

Be stupid, fail harder and give it all away, says BSSP's Keith Cartwright

By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

20 Aug 2017

The son of a Pentecostal pastor, Keith Cartwright grew up in church and according to him it was a very, very strict religion and it forced him to keep a schedule. Six days a week, 2 hours a day and 8 hours on a Sunday, he had to be in church. This schedule taught Cartwright a lot of discipline. It taught him to sit still and it taught him to pay attention. Besides all the religious and moral lessons that he learned, there were other disciplines that crafted his mind and gave him focus. In the second part of this coverage, he lists three; be stupid, fail harder and give it all away.



#Loeries2017: Doubt yourself and steal, if you want to be great, says BSSP's Keith Cartwright

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Be stupid

"I am definitely guilty of that - a lot," says Cartwright but explains that in business to be stupid means coming out to everyone and admitting that you know absolutely nothing. One of the smartest men in the world, the smartest that's ever lived said: **'I know one thing. I know nothing.'** That was Socrates. So, what does that mean? That means everything is in question. You walk in with an idea of what a brand is, what it stands for and what it is about. But maybe you are wrong. You walk in thinking you know how to solve someone's problem but you could be wrong. The solution is to walk in and to be open-minded. To understand what you don't understand. "So, I always say to myself, **'Think of the most responsible way of doing it and then do the opposite.'** Sometimes that's not the right way to do it but it's the right way to start. Just say to yourself, 'Let me for once do it wrong.'"



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Leigh Andrews 28 Jul 2017



Next he showed us some stupid things that he did that actually worked well because they were willing to take a risk and took a chance.

"No one cares about your tequila. So let's not talk about it." Tres Agaves tequila tripped in sales because of this ad.

[Tres Agaves Friendship](#) from [Phil VanBuren](#) on [Vimeo](#).

"Tell parents to pay less attention to their children." This ad is the most viewed in Lego's history.

"We're gonna make a multi-million-dollar movie trailer for your app game. And we're gonna show it during the Superbowl." This ad took the Evony app from not being ranked to being ranked number 1 for three weeks and it's currently ranked number 5 on the App Store.

[Battle of Evony - Super Bowl Commercial 2017 SB51](#) from [Henry Hobson](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Fail harder

"This is a lesson I actually learnt from someone I ended up working for. Someone who ended up being my boss," says Cartwright. "And I didn't learn from him when I was in advertising, I learnt from him when I was a fan." He is referring to famous sport star, Michael Jordan. The idea of failing harder came from a famous ad that was written a few years ago by creative director, Jamie Barrett on a printed copy ad in reference to Michael Jordan and it says,

"I've missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

So, fail harder and fail faster. Don't waste time. Get to it. Figure out what's wrong because that is actually how you learn. Learning from failure is the process. If everything is a success then you already know about it.

Give it all away

The important aspect of all of this is that it comes full circle with regards to how he was raised, says Cartwright. "My mother was a speech therapist, a teacher, my father was a pastor. And as strict in their discipline as they were, they were also very charitable and very giving people. In America, you don't go into teaching because you want to make a lot of money. You go into teaching because you care about the children. And my father certainly didn't go into the ministry to make money. For him it was about helping people understand that there was a higher power. Someone that I admire and someone that I always look up to, is Dr King. And there is an organisation that I created that was based on one speech that he made and he said it on a talk show called, *CBS This Morning*.

"The most divided day in America the most divided hour in America is 11:00 on a Sunday morning."

At the moment, there's a huge divide in America based on a lot of different principals, based on perceptions. So, he decided to start an organisation with three of friends called Saturday Morning. "The idea of Saturday Morning is based on the principle that if Sunday morning is going to be divided because we go to our respective churches. Saturday Morning is going to be about inclusion and bringing us together so we can talk about our differences, regardless of what culture you are and regardless from where you are from."



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There aren't a ton of African Americans in the advertising business in the United States. It's pretty anaemic. But these are the three co-founders of Saturday morning: Geoff Edwards, Jayanta Jenkins, Jimmy Smith. Last summer was a rough summer for African Americans. Eric Gardner and Armando Garcia all happened within a week. They lost their lives due to police brutality. So, the three of them got together to have a conversation about what was going on. All of them were in advertising and the thought was, 'What can we do? What possibly can we do?' They didn't want to create an advert. That felt like it wasn't big enough. So, they decided that they were going to write a letter to Advertising Week and with that letter they were going to hopefully get some response but it ended up being more than that.

“ [@saturdaymornco](#) presents: The Peace Brief [#makedifferencehappen](#) [#GeoffreyEdwards](#) [@Jayanta](#) [@kmcartwright](#) <https://t.co/zaOoqS7vCH> pic.twitter.com/AmY8Bi3vTZ— Wieden+Kennedy (@WiedenKennedy) [June 18, 2017](#) ”

“We went to Cannes and introduced our organisation that is based on a very specific principal and that is that **all of us are the same**. And we should come together and understand each other and the perceptions that divide us are only perceptions that divide us because we haven't come to a mutual understanding of who we are. And so, we are creative people, we are makers and we want to continue to create and make and so we created a platform, SaturdayMorning.co, where we are inviting all people, whether you are in advertising, whether you're in business, whoever you are, if you want to create something based off of our peace brief, please do it and submit it to SaturdayMorning.co. So, we collect all those ideas and we have created a platform for people to view and see how people are thinking about what's going on in the world. This year's peace brief is based on the police and the community they serve. How do we bring mutual understanding between the two? It's not about pointing fingers and hatred. It's about coming together.”

Cartwright says that the idea of giving it all back is so wildly important because we are only in this business for so long and we are so focussed on winning awards and sometimes focussed on making the best work we can and sometimes focused on promotion, we forget that the things we put out into the world is very influential and that gives us quite a bit of power. We communicate what the next generation sees. how they view themselves. And as humbling as that is, you need to also see it as a responsibility that what you put out in the world is important. Never forget that – **every single thing you put out there is consumed**. So, ask yourself, what are they consuming?

He ended of the talk with one of his favourite quotes: "When everything is said and done. There's nothing left to do or say – Darryl Dawkins. "If you really think about it, he's saying leave it all on the floor. Put everything that you have into what you do and leave it all on the floor and have absolutely no regrets.”

“ Thank you [#Lories2017](#) for an incredible week in Durban, South Africa. pic.twitter.com/QEvivH49Oo— Keith

Cartwright (@kmcartwright) [August 19, 2017](#) ”

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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