

Not-so 'Under the Radar'

 By Leigh Andrews

5 Feb 2016

There's a not-so-new agency in (Cape) Town. It sees the whole of 2015 as a highlight as it's the year it moved into new offices in both Rose Street, Bo Kaap and Maboneng, Johannesburg. It also won new clients in Visa, Bacardi and DGB, entered and won its first Loerie, welcomed many new faces through their doors and launched a new [website](#). Here's why RADAR's set to be the pulse of the local brand design industry.

"Great design, once seen as the prerogative of the wealthy is now an expectation of everyone, and rightly so. We believe that in this visual age, design helps to tell the brand story in a language that everyone speaks."

That's the view of Kyle Sarkas, managing director of RADAR.



Kyle Sarkas

Haven't heard of them? Chances are you actually have, just under a different guise. In 2006, four friends left Ogilvy to launch Under the Radar (UTR), a specialist below-the-line agency.

They believed that it was time to launch "a new kind of agency that backed away from its reliance on traditional media".

Unfortunately, Under the Radar had been just that, operating under the radar from most of the advertising and marketing industry.

But this all changed in 2012, when Jason Ray bought out his three partners and has evolved its name and offering to a full-service communications offering. The agency has been rebranded as RADAR ever since.

Sarkas tells us more...

'Same same, but different'

"Like any other agency, we try to solve our client's business challenges creatively," says Sarkas. But the difference with RADAR is that they're involved before most agencies are even thought of, which gives real insight into the business and its audience and enables deeper, more meaningful work.

Perhaps that's why they won the Mutual and Federal account after an intense pitch process against some of the industry's biggest players, proving they punch well above their weight. They also prefer to 'grow their own timber', as much of the team has been at RADAR for a long time and grown with the agency over the years. That doesn't mean to say they're anti-new though, as they've recently welcomed many faces back into the agency when employees have gone out there and realised that the RADAR philosophy of creative autonomy isn't duplicated everywhere else.



RADARs not-so-new kids on the block

It's a strategy based on being experts in their clients' business to help it grow, with the agency model structured accordingly. For example, RADAR's client service team - an integral part of the marketing team - is sometimes actually placed inside their clients' offices. In addition, as they believe in working with senior people, the studio is organised as such, with four creative directors that work with their teams in a very hands-on way.

Looking back, looking forward

That hands-on approach is reaping rewards - literally speaking, as RADAR entered awards for the first time in 2015 and came out smiling with their first Loerie for fashion brand COAL in the 'brand identity and collateral design' category. They wanted to create an identity that would always allow the fabric to be the hero and considered how the logo would work with the brightly coloured clothing and fabrics key to the brand.

Sarkas confirms that while the playing field for the local advertising industry has become a lot larger in recent years, he still believes South Africa produces some of the most incredible work, as tends to be evidenced in the international award shows. But the buck doesn't stop there, as he's excited to see Africa making its mark in the near future, too.

Cloudy with a chance of disruption

Delving into that unpredictable future, at the very top of his list of industry trends predicted for 2016, Sarkas speaks of connection of customers in an industry disruptive way.

"The largest taxi company doesn't own a single taxi. The biggest accommodation provider owns no real estate. The biggest media company creates no content and the crowdfunding business are expected to surpass venture capital funding in 2016."

'Disruptor' brands like Uber, AirBNB, Facebook and Kickstarter have managed to do all this through connections and we can expect more of this in the months to come.

And while 2016 is set to be a year of focus for the agency, in terms of spending time and effort helping clients grow and meet their business objectives, that doesn't mean it's all about the profit as they also try to stay in touch with the community around them and focus any pro-bono work appropriately and help local businesses build their individual brands.

An example of this is the 'dog fundraiser' they're holding tomorrow, 6 February 2016 in De Waal Park. It's dubbed a 'designer duds' sale, in aid of raising funds to uplift the kids' and dogs' play area. RADAR lovingly designed the artwork for the event, which includes branded frisbees, posters and even a painted fountain. All well and good, but the stand-out aspect

is that they targeted the artwork at dogs, hoping their owners would pass on the message:

“ *Bring your human to our pre-loved designer duds sale, the band stand, De Waal Park, 6 February.*

pic.twitter.com/KGnb1a4WEK— RADAR (@RADAR__Agency) [January 25, 2016](#) ”

That's a clever twist on the usual design mindset. [Click here](#) for more on Radar or follow their [Twitter stream](#).

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.

- #Loeries2020: Behavioural economics as creativity, but not as we know it... - 24 Nov 2020
- #Dl2020: Ignite your inner activist - representation through illustration - 27 Feb 2020
- #Dl2020: How Sho Madjozi brought traditional Tsonga *xibelani* into 2020 - 27 Feb 2020
- #Dl2020: Silver jubilee shines with Department of Audacious Projects launch - 26 Feb 2020
- #BehindtheSelfie with... Qingqile 'WingWing' Mdlulwa, COO at The Whole Idea - 26 Feb 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>