

Understand true diversity to become more inclusively creative

By Leigh Andrews

2 Sep 2019

One of the most interesting sessions of the DStv Seminar of Creativity at #Loeries2019 creative week touched on the difference between inherent and acquired diversity. But many gloss over these terms as business jargon and don't even know which is which, and why both are valuable to your creativity.



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There's no denying that diversity is a top talking point in business today, especially in the creative industries.



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Jessica Tennant 11 Apr 2019



Zibusiso Mkhwanazi, founder and Group CEO of M&N Brands which owns Avatar, [writes that](#) one would think that after seven years of having run a wholly black-owned agency like Avatar that the industry would be further down the road with understanding these demographics – but the assumptions often result in many campaigns missing the mark.

“ The mass market is not only black people. It is South Africa in its diversity. And the diversity needs to start with the people you have sitting in your agency. ”



Mass market challenges need mass-market people

Zibusiso Mkhwanazi 30 Aug 2019



Understanding culture and what culturally good communication is, is key to conceptualising campaigns that resonate well. You can only understand that if the agency has live insights from people as diverse as South Africa, as diversity of staff equals diversity of insights.

But how deep do you go in diving into your staff's diversity?



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Because gender alone is not true diversity. Louder for those in the back of the room...

[Aileen Sauerman of Duke](#) writes that any woman also represents a particular age group, a race group, a sexual orientation or a certain level in the workplace.



The importance of showing up

Aileen Sauerman 30 Aug 2019



Tara McKenty, creative director at Google APAC in Sydney and Loeries digital communication jury president for 2019, was the second speaker at the Dstv Seminar of Creativity at Loeries 2019.

Inherent vs acquired, nature vs nurture

[McKenty took the topic further](#) in describing the two kinds of diversity in the industry as being split into the inherent and the acquired diversity.



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Angie White 23 Aug 2019



Inherent diversity is the 'nature' aspect of the nature-nurture debate.

It's what you're born with that forms part of your personal fabric. Inherent diversity includes:

- Gender
- Race
- Religion
- Sexuality

- Class
- Ability
- Mental health
- Age



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Acquired diversity then is what's 'nurtured'; as the result of your life experiences in making you stand out from the crowd. Acquired diversity includes:

- Tragedy
- Loss
- Illness
- Travel
- Care
- Language skills

But it's not enough just to talk about the various forms of diversity, as we've been doing so for years and reports of 'diversity fatigue' are pouring in from all over the world.



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Instead, we need to walk the walk after we talk the talk.

How to enhance both inherent and acquired diversity

In 2015, the [Global Integration](#) CEO Kevan Hall wrote that socio-economic background could be argued as either inherent or acquired, but more than this, pointed out the following:

“ *Inherent diversity requires changes to our recruitment practices to effectively 'buy-in' underrepresented forms of diversity. It also requires a more inclusive way of working that both attracts and retains people with different life experiences and needs.* ”



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Acquired diversity, on the other hand, is encouraged by increased mobility and breadth of experience.

So don't turn down the candidate who has jumped from job to job before even calling them in for an interview as that indicates a wealth of experience, and let your employees travel, attend events and network with their peers.

[TLNT](#) clarifies that it's not an either/or situation, as a combination of inherent and acquired diversity is what truly benefits your business.

Top tip to enhance creativity: Avoid groupthink!

It's also the best way to: "Spur innovation and avoid groupthink, through cultures that welcome out-of-the-box ideas."



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Leigh Andrews 23 Jul 2018



[TLNT](#) concludes that it's about creating a workforce that can move swiftly into new business models, regions, and markets.

Nowhere is acquired diversity more important than in these environments of constant change like those affected by the ever-snowballing shift to all things digital.

That's the essence of creativity as we head towards 2020.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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