

# What advertising execs earn

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*Agencies are having to do more with fewer resources, and there's more staff burn-out and pressure to transform.*



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Though salaries in the advertising industry have improved over the past year, pay levels for top talent have remained largely flat.

A new survey by industry recruitment agency Ad Talent shows the average 2016 Johannesburg salary for a client service director has gone up from R57,000 to R59,000 and that for a strategic planning director from R78,000 to R80,000.

The average monthly take-home for an executive creative director remains at around R100,000 while that of a copywriter is anything between R35,000 and R65,000, depending on experience. This is much the same as 2015. The average for a Johannesburg MD has risen to R140,000 from R120,000.

Ad Talent's Brenda Bensted-Smith says: "Clients want more bang for their buck and salaries have moved little in the past year." Pressure on agencies' resources is immense and many are doing more with less.

Of more concern to the industry, she says, is that agency staff are burning out more quickly and requesting moves to their clients, where salary and perks are more stable. There seems to be more job-hopping to increase salaries.

The survey shows digital salaries are more in line with traditional agencies for the first time, but that digital creative directors can earn less than their traditional counterparts. It also appears that many agencies are employing more juniors to keep costs down.

Ogilvy and Mather group CEO Abey Mokgwatsane says: "An agency's hiring and retrenching cycle is in direct proportion to the revenue it generates. These cycles are more erratic given clients' increased appetite to change agencies more frequently than in the past."

And agencies can't compete with client salary budgets where most talent is migrating. "Though we might offer a more vibrant, innovative and creative work environment, staff that seek financial incentives above anything else will be lured by the client environment."

Gary Leih, CEO and founder of Cape-based agency OFyt, says: “The challenging part for agencies here is that some clients are migrating to Jo’burg, so the gains are up-country. With an economy placed to grow by only 1% this year you can bet on stagnant growth in ad-land employment.”

Leih says ad agencies are not spending enough time upskilling, training and mentoring their staff, especially at entry level.

“Very often, entry-level employees are left, under huge pressure, deadline and otherwise, without being trained or managed sufficiently.”

Odette van der Haar, CEO of the Association for Communication & Advertising, says business in the industry is being moved around between the agencies and to a large extent, so is the talent.

Furthermore, promulgation of the MAC Sector Codes of the BBBEE Act has put pressure on agencies to transform. This includes incorporating transformed talent in agencies. Van der Haar says tertiary institutions that feed the profession with talent are finding it hard to meet the demand for transformed talent because of the “degradation of the education system”.

Van der Haar believes agency remuneration is not on par with professional services in other industries.

“It is unfortunate that agency fees are always driven down because marketing and advertising are deemed an expense and not an investment.”

She’s calling for greater investment in skills development in agencies.

“Clients are constantly upskilling themselves and if agencies don’t do the same, what is procured from agency partners will be done in-house.”

**Source:** Financial Mail



Odette van der Haar

Picture: [Robert Tshabalala](#)

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