

Goodness, this works

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

10 May 2022

Campaign: Helping hands spreading the love make world a better place; Stan's not the man, piggybacking on other's expertise.



I am always quite cynical when I look at “corporate social investment” campaigns, where companies piously claim to be “giving something back” to the broader community.

A businessman friend of mine in London says simply: The best corporate social investment and the best way of giving back to the community is not to charge your customers too much in the first place. Those savings go directly to improving the lives of people.

I agree because I often see companies or brands which have a reputation for premium pricing, or bad customer service, trying to “greenwash” their image with a “giving back” campaign.

On the other hand, this battered country of ours with its immense social and economic problems requires that corporates start pitching in, in a meaningful way, to change lives.

That’s why I think the latest campaign by Hollard insurance – to involve its policyholders in doing good works for good

causes – is something we need to see more of.

The idea is called ChangeMaker and was put together over more than a year by Hollard and its agency, VMLY&R, and its NGO partner, Forgood, a volunteer-cause connector.

The idea is that if you are a Hollard client – or even if you aren't – you go to the website (www.hollard.co.za/changemaker), register and then look at the various volunteer activities and decide which one suits you and which you'd like to do. The website has a dashboard which updates in real-time, showing when each month's campaign ends and how many volunteer spots are still available.

Once you've signed up and performed the activity, you log it on the site. If you are a Hollard client, you get back up to 20% of your monthly premium, paid directly to your bank account.

In a way, it is sad that so many of us might have to be coaxed to help others, but that is South Africans for you. Still, I think the chances are good that once people get into helping, they'll go for longer hours and may even volunteer elsewhere. So this initiative could help start taking us away from that "me first" attitude...

Of course, doing the right thing can also have positive impacts on your corporate image, so Hollard's campaign also has a marketing point.

And it's been wrapped up in a cute commercial, seamlessly blending graphics with real footage... and painting a nice, positive picture of what life might be like if we all thought a bit more about each other.

Hollard, VMLY&R, and Forgood – step up to collect your Orchids.

Ethics still apply on social media

The internet has always seemed to be a cultural and business "Wild West" because many believe with new technology, none of the old rules apply. So, boet, if you want to market yourself or your company, you can steal bits and pieces of copyright material, or use someone else's branding to boost your own image.

That seems to be the idea behind a local road accident investigation 'expert' from Ibfusa, who has been fuelling Twitter alarm and panic in recent weeks with hysterical posts and car recalls in Europe.

Fair enough, you might say, he is an expert and he is sharing his information. Well, no.

He appropriated – without permission – the logo of the Euro New Car Assessment Programme (Euro NCAP), to make it appear as if this was the organisation ordering the recalls.

One which got my attention, because it looked misleading, was about Volkswagen's Amarok bakkie.

So I challenged him on it and he stuck by his guns that Euro NCAP had ordered the recalls...which is something the organisation has never done, nor ever will.

The recalls were initiated by VW itself when it discovered that a batch of pre-production cars had found their way onto the market and which were not compliant with the full homologation rules.



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He and his company IBFUSA claim to be experts in their field, yet even a person with a basic understanding of the global motor industry would know that Euro NCAP is a testing organisation without any enforcement powers. I quickly found the recall notices on a European Union database of all product recalls.

He seemed to think that European Union and Euro NCAP are the same thing. They aren't.

These VW recalls, I am informed, were dealt with and this alarmist messaging from him has the potential to do great damage to their brand. I understand their lawyers are looking at the situation.

Euro NCAP has – after I brought the illegal use of their name to their attention – said they have contacted Twitter to get the content removed.

So, his plan to piggyback on the expertise and reputation of another organisation has badly backfired.

So silly, considering he should have enough experience to be able to post useful content about road accidents and how to avoid them.

I will never know because after arguing with me on Twitter, he deleted his original post and then blocked me.

I won't go away. You get an Onion for failing to see that the rules of ethical business conduct still apply, whether you are on social media or not.

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ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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