

Take digital marketing seriously, brands urged

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The South African digital marketing adspend, which represents only a fraction (1.7%) of the total adspend, has become a cause for concern for industry watchers who believe businesses are not putting enough effort and resources to develop a sector full of opportunities and innovations.

Speaking recently at the 2009 Tony Koenderman's Brainstorm Conference in Johannesburg, Gloo Digital Design founder and creative director Pete Case, said: "Our wider marketing industry is starting to actively listen and engage with digital, but we need more.

"We are very small but we are critical, as well as constructive. Then we can help increase the things we are not doing so well."

Excuses such as lack of sufficient connections, slow bandwidth, past ineffective campaigns, 360 degrees agency and delay in making profit, among others, have been given by most businesses as reasons for not taking digital marketing seriously.

Unfounded, baseless

Case refuted these excuses, however, saying they are unfounded and baseless. "Many brands didn't plan and execute digital well, that is why they haven't seen the benefits," he said.

"Do you have an integrated and experienced digital team and are they on retainer like your other areas of marketing?" he asked.

"Ensure that you have a right mix of skills around the table. Digital requires a highly skilled team to design and produce the concept, and deliver the goods.

"Don't do things cheaply. Do it right first round or it could cost you a lot when you correct," Case advised.

"Creativity comes from understanding the bigger picture and lateral thinking. Great digital takes budget and time. Brief the digital agency like you would do for the traditional agency.

Too many applications, too little innovation

“There are just too many applications but no innovation. Treat digital like any medium of innovation. Own a unique idea and direction and do things differently. Collaborate early in the process and plan ahead. Think about all consumer touch points. Understand your audience and your failure rate will decrease.” Case said.

“Don't believe someone who tells you that TV is dead and long live digital. Digital is an addition but not a replacement.”

Case also said while digital is happening in SA, it is however happening too slow, citing Cannes Festival as a typical example of that sluggish trend.

“At Cannes Festival, digital has become a main attraction. Last year SA sent 64 entries to Cannes Festival compared to 1680 of the US,” he said, adding that people should stop blaming others for the image of digital.

'Let's kickstart the revolution

“Why most brands have a detailed and long term marketing strategy but not a digital strategy?

“Go ahead, try this strategy too and let's kickstart the digital revolution,” he concluded.

This year, Brainstorm was part of The Bookmarks week, which culminated with The Bookmarks Awards evening on Thursday, 12 November 2009, at Movida in Johannesburg.

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ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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