Unlocking true digital magic

By [Leigh Andrews](#)   16 Mar 2016

While we're on the right path, the only way we can reach the goal of creating immersive digital work that resonates with the audience is to ensure clients understand digital's value. Here's how.

In addition to his day job as [magic steam turbine driver](#) (make that 'CEO') of Owen Kessel Leo Burnett, Felix Kessel slots in lots of little extras that prove his passion for the industry. For example, he chaired the [marketing panel](#) of this year's recent IAB Bookmark Awards. No small task, this involved keeping the jury panel on track and facilitating dialogue and debate among the judges around the work presented.

Not surprisingly, as his love for creativity means he tends to see a bit of magic in everything, he lists not one but three highlights from this year's IAB Bookmark Awards. Two of these were the communication from King James for City of Cape Town, both for bringing its [new tagline](#) 'Making progress possible together' to life, which involves an immediate social media response team to problems reported (yes, really), and the city's drug rehabilitation campaign 'Someone in Cape Town', both of which made use of existing social communities to entertain, educate and elicit action from their intended audience. That, after all, is what makes good digital ideas truly great. Kessel says these were handled "sensitively and spectacularly", and show how the communication mandate was elevated through the added boon of massive utility and uplifting perception of the brand.

Kessel lists another "beautiful idea" as that of NATIVE VML's [rethinking the immigrant crisis](#) in the user-generated content category by giving refugees back their humanity in digitally hijacking or literally replacing 'immigrant' with 'human being' in news reports. It's an idea that's simple, effective and emotive. He calls on these campaigns as excellent examples of clever social media use and a clear example of effective digital strategy for other agencies to follow.

Digital work that works

On the other end of the digital wand of wonderful work, Kessel felt a little sad that the actual entries themselves detracted from the work that hit the world. While the actual work is great, Kessel found it frustrating knowing just how good the end result is and seeing the entries reflecting a mere shadow of that magic. The good news is, South Africa's digital work definitely is getting better year-on-year. When he looks at international integrated entries, Kessel says the work that's entered into purely digital categories, even when there's an outstanding traditional component, isn't always the most

deserving of the digital win.

[Lucozade 'give me strength'](#) integrated silver winning campaign is an example of how integrated really should be done. It's clear we still have a way to go in this regard.

Little wonder then that Kessel says we need to stop treating digital as a 'digital thing' – we're slowly starting to understand what we can truly expect from digital. Globally, the industry is refining the massive promise that digital initially made, into what is actually possible. To truly be noticed and get people to spend time where you want them to, your message has to be pretty much the best part of their day. What digital has long promised, the entertainment industry has learned to deliver – the truly immersive experience. Brands are not there yet and still do not have permission to command that much attention and time in our lives. It's a digital trend starting to make waves around the world and agencies are beginning to get it right locally.

Best we do so fast, as this is what Kessel calls the crux of an award-winning digital campaign: At the convergence of digital, technology and creativity lies the true magic; the potential for the kind of immersion that takes your breath away. The parallel in traditional advertising is to physically lock your audience into a cinema and force them to be moved or compelled by your on-screen message. Digital has the same ability to really grab your audience, whatever screen is used to convey the message. It's just a case of getting it noticed through all the clutter. Kessel says great digital work will do this.

Your job: Make clients understand digital's value

The reason we're not seeing enough of this type of digital work quite yet locally is that agencies aren't helping their clients fully understand the value of digital. Kessel says the key to getting this right is to prove to them that what you do in digital is as important as work in the traditional media they're used to. As agency, it's your job to drag the client towards the next big thing, but if you don't believe the hype yourself, they won't bite.

Agencies therefore need to bring the value of digital front and centre. When it comes to discussing what's best for the brand, digital must play a role. Even though it is measurable, we need the results to be reported and understood in much the same way as we now see traditional media values – so quantify the actual results in honest, real terms and reference them in such a way that their true value shines, says Kessel.

It's the only way we'll start moving forward faster on the path to truly impactful digital work.

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