

Nike's Caster Semenya ad just does it

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Great marketing is one thing, poor customer service and incompetence is another - and that's why Telkom gets both an Orchid and an Onion this week.



Screen grabs from the ad.

One of the problems of running a brand is that if you want to make a social statement, or do something intended to change society, then you need to be authentic.

Social media denizens will sniff you out in a heartbeat if all you are doing is “virtue signalling”... telling everybody you are virtuous because you have taken a stand on this or that.

I don't quite know what to make of Nike's controversial current stance on social issues. Athletics gear does not, and cannot, change the world. But if you do support a cause, then you will get support.

That's been the lesson for the company in its use of American football player Colin Kaepernick as the front of its “Just do it” campaign in the US.



He gained notoriety by starting a movement to protest police brutality (especially against African-Americans) by kneeling during the national anthem at games.

Many followed suit, outraging conservatives, who claimed they were desecrating the memory of soldiers fallen in combat (the kneeling action is a tribute to them).

There was pushback against Nike from the conservatives, but its sales quickly bounced back, as did its shares.

Now, the “Just do it” campaign’s in-your-face signature has been extended, with an ad featuring our own Caster Semenya. It shows her winning races, in her Nike equipment of course, but also recreated footage of her youth, from her first steps to her love of running and hard work... although she was, clearly, on a different level to those around her.

“ Then, a voice questions the world (and presumably the international athletic bodies, which have tried to handicap her). It asks if people would have preferred it if she wasn’t so fast, if she didn’t work so hard, if she hadn’t been so proud, if she had taken up a different sport, even if she had not taken her first steps. Then she answers with a simple “well, too bad...” ”

It’s an elegant summation of her fighting spirit. Everyone wants to make her conform, and her response is: to hell with you! The ad ends, perfectly, with the words “When you’re born to do it,” followed by: “Just do it”.

A great match: top-class athlete, top-class athletic brand. And it makes a controversial social statement. So it will be noticed. And getting noticed is good advertising.

So Orchids to Caster Semenya and Nike.

I am handing out another Orchid now, to Artifact Advertising and Telkom, for the clever, updating billboards they’ve just put up. These contain news-driven messages which are changed to echo the events of the day.

I’ve always said that the thing most ad agencies miss is a good news editor – someone who can see a story and get it out there, chop-chop.

Creatives can sometimes see a story, but can be prisoners of their own headspaces (rule number one in news, as in advertising, is: You are *not* the target market).

That's why I like the Artifact idea and Telkom for letting them run with it. It's a great way to keep your name top of mind. So Orchids to you both.

However, great marketing is one thing, poor customer service and incompetence is another, Telkom. I got a call from one of your call centre people this week, as I had decided on your Orchid.

He phoned to try and sell me fibre. Just as someone did in December last year. And at that time, I signed up. But do you think anyone from Telkom bothered to follow up on that December call?

When an organisation is so slapdash about an opportunity to earn money, how bad must it be when it comes to looking after the customer, once the deal has been done?

Judging from all the complaints out there, Telkom, you're not very good.

So, as you receive this Onion, perhaps you could look for the logistics, training and implementation equivalent of Artifact Advertising.

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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