

# If vernacular advertising performs well, the results cannot be ignored

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“Afrikaans and indigenous advertising are increasingly under pressure owing to globalisation. It can only survive if it sets creative standards that other people would want to emulate and if it can reach different target markets so effectively that the results simply cannot be ignored. If all role-players who deem this important, joined forces and focused on working towards this end, we could assist in ensuring the future of our indigenous advertising industry.”

So says Henriette Loubser, newly-appointed editor of Netwerk24, digital home of *Die Burger*, *Beeld*, *Volksblad* and *Rapport*, which has pledged its support to the Pendoring Advertising Awards as a platinum sponsor.

## Innovative concepts

Loubser believes it is important that indigenous advertising is promoted and in this respect it is the duty of Netwerk24 and other media role-players to convey the message to marketers that they will be able to reach their markets much more effectively if they communicate with them in the language of the heart - in the sounds, frame of reference and humour so typical of our different language groups.

“This message will, however, only be effective if we have the results to prove this and this is why we also have the duty to approach advertisers with innovative concepts with which they will be willing to experiment,” she stresses.

Jo van Eeden, Netwerk24 publisher, believes that together digital news networks and advertisers can achieve a whole lot “if you have an advertiser with an appetite to innovate and experiment. Within 24.com, a number of highly successful advertising campaigns have already been concluded and executed, which is encouraging and inspiring.”

## Interaction

According to Van Eeden, Netwerk24 continuously reaches out to advertisers to determine which campaigns they are working on and the messages they wish to convey to see if Netwerk24 could be of any assistance to do it online.

“Not only is the ongoing training of sales teams essential, but also the provision of information to advertisers to create awareness of the possibilities. We often tend to focus on the fact that the journalistic environment has been digitally disrupted, forgetting that, in fact, the entire media industry, including advertising, has been disrupted. How we navigate it together – as publishers and



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Henriette Loubser



Jo van Eeden

as advertisers. This is the challenge facing us,” she stresses.

Van Eeden refers to the high quality of the winning advertisements, all in English, at this year’s Bookmarks awards ceremony for innovative and outstanding digital work. “The question is how we can move boundaries in an Afrikaans and indigenous language environment. Netwerk24 and NetNuus were the only finalists honoured at the Bookmarks (two silver and one gold award). Pending annually awards excellent Afrikaans and vernacular advertisements, but when it comes to digital platforms, there is still much room for creativity and innovation.”

It is also important that advertisers and marketers commit themselves from the outset to communicate with consumers in their mother tongue. “It serves no purpose that time, money and creativity are poured into an English campaign which is then translated into Afrikaans and an indigenous language merely as an after-thought. Something is lost in translation,” stresses Van Eeden.

Advertising is not only a sales technique,” adds Loubser. “It is also a showcase of creativity and reflects cultural goods. This way it will assist in keeping languages, cultures and creativity alive.”

## **Opportunities, challenges**

Consumers who have access to the media at any given time and place, not only give Netwerk24 new ways of communicating with them and serving them; but also provides valuable opportunities to listen to them and determine their needs. Netwerk24 utilises this information to improve its value offering to readers/users and advertisers, Loubser points out.

According to her, Media24 moves in parallel with changing consumer needs “by offering our extensive market prime digital content across multiple platforms. The challenge now is to create a sustainable business model that will allow us to build and maintain a future for quality journalism. Moreover, the journalism must be of such a high standard that readers/users will be willing to pay for it, even in a digital age where free information abounds.

“Netwerk24 wants to do the work on behalf of its readers/users and provide them with unique and accurate content that they can trust – be it print, image or sound – as well as a selection of opinions that will enable them to understand what is happening in our country and the world, to make sense of their world and equip them to constructively contribute to a South Africa and a planet where people are tolerant of each other and where everybody gets the opportunity to realise his/her potential. With the technology and data available to us, we want to provide advertisers with new, focused and innovative ways of reaching their market,” says Loubser.

## **Success**

Despite the fact the Netwerk24 is a relatively young brand, the digital news network already operates the most successful pay wall in South Africa. It was adapted in June 2016 and since then the number of subscribers has doubled, Van Eeden points out.

“We are proof that people are prepared to pay for news and authoritative opinions that they can trust. Netwerk24 is the gathering place for every Afrikaans speaker, the place where everybody can have an opinion and can agree or disagree. We have a conversation forum where readers may comment – one of the few websites that still allow readers’ comments.

“We publish fresh and unique content from 5am to 11pm during the week and from 7am to 11pm over weekends. We have the most comprehensive reporting team in the country, with journalists from Polokwane to Cape Town, from Kathu to Kroonstad. We not only offer national news, but also community news, which is gathered by our network of local newspapers,” Van Eeden says.

## **Going forward**

According to her, the name Netwerk24 is beginning to take shape and gaining in popularity. “It is precisely that – a network

of the best journalism that Media24 can offer in Afrikaans. We work hard to market our new brand and in this way, cultivate increasing awareness of the marketing opportunities that we offer,” Van Eeden concludes.

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