

Birthing a renewed ad industry

 By [Wayne Naidoo](#)

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The [Association for Communication and Advertising](#) (ACA) is the professional body for the sector and represents approximately 100 agencies, which collectively contribute almost 95% of the total measured adspend in South Africa.



I became chairman of the ACA in [November 2010](#) and am honoured to serve an organisation with such a long history (it was formed in 1942), excited because it is a time of such big change for the industry, and anxious that, as a profession, we are able to reinvent ourselves for a new era.

Profession has evolved

We spend a lot of time focusing on the creative output which is, after all, our *raison d'être*. But our profession has evolved to the point where it is not only in itself highly sophisticated but it increasingly has to work within a complicated business environment in which it is expected that our profession will positively impact business strategy on a global scale.

As a voluntary association of advertising agencies, the ACA is focused on resolving the challenges we face as a profession. Personally, I think that our future requires the momentum of the entire sector working together or we face the real danger of the market dictating and shaping the way we work.

As an example, the ACA has spent the past four years working with agencies and the market to streamline the [pitch process](#) and remove some of the inequities (such as expensive and unreasonable procurement practices and theft of intellectual property by unscrupulous clients), which made pitching untenable for agencies.

Pitch process code of conduct for

The sector has now adopted the original "guidelines" as a formal [Code of Conduct](#) as of 1 December 2009 in order to promote professionalism, healthy competition, equal opportunity and transformation during new business acquisition, which

is a critical part of the business.

We were thrilled with the cooperation and input that we received from agencies and, in fact, the process went so well that we have been contacted by foreign markets requesting information on how 'we got the pitch process' right.

[Internationally](#), the kinds of abuse and exploitation that have become commonplace in SA are regarded very seriously by agencies and have often resulted in headlines - especially in the past year, when agencies in countries such as [Belgium](#) and the US publicly boycotted large clients despite the recession.

Acted in solidarity

In SA, while it may not have made headlines, agencies have often [acted in solidarity](#) by standing down during tenders and pitches. Now, as the only country with a formal code of conduct governing tenders and pitches, SA is setting the standard for professionalism, ethics, healthy competition and equal opportunity in this area.

But this is just the start of the challenges we face and the association is creating a series of programmes to deal with all areas of the profession, including agency remuneration; transformation (a voluntary BEE charter to be adopted); education (looking at bursaries and scholarships); skills training (via the AAA School of Advertising); skills retention (acting as a catalyst for this critical conversation); setting of standards and ethics; and defining the local industry's interface within the global market - to name a few.

Likewise, the ACA exists to be the voice of the sector as a collective and this collective voice is now more critical than ever on important issues such as regulation of advertising and of decisions around taxation - especially where we engage lawmakers in government, who often do not have an in-depth understanding of our sector and the adverse impact of certain legislation, regulation and taxation.

Won't simply keel over

Our profession is resilient. It won't simply keel over in the face of challenges, such as having to compete with other more well-paid professions for talent or having to wrestle with an understanding of new media or remaining viable in the face of policy dictates of multi-nationals.

No, we certainly won't keel over. But in order to thrive - to maintain the creative edge that defines us while still being 'corporatised' enough to be acceptable to clients - requires us to work together to decide what we change and how.

The advertising and communications sector has been very successful in SA and is by nature highly competitive - this is what sustains a vibrant profession. The cooperation and participation of agencies within the collective body has made it possible to establish the credibility of the sector to date.

I have no doubt that at this crossroads; our continued working together in forums such as the ACA will allow a refuelled and more powerful profession to be born.

ABOUT WAYNE NAIDOO

Wayne Naidoo founded DUKE after leaving his CMO position at AFB (now JUMO), one of Africa's fastest growing consumer finance groups. Currently chairman of the ACA (Association of Communication and Advertising SA) and voted as 2019's runner up for 'Most Respected Agency Leader in Cape Town' by MarkLives. Former CEO of Lowe & Partners SA, former chairman of YPO (Young Presidents Organisation), previous chairman of the ACA and former director of the AAA School of Advertising.

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