Challenging the concept, 'Creativity is irrelevant to business'

During October 2014, Adobe South Africa hosted a roundtable discussion to discuss the relevance of creativity in today's business environment. Creative heavyweights had to challenge the status quo of 'Creativity is irrelevant to business'.

Customers have changed. They are empowered and informed. They have a better understanding of available products and services. In the age of information overload, breaking through the clutter takes skill and perception. The discussion forum delved into the role that creativity plays in delivering information to consumers.

Creativity for creativity's sake

The dialogue between a vibrant palette of heavyweight industry influences focused on identifying and considering the correlation between business success and creative endeavours and how consumers interact, is prompting change in the creative industry.

As we see technology and innovation leading the charge towards corporate dominance, the role of creativity is evolving rapidly and creatives need to ensure that their quivers are stocked with more than just pixie dust and light sabres.

The roundtable participants were unanimous in the belief that creativity for creativity's sake is no longer an option. It has to focus on giving effective, measurable output. Clever slogans and inspired sketches need to yield bottom line results if they are to be taken seriously.

The delicate balance between creativity and profit margins begs the question: can corporate culture and the bureaucracy that it necessitates stifle the creative process? The jury still seems to be out on this. Many participants at the roundtable expressed their understanding that commercial creativity cannot take place in a vacuum. The only way that creatives can garner the respect of the marketplace and ensure that their value is fully appreciated is through the provision of a total

solution from the initial light bulb idea to a neatly packaged product that does what it says. Creating an experience that lives up to the promise is an integral part of the process.

Work across different mediums

According to a recent study conducted by Adobe, entitled 'The New Creatives Report', 66% of the creatives surveyed expect that their current role will not exist within three years. This does not mean that these positions are going to fall away; it means that the creative industry is morphing at such a pace that a gentle jog is not going to keep you in the race.

The digital platform has created an expectation in customers to access and consume information across multiple apps and devices. Creatives are aware that they must learn to work across mediums and disciplines in an increasingly fragmented environment to maintain relevance. Coding, and the ability to understand the front end of web development, is also becoming a prerequisite as opposed to a nice to have.

"The shift to digital requires new technology, new approaches and, in many cases, entirely new roles. Collaboration is a key factor in the development of digital strategies that are integrated across social, mobile, advertising, marketing and communication in general," says Adobe Territory Account Manager, Simon Bromfield.

The consensus was that creatives need to create value for themselves and adopt a 'design thinking' mentality. The capacity for visionary conduct, a cool head in times of failure or disillusionment and a knack for recognising good or bad ideas will ensure the survival of the creative industry in times when profit trumps ingenuity.