

Phat Brand Activation took the road less travelled and are now reaping the benefits

Issued by [IMC Conference](#)

29 Apr 2015

Rico Wessels and Christopher de Bod are not average entrepreneurs. For one thing, they didn't dream of starting their own business. When they finally did launch their company, Phat Brand Activation, in 2008, they went from an idle discussion about starting something of their own instead of building other people's businesses, to resigning, to start-up in two weeks. They also broke all the rules doing it. How did they do it? Phat did it by freeing themselves from the conformities of the industry.

Create a language of your own

Phat was not a first mover. It entered an overcrowded, established and saturated market. And yet it still managed to stand out. "We needed to differentiate ourselves," explain Wessels and de Bod. Living Media™ and Variable Media™, also known as promotions and events, these names serve two important functions and are a lot more exciting than 'promos' and 'events'. Secondly, it gives Phat the opportunity to explore the benefits of each with their clients and show the value of these marketing methods, which offer immediate ROI, are much more affordable than traditional media, and promote brand recognition and word-of-mouth growth. *They created a new category for themselves in an established market by changing the conversation.*



Rico Wessels - Director and Christopher de Bod - Director

Target specific clients

Agencies cannot have two competing clients from the same sector. So how do you ensure you can still grow with a limited client list? According to Wessels, you do the best you can with what you have, or 'have a good go and get a good slice of the pie.' In other words, you get as much business from each client as possible. Phat has defined 14 sectors that it will work with, and has a shortlist of key clients in each. Once a contract is in place with one client, no others are approached in that sector. Year one is all about building trust, understanding the business, and delivering exceptional service. From year two, the department you've been working with will start introducing you to other departments. You can evaluate the business more holistically, and develop solutions to match their needs.

Don't market in the normal spaces

Now in their seventh year, De Bod and Wessels are focusing on growing their own brand. They're doing this in two ways. First, they're aiming to be the leaders within their own industry. This isn't just about standing out in terms of client service, but being thought leaders that industry outsiders and insiders turn to for expert opinions. "For example, we need to know the law around contract workers inside out," explains Wessels. "We need to be able to advise our clients, fellow industry companies and the promoters themselves on what the law says, and how this works in the best interests for all of us."

Over and above that, Wessels is working hard to launch an industry forum and conference that will determine best practice, price norms and other pertinent factors. "We need to regulate ourselves. It's good for the industry as a whole when we all follow the same codes, know what our rights are, and can offer clients established best practice," he explains.

They're advertising in unexpected markets. "We've taken the view that business owners and corporate executives have other interests beyond 'how do I find a marketing partner'," explains Wessels. "We want to be the unexpected advert or

advertorial that grabs attention. When you're not where people expect you to be, they pay attention."



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With their Brand's motto of "*Nothing influences people like People*", it is no surprise that [Phat](#) has become a Silver Sponsor for the IMC Conferences in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg Conferences. "Following our involvement in 2014 Johannesburg IMC Conference and the remarkable synergy between us and the IMC Conferences, Phat Brand Activation has decided to again team up with IMC Conferences for 2015. We are thrilled with the success of the inaugural Durban conference and believe that the conferences are an effective medium in which we can communicate," concludes De Bod.

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