

OpenCo's open creative culture of collaboration for the win!

By  Leigh Andrews

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OpenCo was recently crowned the AdFocus 'small agency of the year' for the second year running. Here, MD Mike di Terlizzi lets us in on what this means to the team and why an open creative culture of collaboration is crucial for the future.



From left: Carl Villoughby, executive creative director; Mike di Terlizzi, managing director; and Louis Gavin, chief creative director at OpenCo.

Di Terlizzi says OpenCo's string of wins lately ties in nicely with other highlights over their five years of operation. These range from organically growing their client base to include new business such as Jameson International work from Irish Distillers Limited; Mumm Champagne from Pernod Ricard; and EVP/internal marketing from Standard Bank. Another crucial aspect of any success is business performance. On how this can be enhanced in the current economic climate through "extraordinary solutions for these extraordinary times", Di Terlizzi says OpenCo found success in bedding down their current clients, most of which were new, and not going out hunting for new business, rather organically growing and taking care of their current client base.

That's why the agency is particularly happy with their 'relationship dividend' in the form of organic growth on accounts from increases in scope, additional project work and the allocation of new portfolios.



Part of that stems from its talent attraction and development focus, based on a two-fold objective to significantly upweight the capability and profile of OpenCo's creative talent and to continue pushing its transformation work. Di Terlizzi shares that it was a successful year in both instances, with the quality of the creative teams that joined providing OpenCo its most successful year to date at creative award shows and the ability to develop and train young talent.

Speaking to that creative recognition in particular, Di Terlizzi says, "This was anchored by the agency's first international success with wins at [The One Show](#), which saw OpenCo positioned as South Africa's most awarded agency, as well as

Cannes.”

Their creative wins from June 2015 to now are certainly impressive:

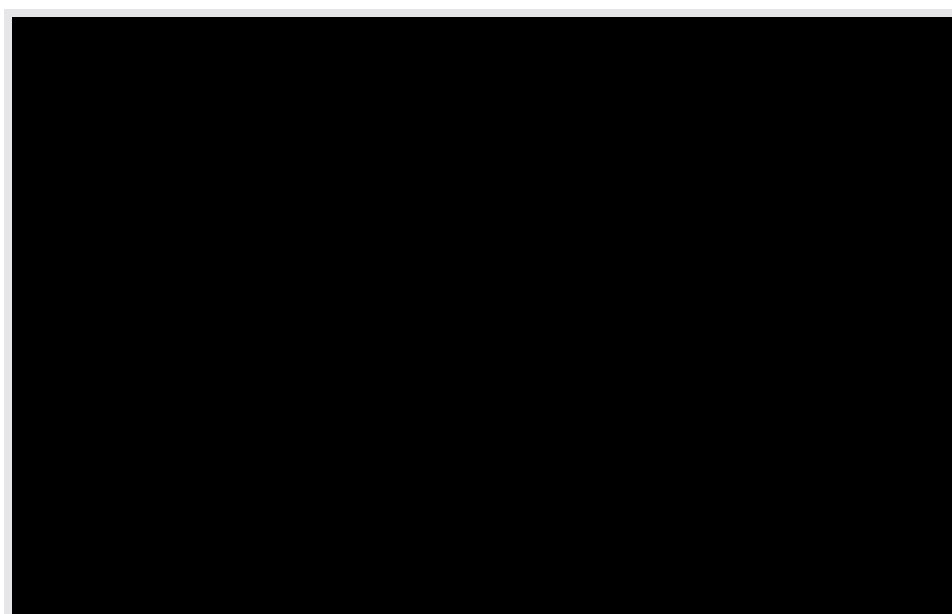
Creative Awards received July 2015 – November 2016

Loerie Awards 2015	
Merit Campaign Certificate for Art Direction Craft / Poster and Campaign Silver / Poster	Apartheid Museum - 'Make Sense Of The Present: 'Protest', 'Police', 'Massacre', 'Mob'
Cannes Lions 2016	
Campaign Bronze / Print & Publishing	Apartheid Museum - 'Make Sense Of The Present: 'Protest', 'Police', 'Massacre', 'Mob'
One Show 2016	
One Show Gold / Photography Design	Apartheid Museum- 'Make Sense Of The Present'
One Show Silver / Newspaper	Apartheid Museum- 'Make Sense Of The Present'
One Show Bronze / Collateral	Apartheid Museum - 'Make Sense Of The Present'
One Show Merit / Art Direction	Apartheid Museum - 'Make Sense Of The Present'
One Show Merit / Collateral Design	Apartheid Museum - 'Make Sense Of The Present'
Creative Circle 2016	
Ad of the Month/ 1st in Print/ June 2016	Apartheid Museum - "March"
Loerie Awards 2016	
Bronze/ Communications: Design Posters and Billboards	Soweto Gold – 'Marked by Bravery'
Bronze/ Communications: Package and Industrial Design	Soweto Gold – 'Marked by Bravery'
Bronze/Television, Film and Video Communication: South African Non-English TV and Cinema Commercials Up to 90s	Umhlobo Wenene FM– 'uTata Nonyana'
Craft/Television, Film and Video Communication: Original Music and Sound Design	SABC1 – 'TV and life are 1'
Pendorings 2016	
Silver Newspaper Advertising	Apartheid Museum – 'Menigte'

As a result of these wins, it's little wonder that OpenCo won the AdFocus 'small agency of the year' award for the second year running. Di Terlizzi says they knew they had real competitors – this year up against FoxP2 Cape Town, House of Brave and Riverbed for the title – so were reserved in their expectations. He explains, "To win it once was amazing but the second time reaffirmed we are on the right track and focusing our efforts where it matters in this industry."

Disruption as a strategic planning tool

Explaining what goes into maintaining OpenCo's creative standards, especially as they say, "We can no longer simply run an ad and expect results," Di Terlizzi says, "At OpenCo we cultivate a creative culture that is open to positive criticism; it keeps us aware of trends and encourages a deep appreciation of good work."





"Accountability for the results we sell to clients are key – the desired outcome for the campaign is carefully woven into the creative process to ensure that when we sell an idea to our client, we have that end goal in mind. This forces us to think beyond the conventional solutions both in terms of the media usage and the concept itself. We use disruption as our strategic planning tool and we go out to disrupt conventions." Fitting as OpenCo or 'the Open Collaboration' is a member of the TBWA Worldwide Group, AKA 'the disruption company'.

OpenCo's Mannequin challenge Christmas message for the year ties into this idea as it's funny and trendy, decidedly different from the typical "We're closed from this date and will see you in the new year" end-of-year message:

Lastly, on the importance of collaboration for all agencies as we enter 2017, Di Terlizzi explains the agency belief: "None of us is as strong as all of us," on the importance of harnessing the power of collaboration, as follows: "None of us have all the pieces of the puzzle, therefore companies need to work closely with various third parties if they value the big picture.

Technology, particularly the exponential evolution of data analysis and its application to targeting and segmentation, is one of the drivers of this trend. The need for specialist skills is on the increase. Furthermore, there is undeniable historic evidence that the more we cooperate as a species, the more we thrive. It's a no-brainer when it comes to business."

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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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