

Making a difference, one school at a time

Issued by [Joe Public](#)

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It is the era of the triple bottom line. A time when companies are expected to deliver to more than its shareholders. In fact, it has become critical for 21st century business leaders to have an acute eye on the bigger picture, especially within the context of the challenges that face South Africa today.



Joe Public
for people by people

Enter Joe Public, a full-service advertising agency of 45 people that is heading to the top of its industry. Positioned within the market as being For People, By People, this young business is starting to make waves.

Says Joe Public's Executive Creative Director, Pepe Marais: "If the purpose of one's business is only to make money, then you may as well enjoy the rest of your years of accumulating your wealth with a serious chance of never really attaining your business' true potential." To this end the company has designed its purpose around people - not surprising when you are called Joe Public.

"The purpose of our business is to create a platform for the growth and success of passionate and talented advertising professionals. This philosophy has become the rudder that steers us into the future. And this philosophy is what is showing us the way in terms of our investment into the community at large, outside the walls of our business."

To this end, the company has adopted a High School in Dobsonville, Soweto. The reason for this move is quite simple: There are 30 000 schools in South Africa. 1 500 are top schools. 4 500 are ok. And 24 000 are dysfunctional. 80%. The net result is an educational system that churns out less than 20% of learners enabled to face a future filled with hope. Compounded by the fact that a person without Matric is six times more likely to commit crime, and the future takes on a different perspective.

Says Laurent Marty, Strategic Director and partner in Joe Public: "If the great Nelson Mandela's challenge was to free the people of South Africa of oppression, the problem 16 years later is as challenging: To free the minds of the people of South Africa."

A daunting task, perhaps, but not an impossible one if one starts with one school.

Which is exactly what the Forte High project entails. Over the past two and a half years, Joe Public assisted the school in creating their own vision, mission statement and set of core values. They also financed 18 of the 42 teachers to attend life awareness workshops enabling teachers to uncover their true potential. Further to this, the head of the project, Bronwyn James, meets with the school monthly, driving pre-set annual goals with the principal and his heads of departments. The company believes that the lack of proper management tools within the school is at the heart of the problem that faces our current system.

Further to this, with the help of funds raised through Joe Public's annual fundraising event as well as corporate sponsorships from their Tracker client and the CTM group, the company was able to upgrade all ablution facilities for the learners and build a tennis and basketball court for the school during the course of 2009. It is a small step in motivating change but a big step in manifesting hope within a school where the infrastructure is overcrowded by 60%.

And the next step?

A new library for the school. The concept of "skyscrapers" rings true here. Give people hope by showing that you mean business. It is with this goal in mind that Pepe Marais will be climbing Kilimanjaro on September 5, 2010. To raise the R500 000 needed for this project. The trip is fully financed by his business. All he needs now are more and more businesses to step forward in the fight for a better education for all. The pledge list is expanding by the day and has reached R200 000. With a few weeks to go, the sky truly is the limit.

Businesses in a position to offer assistance are asked to email a pledge per metre climbed (the summit of Kilimanjaro is 5985 metres), to pepe@joepublic.co.za or melanieerasmus@gmail.com.

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Joe Public

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