

Bull bangs the drums for digital

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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It seems the digital medium is still not being taken seriously by the creative industry, as evidenced by last year's [Bookmark Awards](#). Matthew Bull, chairman of the Lowe Bull Group and worldwide creative director of Lowe Worldwide, as well as creative counsel for the Online Publishers' Association (OPA), told Bizcommunity.com, however, that digital will be everything in 10 - 20 years' time and the South African industry needs to understand and prepare for this.



Bull foresees blistering ignorance in the ad industry to come, should digital not be fully embraced. He describes the medium's role in a football metaphor: "Its role is much the same as that of a highly talented young footballer trying to make his way into a team - firstly everyone within the club talks about him, then he gets on the bench, then in the team and then he's the superstar.

"Right now, in South Africa, he's on the bench. In the world, digital is already in the team, and on his way to becoming the star. It will become integrated and it will be the centre of the universe in years to come."

Transformed Western society

According to Bull, digital has transformed Western society and will transform world society as agencies mould business strategies around the digital age. Yet a dismal number are making adequate use of the medium.

"We are far more open-minded as an industry than we have been for years, clients need us again - the unknown is being ventured into - and strange, wonderful new people are entering the business. [However,] digital in South Africa is being used to only 5% of its potential - and I'm being generous," he says.

Traditional big advertising players, he believes, have embraced digital only conceptually as companies, are having to "re-learn the industry, or reshape it." Agencies, according to Bull, require energy and flexibility and "...big companies, who have focused for years on building their bodies, not their brains, are struggling to change," he continues.

Bull's answer to making the industry aware that digital is the future is pretty simple: "By banging the drum and making beautiful music whilst you do... Bookmarks is all about talking about the impact digital will have, and showing the impact it has had. It, and other events like it, are vital in the education and inspiration of the industry."

“Aim is to invigorate and motivate”

"The aim of the Bookmarks [is] to invigorate and motivate the broader industry to embrace digital," says Bull. "It can and will improve but I thought that [last year's] team was unbelievable in what they put together and the style in which they did it. Might have to relook the comedian though. One thing I will tell you though, the work by and large was complete garbage when compared to global work. We are way behind."

Bull believes SA needs to remain at the forefront of the world ad industry and digital will play a substantial role in the future of the business. While SA agencies did not consider the Bookmarks as an important event on the creatives calendar, Bull still believes in the concept behind it.

"We really wanted the broader industry to embrace it and I believed that, as we were involved, the rest of the industry would join us and send people to the seminars and enter their work. Truth is, they did neither, which I found really disappointing. But perhaps we didn't promote it hard enough to them and we'll learn from that."

Bull sees change as both socially and commercially inevitable, what with the arrival of proper broadband in the country mid-2009, and it is vital therefore for SA ad agencies to view digital as a viable tool of the present and a mandatory tool of the future.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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