

Justify it with real figures for it all to add up

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

31 Mar 2015

I often get breathlessly excited news releases from digital agencies puffing out their chests about some clever campaign. What is often absent from these announcements is figures...

When there are figures, they are (considering the amount spent on the campaign and the often-high profile of the client) somewhat underwhelming, to say the least. Facebook likes in the range of hundreds or actual physical response of well under 1,000 on a national campaign would, in any other medium I suggest, get the ad agency and media planners fired. But, in the digital space no one can hear you scream... and, apparently, the old-fashioned business metrics (that's a current buzzword) of sales and profits don't apply to the brave new web world.

Please don't rush off now and paint me as a technophobe: I know a lot more than many of you might think about digital... but I am unusual in that, when it comes to technology, I have the annoying habit of questioning the answers.

Digital can, and does, work, in many ways. But, frankly, I don't believe it until I see some real numbers.

Real numbers I was reminded about a few days ago in conversation with the redoubtable Peter Mann, head of Meropa Communications. Peter reminded me of the launch event for Ford's sexy new Mustang. With just on 300 or so guests at the event, it generated more than 2 million social media shares within 24 hours. You cannot even begin to calculate that return on investment because it's off the charts.

However, as Easter approaches, the print sector (yes, I know I'm biased) is fattening up with advertising inserts - and I have to say (yet again) that these are some of the most cost-effective marketing vehicles around. There are few of us who pick up a newspaper (be it paid for or a "knock and drop") who don't pore over these, comparing prices, looking for specifics or just window shopping. Designs of these inserts vary from standard, straight-up-and-down (with heavy emphasis on pricing and call-to-action) to elegant.

One such insert stood out this week. In its normal, sophisticated style, Cape Union Mart again produced a winter catalogue, which had me - and, I'll guarantee, plenty of others - looking, drooling... and thinking. Timed ahead of the Easter weekend, which is our climate watershed in South Africa (where we start sliding down into winter), the catalogue was a perfect example of how it should be done. Good photography, simple, clear graphics, and unmissable push-to-purchase messages.

Plenty of people will be in Cape Union Mart stores this week, I'll bet. Great marketing, so it gets an Orchid.



Clearly not Seery... © Piotr Stryjewski – [123RF.com](https://www.123RF.com)

One of the things which annoys not just me but most other journalists is PR people who send you material that's too late for deadline - because they haven't bothered to find out how your production process works. It is not only disrespectful but counter-productive and a waste of client money, because no coverage results.

Latest example to affect me personally (and I realise I am a miserable git sometimes) occurred last week when I got an e-mail at around 2pm on Thursday from a junior PR person at the international Dentsu Aegis group, informing me that two senior people from its European operations would be speaking at the Adweek Europe conference the following Monday, and would I be interested in speaking to them?

Given that my Media and Marketing pages go into production on a Thursday morning (and were almost done by that afternoon), the e-mail was absurd.

Hence, my reply: "If you want me to do something in the run-up to an event and you let me know just over one business day ahead of time, don't be surprised when I say no thanks. No thanks. Brendan"

She then came back, in the common South African it's-not-my-fault style and said, actually, she was asked to approach me by "global". My response was: it is actually your fault. If you want to use any medium to convey your client's message, then understand that medium's production processes. If you had, you would have been able to tell your London clevers that they were too late.

I also could not understand why a large, professional and successful global group would wait until the last minute to think of coverage in our pages. Maybe we are unimportant and only an after-thought. But, even your after-thought didn't work because you don't understand the world of communication.

And, because I understand that she is only a junior PR person, the Onion goes to Dentsu Aegis: you all need some PR Basics 101 education.

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ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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