

Digital campaigning is complex...

By [Japie Swanepoel](#)

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At the recent Habari Media MSN Digital Symposium in Cape Town, attended by online experts, ad agencies and marketing managers in charge of online efforts at some of South Africa's largest companies, the whole process of getting an online campaign out there was a topic of the panel discussion.

During this discussion, the online publishers were answering questions from corporate advertisers on how to go about getting meaningful stats on SA's biggest sites. An ad agency media planner then commented about the work overload and how they cannot simply get to see every website. An ad agency digital expert denied that everyone in the agencies out there are "old pale males" that don't understand online.

All the time, listening to this banter between all the different parties in the chain, my blood pressure slowly began to rise but I managed to keep it under control.

Heated exchange

When one of the panelists then uttered the words "digital is complex and that is why clients need online agencies", I simply could not sit there and say nothing, and heated was the exchange!

I agree, understanding the workings of an ad serving platform is not the same as understanding how to send an email, neither is launching an adwords campaign the same as writing a Word document; different expertise is required.

Do the biggest companies in South Africa that collectively spend some R8 billion a year on TV advertising know how to cast for a TV ad, let alone produce it? I think not! The point being, they believe in TV and spend on it.

If we (online agencies, ad agencies and media agencies) go around making companies believe that online initiatives are complex, they will merely stay away from it and spend their money elsewhere.

I am pretty sure that all the execs at SA's biggest companies have cellphones and receive the odd SMS every now and again and maybe even sends one every so often. I'm sure too that they book holidays online and even buy books and wine online.

Understand the medium's power

They do, therefore, understand the power of the medium and certainly need only a little education to explain to them how

they can derive the same value for their company online as those they use in their personal capacities.

It is indeed my humble opinion that the more companies in South Africa and their advertising, media and marketing agencies know about the Internet, the better it is for everyone, not only in the business of online, but for every company and its agency that wants to see a greater return on investment from a channel that will only grow and take those who believe in it to greater heights.

So please, can we agree that though there are technical issues and challenges to digital, the same principles apply for that channel as for all the others?

Identify your target market, find out where they hang out, offer them what they need and all the while, monitor and manage the return on your investment!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Japie Swanepoel is a partner and strategic director at longtail (www.longtail.co.za), which he co-founded in April 2007. He has been involved in eMarketing since 2000 and finds delight in helping companies put proper eMarketing strategies in place. In December 2006, Juta published Japie's book, *The e of marketing*, a book dedicated to eMarketing tools and applications. Besides being an eMarketing evangelist, Japie is also an avid mountain biker, author, blogger, tabasco fan and regular speaker at eMarketing events. Contact him at japie@longtail.co.za.

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