

Cracking big ideas in the cognitive era

 By Leigh Andrews

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The second session of the IMC2017 was all about going back to basics in defining the core principles of big ideas that work; how to disrupt or be disrupted as we enter the fourth industrial revolution; and the sad truth that as consumers, we are still being communicated at, not communicated with.

IMC Conference MC Di Charton introduced Boniswa Pezisa, CEO of Network BBDO, by saying she has sat on practically every body the industry has to offer, going beyond just advertising to include multiple NGOs. Pezisa appropriately kicked off the second session of the 2017 IMC Conference with a talk on big ideas driving brand salience at scale.

Pezisa stated it's not just about where you share the idea, but also the how and the why that matters, as without ideas you can't even get onto that platform. "If we get this right as Africans, we can inspire the world," she says, as her view is that the world is upside down: Africa should be at the top of the globe, with Cape Town at the peak, especially if we create world-class work that's more integrated and effective.



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Pezisa added that we live in the most exciting century due to the democratisation of media and getting messages onto specific channels, where we ultimately dilute our efforts and create clutter while trying to inspire consumers. All this in a world where she says, "140-characters are meant to give us the full story." Remember that audiences are busy and fragmented, so we need big, simple ideas to reach them. In a nutshell, she says it's a single thought that connects all that we say about our brand, in a way that matters to our audience.

It's an idea that revitalised the Old Spice brand that was almost 100-years-old when it devised its 'smell like a man, smell like me' campaign that still hits its mark seven years after its first flight:

Pezisa's core principles when building big ideas:

- Be **single-minded** about the problem you are trying to solve right from the onset.
- This gives you **clear objectives** or purpose.
- Create **exosystems for the customer journey**, be disciplined and drive the experience.
- Remember that you don't have to use all the platforms, just the ones that **match your message**.

Pezisa ended with the tip to simply look for consistency when taking your (simple) big idea to scale.

Valter Adao, lead director at Deloitte Digital Africa, was next on stage, speaking of the **Fourth Industrial Revolution**. His opening statement hit home for many:

“ If you've ever used the word *innovation* that you could interchange with *awesome*, that's not innovation. ”

Sharing context, he said that today's world is faced with unprecedented uncertainty, coupled with questionable brand loyalty and disruptive technologies. This means we have to change the way we think about them to truly disrupt the technologies of the day. It's no longer the science-fiction it felt like just 18 months ago. Now, it's necessary to keep your business competitive and relevant into the future. Adao explained Spratt's earlier point that Amazon started out selling books, then stationery, then Thanksgiving turkeys, and now delivers to the ISS with its blue-and-orange rockets. That's true disruption.

Adao also explained that we can learn from the previous three industrial revolutions:

1. First was the introduction of **energy** into the workplace
2. Next came **high-volume manufacturing**
3. The most recent involved **enterprise computing**.

History has shown that the organisations that failed to adopt the disruption of the day simply disappeared. For some industries, the consequences are dire, as the danger will come from below and outside your sector more than from your direct competitors.



Pezisa, Adao and Bus.

Adao ended with a reminder that the importance of business agility ties in with Darwin's theory of evolution: **It's not the strongest or smartest that survive, it's those most able to adapt to change.** Explaining how that relates to the business world of 2017, Adao says to: "Uber yourself before you get Kodaked".

The final speaker before lunch was Gerrit Bus, Watson commerce executive for IBM Middle East and Africa. He spoke of redefining customer engagement in this cognitive era, and says when he speaks to 'marketing people like us', he asks them to put on their consumer hats to see how compelling (ahem, or not) their customer engagement really is.

We are still being communicated at, not communicated with

Bus says to recognise your customers' purchase intent wherever it may be, and to understand how people navigate your channels. It may be an eye-opener to realise that we dictate the journeys to our customers and not the other way around, as most of us actually don't know what journeys they want to take. But what if, during your campaign's flight, you could drill down to see how just well it is doing and redefine it where need be? Well, Bus says this particular future is just five minutes from now as all of this is already possible, turning marketers into more of a business value-add to the company than they are at present. All you need to do is let the systems tell you what to spend more focus on instead of giving in to 'analysis paralysis'.

Bus says the best way to grow your brand is to captivate your audience through dialogue - it's no longer a one-way street - and let the system bring you the value of the information. You won't be the first to do so but you'll be among the front runners.



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In the session's panel discussion, Pezisa said to start with a simple human insight when telling a story. That's the business we are in now, as consumers are more discerning against the hard sell through the typical 'broadcast speaker' in their faces.

Bus agreed that technology is getting more sophisticated, but keep in mind that it's all been possible in primitive form for almost a decade and unfortunately we are still talking about it as exceptions as opposed to the rule. Technology has given us the scale to turn the old telegram into something that reaches the world in a tweet. Peziswa concluded: "When great ideas are steeped in the brand's DNA, they have longevity for as long as they are relevant." Hear, hear.

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