

Looking up towards 2019

 By [Gareth Grant](#)

13 Dec 2018

In today's hyper-connected 'smart' world, we find ourselves operating at an increasing and ever demanding pace. To help facilitate this are the likes of laptops, smartphones, Google, YouTube, smartwatches, Google Home, Siri and numerous apps to name just a few. But as a society, how smart are we actually becoming?



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I reflected on a recent holiday I took with my wife and in-laws to the remote Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, a mere 1,096 kilometres from Johannesburg. A great place to get away from the hustle and bustle of Johannesburg and the demanding times we find ourselves in.

Head down

After about a week in the bush with no cellphone signal, I recall our last night in the park, where we happened to have some signal, albeit as strong as the Springboks backline. As we settled in for our last night in the park, I can remember those annoying notification sounds that came through on all of our phones, and just like that we had all fallen victim to the "head down" societal norm that we so often see these days. At that moment, our relaxing time in the bush had been taken away. Taken away not because it has the power to, but because we chose to give it away.

The above is true for our everyday lives, whether it is at home, at the office, in a meeting or even at a restaurant or dinner table. How have these devices taken such control? Or, are we actually starring in the third instalment of *The Truman Show*?

There is new research that says that we look at our smartphones every 12 minutes, equating to burying our faces into these devices 80 times a day. Yes, we find ourselves in an extremely fast-paced world that demands so much of us. Our time. Our energy. Being always on. And that go-go-go society in which today's business world operates. However, at what cost?

Surely we can go more than 12 minutes without looking down? Or is the "head down" culture that strong that it cannot be broken?

Adding value

Yes, attention spans are changing. But surely we have some kind of control? I encourage you to read Sean Sullivan's Blog article:



Attention spans - the evolution of a goldfish

Sean Sullivan 15 Nov 2018



Glance around a boardroom table and you will see the same behaviour I experienced in the tranquillity of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. People have their heads buried in their smartphones or their laptops, with very little engagement. For me, personally, it comes down to respect or a lack thereof. A lack of respect for ourselves, our colleagues, our clients and our partners.

If you are too busy being consumed by your smartphone or laptop, why be present in that meeting?

I think we owe it to ourselves, our clients and our colleagues to show each other respect, put those devices away and be present.

As 2018 draws to a close, take stock of the year that was, and how you can be present and show up in 2019, ensuring we add value in every aspect of our lives.

ABOUT GARETH GRANT

Having joined the advertising industry in 2005, Gareth quickly made a name for himself in the industry. As a newbie he was invited to guest lecturer at the AAA during 2006 and 2008, providing unique insights into his first impressions of the workplace. From his humble beginnings at UM as a media planner, Gareth quickly proved his worth, landing a great opportunity as Senior Media Strategist at FNB, a position he held for four years before joining The MediaShop team.

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