

Tractor Outdoor's advertising fund: Meet the SME heroes

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Earlier this year, Tractor Outdoor - one of South Africa's largest out of home (OOH) and digital out of home (DOOH) media owners - launched its SME advertising fund, with the intention of supporting businesses that were hardest hit by the pandemic.

Through the fund, Tractor aimed to provide qualifying small and medium-size enterprises with free advertising via its extensive media networks, in an effort to help them survive the country's challenging lockdown period.

*This weekly video series shares the stories of Tractor Outdoor's **SME Heroes**, and how they managed to endure the most devastating pandemic in modern history.*

Future Champs - one of the beneficiaries of Tractor Outdoor's SME fund - is a registered non-profit organisation (NPO), social enterprise and affiliated network that uses the power of sport as its primary tool in engaging youth from disadvantaged communities.

The NPO has built a number of free-to-use boxing gymnasiums from repurposed shipping containers, which are aimed at those between the ages of five and 19 years old. Future Champs is also responsible for initiating unique sporting and educational programmes with affiliate partner gyms in communities such as Philippi, Imizamo Yethu and Khayelitsha (Western Cape), as well as Hillbrow (Gauteng).

Jeremy Bean, founder of Future Champs, explains that the enterprise was established as a response to the deep tears that run rife throughout the country's socio-economic fabric, and believes that South African children, in particular, experience abnormally high levels of turmoil and stress.

"Inequality, unemployment, poverty, substance abuse and interpersonal violence, along with a generalised HIV epidemic, mean that these children are exposed to several layers of adversity all at once."

Future Champ's centres provide a safe haven to young people, offering them access to mentorship, coaching and physical training, in order to help unlock their potential. The life skills learned extend beyond sport, and these centres have become

important social pillars within communities.

With the announcement of the hard lockdown in March, Future Champs was forced to temporarily close its doors. “This meant that our young members had nowhere to seek refuge from their often-toxic home environments.

“In addition, there was a need for essential relief in the form of personal protective equipment (PPE), food parcels etc.”

During the lockdown, Tractor Outdoor’s SME advertising fund provided Future Champs with R100,000’s worth of free advertising in the form of digital billboards situated in petrol stations across the country, which allowed the NPO to execute a campaign that would enable it to raise funds for its young members.

Says Remi du Preez, commercial director at Tractor Outdoor: “The SME advertising fund was established as we wanted to find a way to help businesses that were struggling, using the resources at our disposal.

“Given the key role that these gyms play in their communities, we felt that it was critical to offer them access to our extensive network of digital out of home media, in an effort to promote their fund-raising campaign.”

Bean says that through this exposure, they were able to connect with other businesses that they have subsequently partnered with, helping Future Champs secure the future of its centres and support its members. “One example is our partnership with Wave Innovate, a tech solutions company, which has generously offered to fund the refurbishment of one of our gyms.”

With the announcement of Level 1, things are looking up for the NPO. “We are slowly getting back to training, and are planning an amateur tournament inside our newly upgraded gym,” says Bean.

Du Preez believes that now is an opportune moment for SMEs to consider investing in OOH. “There is a misperception that outdoor media is inordinately expensive, and thus out of reach for small businesses. Contrary to this, we do a lot of work with SMEs, and tailor-make packages to help them deliver on their campaign objectives, whilst accommodating their budgets.

“OOH is a dynamic and accessible medium that is open to everyone - not only big corporates.”

Du Preez notes that in the wake of a pandemic, businesses will continue to be under pressure, as a result of the recent hard knock to consumers’ wallets.

“Right now, it is more important than ever for companies to prioritise investing in their brands, in order to remain top of consumers’ minds - and OOH is one of the best mediums for this,” he concludes.

Are you an SME that is interested in exploring opportunities within OOH and DOOH? Get in touch with Tractor Outdoor at info@tractoroutdoor.com

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