

Coca-Cola adds fizz to Creative Circle

Coca-Cola South Africa has joined forces with the Creative Circle in a bid to refresh the way the South African business community views creativity.

The partnership, which was brokered by recently-elected Creative Circle Chairperson Justin Gomes of FoxP2 and Sharon Keith of Coca-Cola SA, is significant because it marks the first time that a non-media business entity in South Africa has so publicly staked its flag to the mast of creativity.



Essential business tool

"This partnership is indicative of the worldwide swing towards the acceptance of creativity as an essential business tool," says Gomes. "Coca-Cola is arguably the world's most successful brand, a status which the brand itself attributes to creativity. It has also just been voted South Africa's overall favourite brand at the Sunday Times Top Brands Awards. I couldn't hope for a better partner to help build the case for creativity in South Africa."

Since taking on the role of Chairperson of the Creative Circle, Gomes has committed to help shift the perception of creativity in business circles - from a prevailing local attitude that tends to range from scorn to skepticism, to one that accepts and acknowledges the powerful role that creative thinking can play in building brands and businesses.

In order to do so, he acknowledges the importance of being able to prove a return on creative investment, and quotes a recent study which reveals that - without exception - all the Cannes Advertisers of the Year since 2000 have experienced a record period of stock market growth at the time of receiving the award, boasting an average 41% stock value growth versus the S&P 500 average growth over the period of 0.5%.

"The evidence is all around us, in brands just like Coca-Cola, which prove everyday how consumers respond positively to creativity," he says.

"The task that lies ahead of us now is to demonstrate to the business community that this positive response is directly translatable into Rands and cents."

Coca-Cola's Sharon Keith is one of a small - but growing - group of local marketers who believe wholeheartedly in the power of creativity to create real business value.

"These days, it's relatively easy to achieve parity with your competitors from a functional or intrinsic perspective; what really differentiates great brands is their ability to innovate and stay fresh; to surprise and delight their consumers. That's where creativity comes in."

Creativity drives effectiveness

Global VP of advertising strategy and content excellence Jonathan Mildenhall has been quoted as saying that: "The correlation between winning at Cannes and winning in the market place is compelling ... If Cannes has taught me one thing, it is that creativity drives effectiveness. You cannot have one without the other."



Sharon Keith & Justin Gomes

It's because of this, says Keith, that Coca-Cola SA has partnered with the Creative Circle in a bid to keep raising the creative bar.

"South Africa is already recognised as a creative powerhouse, punching above our weight in terms of winning awards and exporting creative talent, but this doesn't just happen - it needs the structures and the processes and the passion to keep pushing for excellence. We all have to make a stand to fight for better work in our industry.

"The more we invest in our industry, the better the outputs will be for everyone."

Gomes concludes that one of the main objectives of the partnership with Coca-Cola is to foster better working relationships and understanding between advertising agencies and marketers, through the creation of a common goal:

"I'd like to see marketers and agencies working together to create groundbreaking work that not only permeates popular culture, but also grows local brands and local industry. Creativity has incredible power, we just need to learn how to harness it."

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