

#BehindtheSelfie with... Dan Berkowitz

 By Leigh Andrews

23 Oct 2019

This week, we go behind the selfie with Dan Berkowitz, group executive creative director at HaveYouHeard.



Berkowitz with a few of his favourite things.

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in Cape Town, on the slopes of Signal Hill, and work in Woodstock with the top-drawer people at HaveYouHeard. I play wherever my kids' imagination takes us, on my guitars and piano, and with my friends online, where we pretend we're the ultimate version of SEAL Team Six.

2. What's your claim to fame?

I'm not sure I have one, but I'm proud to have lived and worked as a creative director in Cape Town, New Delhi, London and Amsterdam, with some of the best minds at some of the best agencies in the world.

3. Describe your career so far.

My career has been pretty unconventional and that's made it all the more interesting. My first job was to start an agency with legends Brian Searle-Tripp and Bob Rightford, as a fledgeling art director and designer plucked out of my final year at college.



How Rightford, Searle-Tripp & Makin gave SA advertising a *Wallop!*

Leigh Andrews 19 Nov 2014



I moved on to run my own creative studio, which became the conceptual and strategic arm of both Grey Cape Town and Amperzand (which evolved into OfYT). I entered my first award show 12 years into my career, after my stint at Wieden+Kennedy (W+K), when I joined King James and won a number of local and global accolades with the amazing team there.

I took my next leap to start the African office of Arcade – a global network out of Asia and moved on to join HaveYouHeard.



#BehindtheSelfie with... Ryan McFadyen

Leigh Andrews 11 Sep 2019



At HYH, I've been given the opportunity and challenge to bring my experience together with their innovative approach to business and count myself fortunate to be learning and growing from the talented and diverse minds in our team every day.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

My wife Casey and two daughters, Leah and Sophie are my number one faves, followed closely by my dad, brother, sister and extended family. My personal passion is music, which I listen to, study and play on my guitar and piano.

“ I love food more than Brick Tamland loves lamp. Stuffing my face is also a large reason for my travel lust. ”

Japan is my favourite place on the planet because it combines so much of what I love – refined food, deeply layered culture, an inspirational way of life, unparalleled sensibility and civility, wonderful people, the best in design, ancient history. Did I mention the food?



Berkowitz also submitted this 'non-selfie', and explains: "This was taken on my recent visit to Tokyo with brother and my dad. Standing next to legendary retired Yokozuna Kisenosato outside the Ryogoku Kokugikan Sumo Hall, on day three of this year's Grand Sumo Tournament. (I'm on the left.)"

5. What do you love about your industry?

Advertising and communication is being forced to evolve and find relevance in a world-changing at a rate of knots. It's fascinating, challenging, exciting and sometimes downright confusing to be part of this massive period of reinvention for our industry.

The best part of my career though, which will always remain constant, is getting to work with interesting and highly talented colleagues and clients, who allow me to poke my nose into so many other cool worlds, daily. Not having to wear a suit every day is a bonus!

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

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@mattross making me look like a pro in the last 1.5kms. In truth, I was tripping out and in total agony. Hahah.

A post shared by Dan Berkowitz (@berkywits) on Oct 20, 2019 at 10:39am PDT

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Run. Corree. Family time. Corree. Connect with the team. Get busy solving stuff. Coffee. Head down. Talk s#it. Have a laugh. Head down. Meeting.

Con-call. Waiting for a technology issue to be resolved before the con call gets going. Meeting. Head down. Mail. WhatsApp. Food. Rush to the finish line. Home. Food. Family time. Shower. Think about what I need to get done tomorrow. Sleep. Do it all over again.

“



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3 Berksketeers. Drawing done in 30 mins. Noses paid special attention it seems.

#tokyo

A post shared by [Dan Berkowitz \(@berkywits\)](#) on May 16, 2019 at 6:35pm PDT

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7. What are the tools of your trade?

My brain, a black Pentel Sign marker, an A3 pad of pristine white pages and coffee, coupled with the internet, followed by email, Word and PowerPoint. Every now and then, I head back into the land of Adobe to make something, but not as much as I'd like.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

I have the utmost respect for Wieden+Kennedy as the finest independent creative network in the world. Having had the privilege of working there for four years, I learned that their real secret is having the best people, often putting the 'wrong' people into traditional roles and giving them every opportunity to shine.



#FairnessFirst: Nike 'dreams crazier' with Caster and Serena

Leigh Andrews 4 Mar 2019



Their unwavering ideals to always put the work first, never be afraid to fail, don't get stuck in 'sharp stuff' or act big and be a partner to their clients – not just provide them a service – is why they've consistently managed to place the brands they work with at the centre of culture in every country they've opened an office in, for as long as they've been around.

9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

We're all trying to wrangle an ever-changing media landscape and communicate with an audience that is globally connected, which chooses when, how and what they want to interact with. We've come a long way, but we need to adapt faster in how we operate and let go of the legacy processes and approaches that get in the way of better work and better business.



HaveYouHeard's new identity offers a more holistic approach to advertising

Juanita Pienaar 1 Sep 2017



We need to prove ourselves again in a tough global business environment to be an absolutely essential and integrated part of our client's businesses.

“

Sometimes we can slip into our own little echo chamber, paying too much attention to what everyone else in our

industry is doing and who's winning, rather than immersing ourselves in the world out there. ”

I believe it's the only way we'll give the brands we serve the opportunity to do things that really matter to people, and deliver real results.

10. What are you working on right now?

Getting better at everything I possibly can.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Heard around the office and later mumbled to myself: Storydoing, Zillennial, Purpose.

Mumbled by myself and later heard around the office: Good Enough Isn't.



So, what happens to 'once upon a time'?

Damon Stapleton 16 Oct 2019



12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

The first three hours of the morning are 'go time' for my brain. The sparks usually start firing as I open my eyes, form a bit more on the drive in, and rattle out onto the page as soon as I sit at my desk.

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Part of the hyh Zeitgeist of now philosophy, means seeing societal shifts and observations that have always been there, but hasn't always been obvious at a particular time – this philosophy forms the basis of our insights department. @brrrogers in our observational insights team, has uncovered a nostalgic trend making its way back into our lives – collaging. In a digital focussed world, collaging parties is the new community aimed to nurture people's creativity. Are you using the trend of nostalgia to your brand's advantage? #Observation #Insight #ZeitgeistOfNow #NostalgiaIsTheNewNovelty

A post shared by [HaveYouHeard Marketing](#) (@haveyouheard_agency) on Jul 22, 2019 at 3:12am PDT

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It's probably because the logical side still needs two corrects to land before it starts talking sense to the 'What if?' side and slowing it down.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

I subconsciously spout out music trivia and sing whatever happens to be playing on my internal radio station, which usually leads to the tunes switching to something new and interesting when hanging out with friends.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

A technophile with analogue tendencies.

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#sleepclinic

A post shared by [Dan Berkowitz](#) (@berkywits) on Feb 1, 2019 at 10:59am PST

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15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Lots of photos. Lots of music apps. Lots of apps I don't know why I have.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

- Beyond skills and talent, the most important thing a prospective employer looks for is **personality, character and attitude**. They are your most powerful weapon if you want to stand out. Deciding between two great portfolios comes down to whether or not you want to work with the person behind them every day, and if they'll be a positive force and influence for the rest of the team.
- When you get your first shot, start by focussing on **being the very best at what you're best at**. Hone your skills while you're learning and picking up more, and you'll create your own room to grow while making yourself an indispensable part of the team.
- Building your career from the get-go means **committing to consistently evolving** as a professional. Take on more than you're given and push yourself to do the things you want to ultimately be doing. Sometimes you'll fail, but you'll also get it right. Most importantly, you'll get better every time, regardless of the result. It won't be long before you're being asked to do those things.

Dave Trott put it best, I think – Be (the position). Do (the work). Have (the title).



An algorithm hears music. We feel it.

Damon Stapleton 13 Apr 2016



Simple as that. Follow Berkowitz on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#); and HaveYouHeard on their [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) feeds for the latest updates.

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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