

‘Run with it!': Vega develops future thinkers and resilient creative problem solvers

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In industry, and as industry professionals will confirm, team leaders take in fresh graduates and expect them to ‘run with it!’ The more independent and pro-active they are, the better the chances to stay on, and even better, excel. The ability to ‘run with it’, secures a more fluid integration into the fast pace and demanding creative brand communication industry.

How does Vega School ‘run with it’?

To train students to ‘run with it’ is to teach them future skills. The World Economic Forum provided a critical review of the skills required to prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. From this they identified the top 10 future skills required by 2020, of which complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity sit at the top.

“Creativity will become one of the top three skills workers will need. With the avalanche of new products, new technologies and new ways of working, workers are going to have to become more creative in order to benefit from these changes” (Alex Gray, World Economic Forum).

The need for these skills is a necessity for educational institutions to consider in their teaching practice. It is equally important for the communications industry to ensure continuous progress, and possibly to ensure our industry’s survival.

Top 10 future skills:



Top 10 skills

in 2020

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgment and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

in 2015

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity



Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum

In 2016 Vega evolved its approach to the training of creative students. The Visual Communication, Multimedia Design and

Copywriting disciplines shifted to a [process orientated curriculum design](#) that is firmly based on the principles of [student-centred learning](#). The main difference sits within the training practice – students are encouraged to own their learning process by developing confidence and agility in critical and creative thinking, decision making and problem solving whilst developing and honing a disciplined skill-set.

How is this done?

Students are taught how to think, craft and collaborate as well as how to interpret and leverage feedback. This is done through a parallel learning process of engaging in curriculum content in developing skills and knowledge, while working on problem based briefs, also known as [project-based learning](#). Project-based learning works on the following principles: 1) Provide a challenging problem or question to solve, 2) facilitate a sustained process of inquiry, 3) provide authentic / real-world challenges, 4) facilitate and provide students with a voice and choice, 5) facilitate critical reflection, 6) provide an environment for peer- and self-critique and feedback and 7) make their work public, give them a real audience.

Vega School has always supported the development of problem-solving skills. Vega believes that by providing problem based briefs we provide students with the skills needed to thrive in a [fast changing industry and society](#). The aim is to present media neutral brand communication challenges and for students to learn how to navigate the development of strategic, original and meaningful creative solutions. To ensure challenges are authentic, Vega provides briefs that are based on current industry or societal challenges, often employing real-life / industry projects. To complement the complexity and rhythm of the creative brand communication industry, Vega also applies ‘speed’ and ‘deep’ briefs, as well as self-directed projects. Speed briefs enable students to work under fast paced and demanding circumstances building confidence in relying on creative intuition. Deep briefs deal with complex challenges and demand a more considered strategic and creative process. Self-directed projects, also known as passion projects, encourage students to design their own career path and build on their own interests. The magic sits within the option to work in teams and therefore to experience the benefit of and professional need for collaboration. Collaboration is employed through peer and multi-disciplinary engagement to unpack and solve problems (co-design solutions), but also to consider implementing the solution through group work (multi-skilled executions).

In addition, the BA in Creative Brand Communication students participate in Brand Challenges in their second and third year of study. Brand Challenges are real-life client briefs involving students from various programmes working in trans-disciplinary teams over a dedicated and gruelling five-week period. The challenge requires a zero-based audit and touch point engagement across the value chain.

Real-world simulation and application ensures students are prepared for the industry. Vega School, as described by Siobhan Gunning (Senior Copywriting Navigator), is “kind of like a laboratory of iconoclastic thinking and creative brilliance. We are creating and nurturing the future thought leaders and change activists of South Africa (and hopefully further afield)”. The end-of-year internship programme consequently presents the ideal opportunity for students to demonstrate their skills as resilient problem solvers and the personal agility to ‘run with it’.

The challenge in preparing our society for the future, does not solely sit with the educators, but with our industry to adapt to and encourage a culture of embracing, developing and utilising future skills. We need to create ‘future skills’ environments of inviting, enabling and trusting people to ‘run with it’.

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