Convergence marketing

By Heidi Brauer

3 Feb 2015

"Relationships are the game changer."

Heidi Brauer, chief marketing officer of Hollard Insurance, believes solid client/agency relationships based on mutual respect, trust and collaboration is at the heart of industry growth going forward into the New Year.

"I don't think the game changer is digital or data. I think it is back to the basics of relationships: trust, respect, collaboration. I want an adult-adult relationship with my agency. We are parenting this brand together. If you don't want a client with opinions, you have the wrong client. I want to be challenged. We immersed our agency in our business so they could hit the ground running and make beautiful work with us - not for us, with us."

This is important for Brauer, who has worked both sides of the marketing and advertising agency fence, for independent and global brands, most notably Ipsos Markinor, Kulula and recently, Halo agency.

What was special for Brauer in 2014, was to finally see awards shows such as The Loerie Awards acknowledge marketers and not just the agencies. "This year at the Loeries, clients went up to the stage with the agencies to be acknowledged. I have been on a hobby horse for a long time, wanting an award that celebrates a great collaboration with agency and client.

"When I talk to my teams and agency partners, I say it takes a village to raise a brand. For me, the game changer has to be the gift of a real adult partnership between the client and agency.

"More and more I'm going back to psychology 101 and transactional analysis and parent/child relationships. Since when did we need intermediaries to moderate our relationships with each other? It is a diminishing of respect.

"I need my agencies to be the very best they can be, but I can't expect that from them unless I liberate them and let them know as much as I do about my business and not be intimidated by it. Of course, it also comes down to the calibre of marketers out there. Relationships are the game changer. And a little bit of humility goes a long way," Brauer emphasises.

What she doesn't want to see more of in 2015 is the "global gobbling and amalgamation of all the independent agencies into global giants". This is because it gives her less choice as to who she wants to work with.

"No matter how much they tell me that it won't change anything, it does. I am sorry for me as a client and sorry for them as independents because it means that South African brands are not thriving, we are giving ourselves away. I'd love a little less naivety and a little less gobbling, it is anti-competitive and it is bad for the consumer and bad for brands."

Brauer is also tired of seeing marketers being gullible about digital. "Just because you can measure it, doesn't mean you must do it. I'd like to see people choosing media for the feasibility to deliver to the audience. I'd like to see marketers more informed and less gullible."

Brauer's top trends for 2015 are:

1. Marketing convergence: As in "proper convergence". In the current economy, there is less to spend, yet it is so important to spend, Brauer says, so marketing has to be fully integrated. This means applying a creative solution across the best channels in an integrated way, converging and joining up all the agencies involved. It doesn't mean taking a piece of work from another media channel and sticking it on a billboard.

2. Single data currency and source for planning media: Marketers will get a shock in 2015 when they realise that the SAARF AMPS data is no longer available after all the drama around measurement in the South African industry, says Brauer. "Marketers are not aware that they will soon not have AMPS as a measurement and they don't seem to know what is coming next, nor do they seem to care. I want focus on a single currency that is properly moderated that we can do our planning on, or media owners will be pulling the wool over our eyes in a big way."

. Multi-layered brand building: Planning brand communications is like making a multi-layered chocolate cake, recounts Brauer, using a favourite analogy. "Different marketers and different audiences will like a different layer. Some of the layers will be common to the market. Then we have to interleave that with local business milieu and local cultural layers so we end up with the right kind of slice of cake for that market. But it is still our 'Hollard' brand cake. We need to be adaptable and flexible as markets are different, but you can't be so *laissez-faire* that no one knows what you stand for. Some markets will like it sweeter, some with fresh cream, some with strawberries, but it is still a chocolate cake. In putting layers in, that is when it becomes nuanced and layered and brilliant."

4. Continue brand spend: "I see marketers being smart and being able to convince their peers around the boardroom table to continue to invest in brand communications even when the economy is tight. I see marketers being as proud of their strategic business communications plans than they are of their events. We live in hope... Spend is shifting and we have to spend differently, through retention/loyalty spending, direct marketing and lead generation, not just blasting money at a TV strategy," says Brauer, admitting it's probably more of a wish than a reality.

For more:

For more:

- Bizcommunity Special Section: Biz Trends 2015
- Bizcommunity Search: Trends 2015
- Twitter Search: #biztrends2015
- Mobile App: Bizcommunity Trends
- Resource downloads: PWC, Ericsson, JWT, FCB, Millward Brown, Generation Z

**Heidi Brauer was interviewed by Louise Burgers, specialist editor of Biz Trends 2015.*

ABOUT HEIDI BRAUER

Heidi Brauer is the chief marketing officer of Hollard Insurance

- #BizTrends2019: The strategist is dead, long live strategy - 28 Jan 2019
- #BizTrends2018: A trends story from a magician's granddaughter - 8 Jan 2018
- Would I do it again? My four days at SXSW... - 7 Apr 2015
- [Trends 2015] Convergence marketing - 3 Feb 2015

View my profile and articles...