP, and multinationals like these have over the past three years shown a marked interest in both the SA and the broader African market.

Up to five years ago, companies were focusing much of the attention reserved for emerging markets on the Asia-Pacific region, says Cooper, but since then this has expanded to include the '[Next 11](#)' markets and countries such as South Africa, especially in the course of the past 11 months, which saw the economic outlook in developed economies stagnate further.

Cooper says Omnicom as a whole takes African markets very seriously. Apart from the well-developed media market in SA,

PHD sees the market in Nigeria and Kenya as becoming reasonably sophisticated.

Blurring of responsibility

Cooper acknowledges that barriers are breaking down and that there is a blurring of responsibility between the strategic roles media and ad agencies play. A number of ad agencies are trying to reclaim the strategically important planning role from media agencies in an environment focused on owned and earned (think social) media as much as paid-for media. But, says Cooper, great ideas can come from anywhere, including media agencies, which are increasingly getting involved in creating unique content solutions for clients.

Cooper points to a 36-episode TV show that PHD made for Unilever's anti-dandruff shampoo CLEAR in China as one example of a media agency successfully creating content for a client. The drama, called Unbeatable, which integrated CLEAR into the content, was watched by over 447 million Chinese - one third of the population. Thirteen million people followed the Unbeatable micro-blog. In the month of broadcast, CLEAR's market share increased 24% vs the previous year's average.

In another instance, the group conceptualised, through its content business Drum, '[The Angina Monologues](#)' as a way to raise awareness of heart disease in women for the British Heart Foundation.

[PHD: British Heart Foundation 'Angina Monologues'](#) from [PHD Worldwide](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Enquiries tripled after show

The comedy evening, hosted by Victoria Wood and featuring numerous female comedians, was broadcast on TV and screened in cinemas. It also shifted more than 400 000 DVDs through deals with women's magazines and clips can be found online. GPs reported that enquires on heart risk from women tripled after the show. The campaign won the Grand Prix and a Gold Award at the 2011 Media Week Awards.

It's their access to consumer data and strong media relationships that place media agencies at a strategic and content advantage over ad agencies, says Cooper.

Dearnaley, who is MD at page three, says the company often houses staff temporarily within some of the bigger ad agencies to better serve clients, in collaboration with agency staff, specifically by giving them access to those data tools media agencies has spent years and years developing.

Changes on the media horizon

As for changes on the media horizon, Cooper predicts that mobile, from smartphones to tablets, will increasingly be seen as a way we carry our social media platforms around in our pockets. He predicts that screens/devices made from [graphene](#), a material that is flexible/bendable, transparent and incredibly strong, will become commonplace. The new screens will merge tablets and smartphones due to its ability to fold out, or up, as required.

On the social media front, the rate of change and innovation will accelerate greatly. Research on the marketing value of social media will be a key focus area for many organisations but Cooper suspects a consumer backlash against the commercialisation of what they consider their social spaces might be in the offing. Privacy issues will further step to the fore.

TV is also increasingly becoming a lean-forward experience (when it used to be something we relaxed in front of) - just note how teens are actively discussing shows while they are watching it using their phones - something of which marketers need to take note.

Symbiotic relationship should exist between the two

PHD, says Cooper, is geared to meet the challenges posed by the rollout of new technology, and says modern media isn't simply a matter of old media and new but about the symbiotic relationship that should exist between the two.

The media environment is becoming more complicated and sophisticated, says Cooper - one great media blur, in fact. He believes media agencies, well, specifically his media agency, has the tools to help clients see the market more clearly.

Meanwhile, page three is already benefitting from the international alliance with PHD, says Dearnaley, with the agency having gained global clients such as Sony Ericsson, Cannon, SE Johnson and Siemens since the affiliation with PHD was announced. The new business will allow the agency to beef up its Johannesburg office in the near term.

ABOUT HERMAN MANSON: @MARKLIVES

The inaugural Vodacom Social Media Journalist of the Year in 2011, Herman Manson (@marklives) is a business journalist and media commentator who edits industry news site www.marklives.com. His writing has appeared in newspapers and magazines locally and abroad, including Bizcommunity.com. He also co-founded *Brand* magazine.

- AwardsCandy - SA app start-up signing global award shows - 11 May 2012
- Ninety9cents lands Capitec, sees 43% growth y/y - 9 May 2012
- Press freedom the commission and you - 26 Apr 2012
- Cell C drops King James, FoxP2 - retains Ogilvy - 25 Apr 2012
- Zando rockets into SA ecommerce space - 24 Apr 2012

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>