

Mellow yellow mouse positions Telkom Directory Services



Telkom Directory Services and The Agency have re-affirmed the might of the humble mouse as a convincing brand character. This time not for a German luxury car, but for a new take on the homegrown source of information, the www.yellowpages.co.za.



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Enter "Mellow" - the diminutive but highly likeable hero - of the latest print, outdoor and TV campaign for the Yellow Page's newly revamped search engine. The mishap-afflicted house mouse identifies not just the problem, but the solution too - instantly accessible, locally relevant information to be found at your fingertips with just a click of an Internet-enabled PC 'mouse' away. Simply type in a problem such as "children's diseases" and www.yellowpages.co.za will find the solution, supplying lists of pediatricians specifically in your geographic area.

So why a mouse? And why a yellow one at that? Isn't the scourge of the suburban pantry a little de trop when affiliated to such a breakthrough cyber innovation? "Not at all," says The Agency Art Director and campaign visualiser, Julie Maunder. "Mellow lends an everyday man-on-the-street touch to all the high tech IT gobbledygook. He's just a normal mouse going about a typical house and lands himself in typical everyday human predicaments," says Maunder.

"Granted, mellow is yellow - that's vegetable dye by the way - but he's no supermouse! In fact he arrives at the appropriate solution quite inadvertently - by running across a home computer keyboard. And the irresistibly gratuitous real mouse versus PC mouse visual pun aside, it has to be said that the campaign does succeed in engaging the imaginations of even the most jaded of consumers."

TDS Account Director at The Agency, Natasha Mienie adds: "Having a chirpy soundtrack (Donovan's "Mellow Yellow") doesn't hurt of course, but still it's remarkable how much people identify and empathise with Mellow and how much they enjoy second-guessing the category that saves the day. And on that note don't be fooled - the commercials' resolves aren't always necessarily immediately obvious - who'd have thought a mouse sniffing concernedly around a tin of baked beans would result in a search for 'Gas Leak Detectors' for instance!"

Client Zwelakhe Ndlovu, film director André Liebenberg and stills maestro Michael Meyersfeld, agree: "He's a feisty little

fellow that Mellow, a hard worker. We didn't train him or anything. He never expected star treatment - in fact, he didn't even negotiate residuals! He just got on with the job. Now that's what you call star quality."

As far as the logistics of working with mice goes, Art Director Maunder says she would give up working with people to work with the likes of Mellow again any day! "We worked with a number of mice all with their own unique characteristics - some were neurotic nose twitchers, others sat up and regularly preened their whiskers, others were tremendously inquisitive - each mouse was numbered and their unique characteristics noted. From there it was lights and action and each mouse was put on the set and left to do their thing.

"We got awesome footage and scripts were written based on their unique performances on the day. Despite the fact that the mice had been trained, there was no saying what would happen on the day," she points out. Filming was completed in three days after two months of training with animal trainers.

Professional animal handlers were flown in from Cape Town to take care of all the Mellow look-alikes.

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