

People, planet and profit

By  Danette Breitenbach

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The 2019 *Financial Mail* AdFocus Awards at the Houghton Golf Club in Johannesburg, was a glittering affair, but the industry showed it is much more than just glamour, as the winners demonstrated a clear commitment to purpose and giving back to the industry. None more so than the Overall Agency of the Year, Triple Eight.



Overall Agency of the Year, Triple Eight | Image supplied by *Financial Mail*

Purpose with impact

The agency, which also took home Specialist Agency of the Year, the Transformation Award and the African Impact Award, is a purpose-driven agency that focuses not only on business results, but also social results. “Our focus on purpose is not cosmetic, so our campaigns and partnerships are about making a real and positive impact on people, planet and profit, which is what Triple Eight stands for,” says Sarika Modi, founder and director of Triple Eight.

Being awarded the Overall Agency of the Year Award, while surprising, is both humbling and an honour, she adds. “We are thrilled that the industry is recognising the role purpose has to place and the role agencies and clients have to play in fostering a better South Africa and Africa.”

As an all-female agency, the Transformation Award is also a special award. “Being recognised for having a big impact in an industry that is still quite male-dominated is an inspiration for us and to others,” she says.



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Be in the game

Another believer in making an impact in the industry is this year's Industry Leader Award winner, M&C Saatchi Abel's Neo

Mashigo. “When I got into the industry, I decided I will make an impact wherever I can – be it a client, a campaign or the people I meet and engage with.”



Industry Leader of the Year, Neo Mashigo, CEO at M&C Saatchi Abel | Image supplied by *Financial Mail*

He says you must be in the game. “You cannot complain from the sidelines when things are not working. You need to jump in and when you jump into that pot, you understand just how hot it is and that it is not simple or easy to change something. But you cannot just watch, you need to get involved.”

His advice to younger people wanting to enter the industry is that it takes hard work. “There is no easy way. You have to put in the hard work, and then you see the results, and it starts looking and feeling easy and then you can roll with the punches, because you put in the hard slog earlier.

“After high school, my mom said to me that work is a form of prayer, and if you dedicate yourself to that one thing that you choose and work hard, then your prayers will be answered. You cannot do nothing and expect a miracle. You have to do the hard work,” he says.



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Neo Mashigo 28 Nov 2019



Commenting on Mashigo, Mike Abel, founding partner and chief executive of M&C Saatchi Abel, says he is an outstanding

leader. “He pushes the work hard, he is brave and he has driven an incredible agenda towards brilliant work in our company. We have always set the bar high, he has just come in and set it higher.”

He adds that Mashigo helped in setting their transformation agenda and bringing in amazing talent. “A lot of them have joined because of Neo. When you are a good person and use your talent and a great leader, then things seem to fall into place.”

M&C Saatchi Abel, which is celebrating its 10th birthday next year, was also named Large Agency of the Year. “You always hope you are doing a great job, but outside validation always confirms it, and when that comes from our industry peers, then it is a wonderful achievement,” adds Abel.

With the industry going through some tough times, this award is even more gratifying. “We have a very simple offering for our clients: are we going to grow your top line, are we going to grow your market share, are we going to grow your brand equity. I think it is that focus applied to our model of brutal simplicity that works particularly well in a downturn economy.”

The agency also received the Partnership of the Year Award, sponsored by IAS, with its client Nando's.

Lifetime Achiever

Any award that says 'lifetime' talks about how much time you have spent in the industry, and I spent a lot of time in the industry, says Virginia Hollis, who was named AdFocus' Lifetime Achiever 2019. “It's an industry that I love, otherwise I would not be here, but for me the industry is about giving back as well. Over the past 25 years I have spent more than just doing my job, and if there is anything I could do, it is to encourage people in our industry to get more involved with the industry and help develop people,” she says.



Lifetime Achiever, Virginia Hollis | Image supplied by *Financial Mail*

Growing the industry is very important. “We are a wonderful industry and we are irreverent when we need to be, but at the same time we are a very serious industry. We spend and invest a lot of money. So, we need to take the time to grow our industry.”



[Behind the Loeries] with... Virginia Hollis

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ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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