

5 ways of being to make 2020 great

 By [Pepe Marais](#)

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South Africa. A nation paralysed by talk, where the majority of problems are a product of our failure to execute.



Pepe Marais, group chief creative officer at Joe Public Group.

Abuse of power and corruption has seen our country's economic growth rate hesitating on the edge of recession, with the previous regime looting our country's coffers to the tune of R1.5-trillion. Leaving 3-million of our 60-million countrymen and women to contribute 80% of our annual taxes towards the leaking treasure chests of the state, with the remaining 13-million who are gainfully employed slaving away to help carry the burden of a country on the brink of bankruptcy.



The amazing story behind Joe Public, Africa's number one ad agency

Brendan Seery 9 Nov 2018



Public schooling has collapsed and public hospitals continue to fail, leaving the poor to go to hospital to die, rather than to be healed. Lawlessness is an epidemic, with even the private sector participating in unethical acts, leaving business confidence at an all-time low.

So, if this is the macro view of our current trading environment, then what does our micro-picture look like, within the tiny pond of our creative advertising industry?

99,9% of creative advertising produced across all media types is still wallpaper, with billions being wasted in both financial resources and time. It makes sense then, in the absence of creativity, that more and more clients would rather take their advertising in-house, in an ongoing drive by procurement to save dollars and rands.



Case study: U-Studio - the Unilever on-site marketing success

Oliver 10 Dec 2019



Like state capture, we remain captured by process, spending 90% of our lives in reviews, reverts and research with but 10% of our remaining time left to execute our watered-down ideas. And still we remain lukewarm to change. On the contrary, we are incentivised not to, because we are remunerated for our time rather than our thinking.

Hence ironically, the slower and more laborious our processes, the more we are paid.

Brands continue to prioritise short-term wins over long-term brand-building, turning a blind eye to the truth that short-termism is at the heart of the lack of long-term sustainability seen in our world today.

“ Digital will persist in perpetuating this feeding frenzy of short-term thinking, with every hand on deck battling to get their heads around an aspect of our industry that has pulled more wool over our collective eyes than what can be produced by all the Merino sheep in the Great Karoo. Measures and metrics will continue to include all of my 8,500 followers for my one retweet to create incredible ‘impressions’, leaving me unimpressed since I know that fewer than 10 of them are likely to have seen it. ”

For as long as we are blinded by the beauty of numbers, we believe that the world won't see the ugly truth. After all, stats and data rule the day, notwithstanding that 67% are made up on the spot, including this one.

Hence I choose to find my truth in nature rather than numbers. Because nature shows that after every *veld* fire, there's new growth. That after every winter, there will be a spring. For this reason, no matter the facts and figures, I remain resolute in my belief that we are at the end of a decade-long icy cold winter. And that 2020 will be the beginning of a decade-long spring for our country.



#BizTrends2019: The year of making love

Pepe Marais 24 Jan 2019



So here are five ways of being on offer as a 'springboard' for this new season. Five ways in which each of us can take responsibility for our collective roles that we are to play in this country, in which we are so quick to judge. Not realising that when we point one finger at another, three fingers point back at ourselves.

It is my New Year's wish that these five ways of being will assist you in finding new ways towards taking responsibility in every single area of your life. And in doing so, you will give yourself maximum opportunity to counter the onslaught of negativity, by focusing on that which you can control. Assisting you to grow towards the best version of yourself, in this one glorious lifetime afforded to each of us.

Way of Being #5: Ask more questions

A child asks 128 questions on average each day. An adult only nine. Hence the difference in growth between an adult and a child is 119 questions per day.



"Just start now and be creative" - Pepe Marais on Growing Greatness

Leigh Andrews 24 Aug 2018



January 2020 marks the season to start asking more questions, in more places, more often...

- Ask what is the point of doing a post with a reach of a million and an engagement of none.
- Ask why it is acceptable to spend R4-million on the production of a television commercial, without anyone ever mentioning it in a tweet.
- Ask why we are squeezing agency margins and production budgets when the most valuable assets available to marketers are the various media types, where 80% of total budgets are spent. And that by squeezing the former, you deplete the latter.
- Ask the cost per insertion per media type, and ask if the creative product within it gives the space bang for your hard-earned buck.
- Ask why we are doing one hundred things by half, instead of doing ten things well.
- Ask at least one question in every single meeting you attend in the new year. Because the fewer questions you ask, the less you grow. And that is a crime against your own humanity.

Way of Being #4: Seek new answers

Our businesses are either flatlining or declining, but still we do exactly what we did last year, the year before that, and the year before that.

“ It seems that the schooling system has succeeded in its quest to produce factory thinking, by coercing us into believing that every question has only one answer. It doesn't. One apple plus one apple is simply not just two apples. Because you can slice open the apple, plant the seeds, grow apple trees and find yourself with infinite answers to this one basic grade one question. ”

Seek new answers to the same question every single day. Because it is the only way in which we will flourish in this new season. Seek new answers to old questions. Because new answers bring value to businesses and brands, and will ultimately enable us to enjoy the fruits of our labour.

Way of Being #3: Strive to give a little more, every single day

A while back, one of my industry friends shared a beautiful calculation with me. That 1.01 multiplied by itself 365 times equals 37.7. Meaning that by giving a mere one-hundredth more every day, your output can improve by over 37 times per year.

“ The compounding effect of this positive daily practice is simply astounding. But the real insight comes when you apply the same calculation to doing a mere one-hundredth less every day. By cutting just one small corner. By being just a little less engaged in your daily craft. By becoming just a smidgen less obsessed. ”

Because 0,99 multiplied by itself 365 times equals 0,03, indicating mathematically that by doing just a little less than your best every day, you are physically growing backwards. So make this your way of being for a new leaf in your book of life, 1 January 2020 being page 1: Be better than your best, and then better. Each and every day.

Way of Being #2: Believe in the power of ideas

In 1983, I fell in love. She was out of my reach. English. Gymnast. Girlfriend of the captain of the under-19A rugby team. I played in the C team. My academic marks were a slightly lower D. In fact, my only A at school was for 'average'. But then I had an idea...

“ I would draw her face with a pencil on a chicken egg, borrowed from my mother's fridge. I followed through on my idea, as we should with most ideas. I didn't question it. I didn't research it. I didn't run it through all forms of committees. I simply followed my heART. And in return, won over hers. Which led to the most exceptional and exponential journey through life. ”

To where we find ourselves today, the proud parents to our magnificent boy, Jasper. And if you asked me to put a financial number to his life, I wouldn't be able to hazard a guess. But if pushed, it will be no less than billions of South African rands. All because of one chicken egg with a scribbled face on it.



The risk of not taking risks

Damon Stapleton 27 Nov 2019



Yet still, our industry remains devoid of powerful ideas. We destroy them through fear, through research and through lack of belief. Ideas add value to the world. They open new dimensions. They engage. They connect. They change lives. Trust me, I know. Because one such an idea, 34 years ago, changed mine.

May 2020 bring with it a new-found desire for you to be at the forefront of incredible ideas. Because without them, what value are we really adding to the businesses of our clients?

Way of Being #1: Find purpose for your life

On Friday, 25 October 2019, Joe Public United hosted our annual market for entrepreneurs on the rooftop of our building in Bryanston. Our 11-year-old son decided to participate and created a range of beaded bangles, earrings and rings over the course of the month before. He diligently kept note of his time and the cost of his raw materials in order to make a healthy profit.



#Loeries2019: Bringing the value of purpose-led work to the world through creative product

Juanita Pienaar 2 Sep 2019



Living under our roof, he understands that blood needs to flow through your veins in order to stay alive. And that equally, as

money is the lifeblood of business, it needs to flow through the veins of your organisation in order for it to stay alive.

So I asked Jasper on the way to school one morning why he is in the business of making jewellery and if he could describe the purpose of his business in one word. To which he curtly answered, without giving it much thought, "Joy." And when asked what it means, he simply replied, "To inspire people through joyful jewellery."

“ Smart. As all children are. Intuitively understanding that we don't exist to make blood. May the newseason bring forth the child in you. May you find purpose for your brand. May you find purpose for your life. ”

A new year is upon us. A new season for new growth and new beginnings. A time to find greater meaning to living and to bring this meaning to life in this often meaningless world of advertising. Because contrary to the popular belief that advertising is the second best vocation to that of being a used car salesperson, I believe with all my heart that advertising done well, through the power of creativity, can be the noblest profession in the world.

Here's to 2020. May it be truly great for you.

ABOUT PEPE MARAIS

Pepe Marais is the founding partner and group chief creative officer of brand and communications group Joe Public United. He lives for creativity that deeply connects with people. His passion is to co-create an environment and culture that breed exponential growth, Growthn - the growth of Joe Public United's people, clients and ultimately our country.

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