

Put a much-needed spring into your research step...

 By Leigh Andrews

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Looking to access a global network of creative professionals, for actionable feedback on how to enter new markets, launch new products and improve every aspect of your creative campaigns? Springleap's new Creative Insights Division and monthly syndicated trend report could be the answer, says MD and Head of Commercialisation Trevor Wolfe.

It's not often that a technology start-up chooses to base itself in both New York and South Africa. That's part of Springleap's local appeal, and how it has built a solid reputation in our research industry by making crowdsourced design a trustworthy and exciting platform. Now Springleap's taken things even further into the future by launching its [creative insights division](#), dubbed a first of its kind as it's based on the crowdsourcing model to glean research and qualified feedback. Because it has a heady mix of global and pan-African creatives to call on, brands and advertising agencies have learned to draw on the expertise of Springleap's vast online community.

There's also a new monthly syndicated trend report, offering a localised perspective on marketing and brand activity as well as cultural trends - all crucial to really understanding the market in which you're selling. Sold on the concept, I chatted to Springleap MD and head of commercialisation, [Trevor Wolfe](#), to flesh out the details...

■ **1. Firstly, what prompted the need to launch the creative insights division? How does it build on the previous crowdsourcing model?**

Wolfe: The idea to tap into the minds of our creative community actually came from our existing clients. A lot of them who had been using our crowdsourcing model for fresh design executions started asking us if they could use the same model for big ideas and collaboration on the creative process that happens before and after the actual design is created.

The Creative Insights division uses the same network of copywriters, creative directors, digital strategists and graphic designers as our design crowdsourcing product. However, it allowed us to focus more on building a better understanding of our creatives, including their experience with brands and industries, and how they provide feedback. This metadata - our creative taxonomy, if you will - has allowed us to pair the right minds with the right projects.



Springleap's Trevor Wolfe, Bessie Sibanyoni, Thobile Sibanyoni and Remon Geyser.

■ 2. That's the best use of big data I've heard of yet. What's feedback been like, following the division's beta launch?

Wolfe: From our clients, it's been extremely collaborative and supportive. Since it's part of our DNA, we were essentially co-creating these products with our beta clients. They were very open about their frustrations with current market research vendors, with inefficient internal processes, and exactly what they wanted us to build. Their most positive feedback came from our turnaround times to get insights, at just 10 days, and the cost compared to other research resources. We have a great team here of former TNS, Millward Brown and Nielsen professionals who were given a chance to build the products from scratch using modern client needs as a foundation.

Feedback from our creative community was also encouraging. They were very patient as we tested new survey technologies and asked for deeper information about how they create, critique, and absorb trends around them. They are very grateful to be stretched to think about industries, brands, and creative problems that they normally wouldn't spend time on. Because we pay every creative above-market rates for the time they spend on the projects, it is also rewarding financially speaking.

■ 3. Let's get back to business: Tell us more about your day-to-day responsibilities in your role as MD and head of commercialisation...

Wolfe: The majority of my time the past few months has gone to preparing for this launch and for the trend report. Getting pricing, client feedback, marketing, beta clients, and operations all aligned was a big part of it. Our team in Cape Town and Joburg did all the heavy lifting while I did all the secret worrying. The next month will be focused on getting the word out and meeting with clients who are unhappy with the status quo.

We are now officially operating globally, so I spend my other time with our CEO, Eran Eyal, in NYC on expansion plans, investment strategies, and helping him drive business forward in North America. [Click here to read more of what I do.](#)

■ 4. Sounds good. On the topic of taking things global, tell us the importance of brands and companies now having access to a global network of creative professionals...

Wolfe: Up to now, clients looking to expand into new markets, or understand what other brands around the world are doing successfully, have very few resources to work with. Clients that can afford the time and investment of doing so, commission bulky market and consumer research studies, which ultimately never really give them an answer or lead them in one direction or the other. Tapping into panels of creative professionals with the relevant industry experience allows for a very good understanding of what existing brands are already doing, what strategies they're implementing, how they are perceived, and what suggested courses of action one could take to enter the market.

On campaigns, local creatives can give very concrete and actionable feedback on how to improve the copywriting, narrative arcs, imagery and audio to be relevant to their market. They can identify opportunities to partner with local celebrities, sports stars, media channels and influencers, and which demographic segments would respond well to the messaging.

■ 5. This seems like a good spot to segue into trends: What can we expect from the new monthly syndicated Trend Report?



Wolfe: Firstly, we need to mention that this is a monthly South African trend report, done by South Africans. Many trend reports are done on "Africa", or from an office in France. We cover five topics in three regions, namely the big cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The topics we cover are:

- **Brand activity:** What brand activity was particularly impactful and why? Who were they targeting and what could possibly have been done better? We also do a creative deep dive on TV, print and radio executions.
- **Media influences:** There are many influences on media. This section identifies trendy websites, blogs, social accounts and personalities relevant to each region.
- **Imagery:** We all know how impactful imagery is. This section aims to provide imagery of street culture, hot spots, landmarks and more for each region, with commentary on why they are important to note.
- **Events:** We have a look at impactful events in a particular month and once again give comments on why they are impactful, how these events are impacting culture in that city and which target market would find these events appealing.
- **Ad industry news:** The last section talks about industry news that is important to take note of. For example, the impact of the Super Bowl ads or Cannes festival on South African creatives.

Our aim is not to merely report on a topic, but to give more depth on it. We want to give insight into what make these trendy, who the target market is and, more importantly, inspire innovative ideas, in brands and agencies alike.

■ **6. Lastly, still on this topic - it may seem obvious, but why is it important to be aware of trends, and how can companies best leverage them to their advantage?**

Wolfe: Consumers don't discuss the same 'big issues' that we do in the creative community. They don't lose sleep over the merits of real-time marketing or programmatic media buying, whether they are contributing to higher click-through rates or if social media is revolutionising how they communicate with brands. They *do* care about trending pieces of news, about local voices in their community or social networks, celebratory events, and cultural occasions around them. Trends and happenings are the common thread for connecting with neighbours, family and friends. While consumers talk about what they're having for dinner or what cars they prefer, the majority of their time is spent focusing on the world around them and the days and weekends in front of them. For brands, understanding the environments in which their consumers live will assist them in remaining relevant for their target market. When a brand fails to understand this, they can miss the mark when communicating.

Hugely important then for all to increase their understanding of what makes consumers tick. [Click here](#) for a reminder of my previous interview with Springleap Founder/CEO Eran Eyal on how Springleap's design thinking has been revolutionised in since he took the reins.

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