

# Being more human, doing digital work

 By Leigh Andrews

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In introducing Hellocomputer as one of the IAB Bookmark Awards' top six-ranked digital agencies presenting at last week's Digital Agency Showcase at Red & Yellow School, group MD Mark Tomlinson placed emphasis on being more human in these digital times.



Mark Tomlinson of Hellocomputer, presenting at the Red & Yellow School's #DigitalAgencyShowcase. Image via Red & Yellow School [on Twitter](#).

Tomlinson says students today are much smarter than when he was last a student of Red & Yellow School. He studied art direction and design then had the epiphany one day about digital - the rest is history.



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Tomlinson explained Hellocomputer's journey and what's helped them change in the industry that's very different today to when they started.

He commented that it's amazing how digital has grown and that we currently live in a crazy technological era, which will only get more complex and fragmented as it becomes more omnipresent.

Tomlinson says we need to remember that a computer didn't change the world, a human did. So we need to **put the human insight before the tech.**

It's about understanding people, their needs and wants, and using technology, data and creativity to connect with them in meaningful ways, thus building out business solutions for their clients. So the big idea is a big part of what they do, but it's now embedded in 'the big solution'. That's quite a mouthful, which Tomlinson explained in greater detail...

## **It's not technology first, it's human insight first**

We need to understand the implications of technology, which is why one of the biggest challenges in the industry at large right now is that the chief technology officer now sits at the marketing table - and in some instances, has even superseded the chief marketing officer.

There are a number of themes that can help take you forward in these times. First, on working in the creative space, Tomlinson says we need to love and embrace the power of creativity.

*“Creatives have a unique power where you can take a blank page and literally change lives with the outcome, whether they are campaigns, ideas or products.”*

Second, Tomlinson said Hellocomputer has always been focused on futureproofing the agency, and built it for change, changing the input to change the output. So their employees – and those who hope to emulate them – need to be comfortable with change, or they just won't grow.

On the importance of data, Tomlinson said it is the centre of the conversation they're having in every part of their creative execution.

Summing it all up, Tomlinson said to make things you love, as other people will love them, too.

Placing a practical spin on these abstract concepts, Tomlinson emphasised that effective advertising is about creativity changing lives through business solutions, in an ever-changing landscape.

An example close to his own heart is that of the Peninsula School Feeding Association or PSFA 'social feed', as it shows how creativity changes lives through business solutions:

While you need to be passionate about the work you do and sweat the small stuff, that creative love also needs to tie in with ingenuity, budget and tech planning.

The effect of doing so successfully is clear from their 'live-tweeting honey badger' work, for the Johannesburg Zoo - done on a budget of just R12k, using technology around the animals to help the Zoo break into social media:

Admitting they're often asked how they come up with their ideas, Tomlinson shared that they hold regular internal and external hackathons, where a collective of different people are brought in to change both the input and output, from architects to artists, musicians and engineers.

It's a case of reimagining and reinventing the solutions.

## **Tips to futureproof your agency**

On futureproofing your own agency and clients, Tomlinson said you have to be willing to make a change and be clear on what's currently disrupting the category.

Technology is the ultimate enabler, so you need to find a way to make AI, automation and hacks work for you and make sure you stay dynamic and agile as the industry and larger world changes around you.

Work like their Cansa Testimonials is proof of this:

“ It won awards, but more importantly, it got people talking about a topic that was previously taboo. Breaking through barriers needs similar creative ideas ”

In closing, Tomlinson suggested agencies add the following four actions to their manifesto:

“ A slide at the [#DigitalAgencyShowcase](#), but applicable to life in general. [pic.twitter.com/QiYmkxKc7w](https://pic.twitter.com/QiYmkxKc7w)— Daddy (@LifeisSavage) [October 25, 2018](#) ”

Red & Yellow chairman Rob Stokes concluded that they will definitely hold another showcase next year. Watch for more of my [#DigitalAgencyShowcase](#) coverage, and follow [Red & Yellow School](#), [Tomlinson](#) himself and [Hellocomputer](#) on Twitter for the latest updates.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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