

Year of the proven point

 By [Paul Middleton](#)

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Proof points were put on the table in brand communication conversations in 2021. In 2022, the proof points behind brand goodwill will need to make even more authentic points if they are to be on point. The proof is really going to be in the proven point.



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Over and above brands needing to make their point of being committed to stakeholders and communities, there will be 3 + 1 trends that will determine the magnitude of the impact of brand work. These will be: **Smarter + Simplicity; Truth + Told; Empathy + Emotion**; and a bonus strength trend that I call **Multi-verse + Multi-skilled**.

This article unpacks each of these and makes a rather obvious conclusion that integration at client-agency and specialist-agency levels must work seamlessly if these partnerships are to provide companies with the ultimate trendline, which is the Full + Benefit of a full-service strategic, creative and media offering.

Smarter + Simplicity

There is a profoundness to be found in simplicity as it is the simplest of solutions that are often the smartest ones. Over the ages, history has shown how societies consistently circle back to simplicity in process and product. Nowhere is this clearer

now than in the world of the agency and client, as brand managers, marketers and communicators juggle multiple balls on every given day.

The super-efficient and automated all-under-one-roof agency stays the thing to be on top of in the coming year, and on the subject of juggling, multi-channel immersion is the must-have skill for the next 365 days and more.

Key takeout: Clients will continue to seek tight, even on-the-hour integration across their strategies and campaigns. As we move into 2022 and beyond, tapping into seamless and drama-free delivery will stay top of mind in agencies and corporates alike.

Truth + Told

Nobody wants to feel like a fool in dealing with a fake, so why should brand engagement be any different? Greater transparency has been the discussion in many a strategy session, and truthfully, it has been pursued by communication teams of many leading companies.

Walking into 2022, an honest voice is going to continue to be sought out by companies, but the opportunity is so much more significant here as the real authenticity happens when brands speak with people in their home language.

Key takeout: This adds a layer of communication complexity as African languages toggle nuances of subtle differences in meaning within similar words. But truth be told, if we do not make this move, we cannot close many of the gaps that threaten to stop our market from achieving true inclusivity.

Empathy + Emotion

Talking of walking, empathy will be the biggest key to unlocking an inclusive and diversity embracing culture. This means that, as marketers, we need to not only walk a virtual kilometre in our customers' shoes. We need to put on their shoes and carry them as we walk their roads. Our brand authenticity relies on this 100%.

To add to our personal understanding of customers' realities, social listening and sensitivity in communication will play a large part in ensuring that we apply empathy in practice. Another step into empathy-based brand evolution is User Generated Content (UGC) which is primed for an uptick in the coming year.

Key takeout: There will be a bigger need for social media teams to walk in the shoes of customers daily, as customer management on these channels will require greater CRM skills from agency and client teams.

Multiverse + Multi-skilled

A report by social listening tool provider Falcon projects that a multi-generational approach must be taken moving forward. It states, "Gen Z seems to be the one generation every marketer is trying to get the attention of. In 2022, however, it is imperative to look beyond the fads of just one generation and understand them all to market better."

According to Brandwatch, politics is a big part of Baby Boomers' 2022 outlook. On the other hand, Gen Z is more entertainment-focused, with many of their conversations featuring excitement for movies and games coming out in 2022. This is a simple example, but it shows that these two different generations have two different sets of priorities for and thoughts on the coming year.

Key takeout: In the multiverse of now, one of the channels that are ready to be heard is pure audio and it is set to attract more Mzansi ear traffic. Falcon puts money on this trend for customer engagement as it notes, "TikTok has always been a trendsetter, and even this app has realised the importance of audio, adding a roster of Sound Partners."

Keep it together + Make your point

Full + Benefit takeout - 2022 could therefore become the Year of the Proven Point (as shown and heard live on your made4You-business-results KPI Dashboard). In every brief, there will be the imperative to integrate, strategically and tactically, at every moment of every campaign - and the leaders will be those who deliver quite simply on each KPI.

ABOUT PAUL MIDDLETON

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