

#BehindtheSelfie with... Gail Schimmel

 By Leigh Andrews

20 Feb 2019

This week we go behind the selfie with Gail Schimmel, CEO of the Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB), and writer.



Schimmel says, "This turned out to be much harder than expected..."

1. Where do you live, work and play?

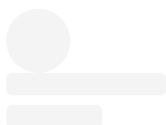
I live in Craighall Park. The ARB has been started on a shoestring budget and we are very lucky that one of our members, MASA, house us in their offices in Bryanston at a nominal rent.

I'm going to be honest – I am a village girl at heart and the drive from Craighall to Bryanston is not my favourite part of the new ARB – thank goodness that podcasts spare me from listening to the news!

2. What's your claim to fame?

I'm the CEO of the new Advertising Regulatory Board. I'm also a novelist – my next book is out in March this year.

“





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#TheAccident On a shelf near you soon. #Books #Reading #ReadSA

A post shared by [Gail Schimmel van Onselen \(@therealgailschimmel\)](#) on Feb 1, 2019 at 5:35am PST

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3. Describe your career so far.

In a nutshell, I am an attorney who was lucky enough to find a field of practice that is exciting and dynamic and stimulating.

I started out practising law, then lectured for a few years before working at the ASA. I left the ASA to take up a brief directorship at ENS, but when I had a baby I left and consulted for about ten years. When the ASA hit troubled water, I put up my hand to try to be part of the solution.

The last two years with the ASA can be described as tumultuous. I'm hoping that my 2019 ARB career will be described as steady and solid!

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Is it boringly predictable and a bit nauseating to say, my husband and children? Well, some days.

I love reading (and, obviously, writing). I like eating good food and drinking good gin. I love my garden. I like travelling and going to the bush is an annual “must”.

“



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You can follow the puppy at Jake_the_choc_lab! #labradors
#labradorsofinstagram #dogsofinstagram #chocolatelabrador #choclab
#puppiesofinstagram

A post shared by [Gail Schimmel van Onselen \(@therealgailschimmel\)](#) on Nov 4, 2018 at 7:16am PST

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We have a puppy and mostly, I love him. And the cats. And the geriatric old dog. I'm an introvert but I love nothing more than a long, slow, boozy Sunday lunch with friends.

I don't exercise. Ever.

5. What do you love about your industry?

I straddle a few industries and I suppose that is exactly what I love. I am always learning new things and being exposed to new ideas. I love the excitement of a problem unravelling and the stimulation of a new endeavour that will ultimately improve the industry.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

I start early – usually I will be in the office by 8am at the latest.

“ I always start with my inbox – I can't leave a mail unread. I don't know how people stay sane when they have 356 unread items showing. I will deal with easy correspondence, and then put out any fires that have sprung up overnight. ”

I will edit and sign off any pending rulings, deal with our social media, set up appointments and go to them, and check the finances are where they should be. With a staff of just three full-timers, the CEO is more like the Jack of all trades – so no day is identical.



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I am also a hands-on mom so I fetch my kids, help with homework and feed us all. I know that isn't strictly speaking part of the work day – but it sure feels like work to me.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

My laptop and my diary (yes, an old-fashioned paper one.) I am lost without these.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

I am going to take the fifth on this one – I can't name creative advertising work without being accused of bias; I can't name a lawyer without being accused of touting on their behalves! I can tell you what SA writers I think you should be reading this year... but I don't think that's what the question was looking for!

9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

I am going to get on my ARB soapbox now.

For the last year-and-a-half, myself and other industry speakers have been warning the industry that if self-regulation is not supported and funded, it will die. And the alternative will be government intervention in the advertising space – which is happening more and more already.



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1 Jun 2017



The liquidation of the ASA almost saw the end of self-regulation in South Africa.

If the IAB, ACA and MASA had not stepped forward, it would have died. But industry players still refuse to fund self-regulation, refuse to consider themselves bound by self-regulatory decisions and loudly criticise with very little actual knowledge. We have to see the industry taking ownership of their regulation – and putting their money where their mouths are.



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Rant over. For now.

10. What are you working on right now?

A very long to-do list. Today's priorities include getting a ruling out, setting up the final details of an appeal next week and trying desperately to get back to fundraising. Oh, and I'm writing a thriller...

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

In 2019, we'll be talking about the Social Media Code and the #UNStereotype alliance a lot.



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Leigh Andrews 11 Jun 2018



There's no doubt transformation stays high on all our agendas – and what that means for the content of advertising is always an interesting area. This year, I am going to avoid saying “granular” and “learnings”... two phrases I hate that just keep on falling out of my mouth!

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

In the bath or shower.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

I can touch my nose with my tongue.



Schimmel submitted this as proof of her party trick.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

A mixture – but I am quite change-resistant so probably veering more to the “phobe” side of things.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

A terrible, terrible social media problem. I have checked Facebook 5 times while writing this.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

I think that depends on which of my industries. But what I feel strongly about across the board is that people who regard everything that they do as an opportunity go far.

“ As a lawyer, a lot of your early career is really crap – but the skills you learn, the contacts you make and the attitude that your boss sees are going to last a long time. At the risk of sounding like a nauseating Facebook meme: There are no obstacles, only opportunities. ”

Simple as that. Follow Schimmel on [Twitter](#), as well as the ARB on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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