

Seeing 2016 in full-colour with Grey Trends

 By Leigh Andrews

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ICYMI (In Case You Missed It) - the 2016 edition of Grey Trends is out, bursting with facts and foresight on what to expect from the next few months. A selection of Grey Johannesburg's captains shared some background.

2016 is the year of the Red Monkey as well as a leap year, one in which the 45th POTUS or President of the United States will be revealed - luckily it's not all uncertainty and doubt from a business perspective, as Grey Johannesburg has forecast a selection of trends - in our industry in particular -that'll be coming our way.

Grey JHB's creative director Glenn Jeffery; as well as Jessica Wheeler, strategic planning director; [Francois du Preez](#), digital creative director; Huibri Schalkwyk, PR and social business unit director; and CEO Peter Jackson each answered a question to give us the context of this trends report, as well as other highlights from the agency.



Grey JHB's creative director Glenn Jeffery; Jessica Wheeler, strategic planning director; Francois du Preez, digital creative director; Huibri Schalkwyk, PR and social business unit director; and CEO Peter Jackson.

1. Set the context with a brief overview of Grey's recent high notes.

Jeffery: 2015 was a massive year for the Grey Network. The accolades were impressive, from dominating at Cannes to multiple Agency Of The Year awards. However, it's not the 113 Cannes Lions, the 4 Grand Prix Lions or [Adweek's Global Agency of the Year](#) for the second year running that was the most special - it's the unwavering pursuit to make culture, not ads. Advertising needs to change. We live in a world where most ads irritate people so we need to find new ways, and 2015 was the year Grey found new ways to connect with people. Ways to be genuinely useful like preventing injury with glow-in-the-dark [Life Paint for Volvo](#). Ways to redefine the medium of radio with the [Berlin Wall of Sound](#). Ways to prevent gun violence by [opening a gun store](#). But Grey's biggest success was taking the chance to do work that matters.

2. Explain the concept of trends and when they become more than just a fad.

Wheeler: Where do marketing trends come from? The bad ones come from an internal quest to punt a specific skillset within your agency to further your own personal agenda. The good ones, however, come from plenty of hours spent listening. In South Africa specifically, we look abroad to the big networks to see how their internal cultures are shifting, what specific areas they are investing in, what additional criteria are added to the global awards circuits. Read enough op-ed pieces on Ad Age, WARC and the likes and it's quite clear what is happening overseas. When we map these against our

own local challenges, it's easy to see where both agencies and clients should be moving in the year ahead. Fads come and go without much notice or big cultural shifts. When big agencies with plenty to lose start making significant changes, that's when you know it's here to stay. There's a global vested interest to change the industry. That's a trend. Mostly though, it's about giving a damn about making great work and being curious enough to investigate how.

3. Talk us through the origins of Grey Trends 2016.

Du Preez: Our industry is fast-moving and ever-changing. As department heads, it is our responsibility to keep up with and set new trends by constantly looking for ways to improve, knowing what's out there and, based on this knowledge, take educated risks. We tend to focus only on our respective disciplines, so compiling our Grey trends document is one way to consolidate our thoughts. This allows us to progress together as a team with clear goals and benchmarks in mind and in the process inform our clients of what's possible.

4. List a few of the trends the local marketing, media and PR industry should keep an eye out for.

Schalkwyk:

Visual content's popularity continues to grow. Not only for social media but especially for PR. There will be a drastic increase in images, infographics and especially video content used for PR and social media.

- **Real-time marketing** is rising for PR. There is still a need for PR to long lead media but with the information overload at our fingertips, PR teams are required to adapt to real time PR - old news is no news.
- A **traditional press release** is not enough - take advantage of social media channels and building relationships in the industry.

5. Looking ahead, what's next for Grey?

Jackson: Grey, as a forward-thinking agency, has embraced the inherent cross-channel mind-set and reinvented their operational models to create more nimble and effective interactive communications solutions for their clients. As a Group, Grey has been experimental, audacious and extremely flexible, progressively adapting its agency culture to the evolving, hyper-fast digi-world by tapping into modern behaviour trends to win hearts and minds of the changing consumers. Acknowledging the change that's taken place, we've gone beyond simple direct response, to engaging faster and more interactively. So to answer "Where to next for Grey?", we'll keep looking ahead, grasping the reality of change and continually adapting using the Darwinian concept of: "I am turned into a sort of machine for observing facts and grinding out conclusions".

[Click here](#) to download the Grey Trends 2016 PDF, [here](#) to follow Grey JHB on Twitter, and [here](#) to visit the Grey press office.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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