

How VML's quarterly marketing survey will get SA marketers' voices heard

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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Last week, VML released the findings from the first of its quarterly surveys into the role of CMOs in SA. Here, Jarred Cinman, CEO of VML South Africa, explains why the scale of digital spend was one of the most surprising findings and the impact of the surveys on the marketing profession as a whole.



Jarred Cinman, CEO of VML South Africa.

VML's first results are in, and they show there's more money, more data and more pressure on the profession than expected.

More specifically, 40% of those surveyed are responsible for annual budgets in excess of R50m, which is in turn indicative of the value marketing brings to organisations and brands. But marketers of today are responsible for more than just increasing sales, they also improve omnichannel customer experiences and reinvent the customer relationship through digital innovation.

So what do marketers really want, and why? Here, Cinman explains why VML's quarterly survey, for now, seen as just a dipstick, intends to reveal the answers as it grows...

■ ***Let's get right into it – what led to VML running the survey of CMOs in SA? Explain the context for doing so, and how this ties into VML's overall business model.***

We feel that the voice of marketers isn't heard clearly enough, either inside corporates or in the ad industry. There are lots of perceptions about what marketers are doing and why. We want to get to the truth.

As an agency that services this industry, it's really important that we understand what marketers want and why. More importantly, we see it as our role as a citizen of the industry to help it grow and succeed – and understanding what clients are thinking is key to that.

■ ***Definitely. Please elaborate on the research basics in terms of your sample of marketing leads of some of South Africa's largest companies surveyed.***

The first round is a small sample, where about 100 marketers were invited to participate. We will issue our second round of research soon and will be growing that now that we've seen the value in the data collected, broadening the scope of our research as part of our mission to grow it into a definitive and regular measure of South Africa's marketing industry.

We feel sure that our local marketers will benefit from knowing where they stand in relation to their fellow marketers.

■ ***What's the expected outcome of the quarterly surveys, for the marketing profession as a whole?***

We will hopefully shed some valuable light on where we are at and give us all a chance to craft our service offering accordingly.



New research into state of marketing shows more money, more data and more pressure on the profession

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For example, all respondents use three or more agencies to support their marketing efforts, with a third of them using more than five external agencies. So future surveys will explore whether this is an indication that marketers still feel they need specialists for each discipline, and whether these rosters are shrinking or growing.

■ ***Speaking of results, explain the findings of the first survey then: the positives and negatives of “more money, more data and more pressure on the profession”, as well as increased competition and consumer intolerance to advertising.***

A few big things: first that **digital and social** are now such a huge part of marketing spend and offer the greatest returns – that was quite surprising, especially contrasted against the 13% that say they continue to see returns from traditional channels like print and broadcast media and PR. It will be interesting to monitor how this changes over time.

Also, in spite of the majority of respondents saying that they spend the most, and gain the greatest returns from digital channels, “**data analytics**” receives the least ROI. In fact, 33% of respondents said their primary focus for this year is to make better use of existing data, and all respondents said they would invest in training their teams in data analysis and related digital skills, but some marketers said they had too much data to distil.

It seems clear that getting to grips with the huge amount of data now available to marketers is going to be where the biggest advantage lies for the canniest of South Africa's marketing leaders.

“ Data is a buzzword, so while we take it seriously that clients are focusing on it, we need to make sure we don't turn creatives into actuaries. As long as we need to speak to humans, we need more than machines to do it. ”

Consumers' intolerance to ads is probably nothing new, but they now have better tools to block or skip them. So it's up to us to make content that is much more sticky and useful, with more than a quarter of respondents saying their primary focus

would be on creating **customer experiences**.



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Interesting. *What's the expected outcome for the use of these findings by the industry?*

Right now, this is a first stab survey, so I don't think anyone should use the info with too much earnestness. We are planning on building this out and building its scale and scope so stay tuned!

We'll definitely do so! Keep an eye on the [VML press office](#), as well as their [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds for the latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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