

OPA embrace new name, direction

 By [Herman Manson: @marklives](#)

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The [Online Publishers Association](#) (OPA) last night, Tuesday, 25 May 2010, relaunched itself as the Digital Media & Marketing Association (DMMA), announcing not only a new name but also a new strategy to draw in more of the digital marketing industry.

The OPA was launched to grow trust in online publishing metrics and to help grow online ad spend in South Africa, but full membership was dominated by large publishers able to afford an expensive subscription to the Nielsen measurement system. In doing away with the OPA's membership hierarchy (of Full, Associate and Affiliate Membership) the DMMA hopes to pull in more agency participation.

Smart move

It is a smart move. How you would grow online's piece of the ad pie by effectively minimising advertising agency participation is anybody's guess.

DMMA chairperson Adrian Hewlett says the process began three years ago when the OPA realised its structure was too restrictive to encourage real growth or real engagement with the rest of the industry and as it faced the launch of rival associations like the since-discontinued Website Association of South Africa (WASA).

It introduced new membership rules that grew membership from twenty to a hundred, it lowered costs to encourage engagement with the hosts of smaller industry players and launched the [Bookmark Awards](#) to awards to celebrate and reward creativity in online advertising. Still it found that large agencies remained disinterested.

The DMMA hopes its new quarterly awards, run in association with the Creative Circle, will kick-start a process of engagement between the new organisation and established ad agencies. The awards will be open to paidup members of either the Creative Circle or the DMMA and will serve as automatic entry into the annual Bookmark Awards for the winners. The annual event will also be moved to Cape Town this year.

Quarterly awards

The quarterly awards will recognise great Internet and mobile marketing and will cover four main categories, namely Online Ads, Websites, Mobile and Social Media. Only one winner and two runners-up will be announced across all the combined categories.

The DMMA is also taking the opportunity to relook the benefits offered by Nielsen's measurement system and whether or not more viable alternatives have emerged in the meantime. Nielsen will have to re-pitch its system alongside other online auditors (Hewlett mentioned that Google SA is playing a role in helping drive this initiative - it joined the OPA in January of this year).

Its new constitution also finally gives it some bite and the DMMA will be able to suspend members found guilty of malpractice, according to Hewlett.

Hewlett is widely credited with reviving and expanding the OPA over the past few years but has already stated that he will not be available to chair the DMMA after his current tenure ends. As such the DMMA will start looking for its first full-time CEO to take over from Hewlett during the course of 2011.

Grow digital's slice of the pie

Hewlett still aims to see the DMMA grow digital's slice of the advertising pie to 5% of the market within the next 12-18 months. If it does, it will provide a sound foundation for the DMMA and breathe new energy into the online sector.

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