

Red & Yellow bid farewell to John Cooney

 By [Pasqua Heard](#)

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Last week, the Red & Yellow School of Logic and Magic held its first ever Alumni Reunion at the launch of its Alumni Association chaired by Philip Ireland of Ireland Davenport. The event included a notable send-off for John Cooney, who played a vital role in developing the school.

Introduced as the evening's guest of honour, Cooney joined the Red & Yellow School in 1999. He has held the position of chairman emeritus since he ended lecturing at the school two years ago.

"What John brought to the school was in a way the logic to Brian and Allan's magic. He pioneered the MAC [Marketing, Advertising and Communications] course and, as someone who has hired many hundreds of graduates in the last 17 years, I consider it to be the finest course that South Africa has to offer this industry," says Rob Stokes, founder of Quirk Marketing Agency and chairman of Red & Yellow.



John Cooney, Rob Stokes and some of the Red & Yellow School's magic makers.

Magic makers

As part of his farewell to the school, Cooney presented a wooden plaque dedicated to the school's top students, deemed 'magic makers', since the school started in 1999.

"We tried to define what a magic maker was and, frankly, you can't. But you can recognise a magic maker. You'll see they find a situation where they can use the knowledge, confidence and creativity that has always been inside them," explains Cooney, "Red & Yellow's programmes... give the students the opportunity to use the skills they are best at - not what the curriculum says they must do - and blend them with fluid but practical businesslike rigour and hit the road running."

The first student to feature on the plaque is David Moffatt, founder of Hellocomputer. Others included Jason Harrison, founding partner and group managing director at M&C Saatchi Abel, as well as Faheem Chaudhry, strategist at M&CSaatchi London.

Cooney concluded his speech with one final gift: a bench for present and past learners to enjoy at the school's premises.

Alumni Association

In explaining the role of the Alumni Association, Ireland says: "We have a career built solely on one thing and that is bridging the gap between what we can imagine and what we can create. The challenges that the education industry faces at the moment are profound and they are going to take a lot of creative thinking to get beyond them, because inevitably, as fees must fall something else must rise - something must uplift, empower and become a positive force to build rather than break down. Institutions like the Red & Yellow are a beacon of hope for that. The Alumni committee is dedicated to supporting the institution, the faculty and this network of graduate professionals particularly by raising money to create access to underprivileged students to this magnificent facility.

"As graduates come out of the school, the alumni can mentor and show them around the industry in a way that no one else can. The greatest resource that the Alumni have are the other Alumni and our job as a committee will be to focus you as a cohort, so that you can be a positive force for good in the world."

Stokes elaborated on this point by saying that the Alumni serves to reconnect the myriad students who have passed through Red & Yellow's doors and draw on the rich talent of those who have ventured into advertising and marketing professions. He assured the crowd that the Alumni's intention extends beyond merely requesting donations for the school.

"It's really about the power of many... To be able to give one bursary is profoundly impactful in our society, but I want it to be about much more than that. If you don't want to give money, give your time. An hour of lecturing a year can have a genuinely positive effect on the school," says Stokes.

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