

Pete Case of Gloo on what it takes to keep winning awards



By Leigh Andrews

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You know an agency's got creative juices flowing when it names its Cape Town office 'Gloostad' and its Johannesburg version 'Glooburg'. Find out what makes digital dominator Gloo tick...

If you've ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes at Gloo, the agency that [keeps popping up in headlines for its award wins](#), you're in for a treat.

I tackled founder and CEO Pete Case on the agency's clutch of award wins, and what exactly goes on behind the scenes to make Gloo the nation's Digital Agency of the Year from 2007 to 2013 - it's out of the running for 2014 purely because it didn't enter this year.

■ *What's the basic work flow or creative process in the agency?*



Case: This is a question we've not been asked before! We obviously have formal teams that are led by strategy, but the ideation process is carried out in wider teams to increase our ability to have the widest view and talent to solve problems - and create lateral solutions by doing more than just proving a single answer to a question. So for us it's not just about receiving the brief and spitting out an answer on budget and on time. This in turn creates a collaborative informal culture, which is more 'fun' to work in.

List any exciting new developments in the team that have enhanced Gloo's overall skillset.

Case: The whole industry is growing at the moment, and so is Gloo. We've built deeper skills and hired more senior management to strengthen our growth ability. Gloo has now grown its business to approximately 120 people, with the bulk, meaning 85 or so, at new the 'Glooburg' (Johannesburg) head office in a sparkly new building in Greenside, and the rest, roughly 42, situated in Gloostad (Cape Town)... with more to come as we're actively hiring at the moment.



Gloo CEO and founder Pete Case

This year we've matured our offering in the realms of technology, social and deep project management to grow our clients' portfolios of work. We've been exploring a great deal of digital technology in the experiential space, specifically looking at

installations at events, shopper marketing and outdoor billboard interactions. It's all mobile-centric and we're constantly trying to find new ways to increase the ability for consumers to interact with branded content and to help deliver interactive stories to the audience.

■ **Explain Gloo's strategy.**

Case: We are media agnostic and very happy to say when digital is not appropriate for a particular need and if a different medium would work better. We find this is better in the long run than simply 'land grabbing' all available space. Finding the right space for the right work leads to better results. Our journey starts with the consumer and understanding how we can connect with them beyond the product or service we're selling. Our knowledge of them and their lifestyle is a key starting point to fulfilling any brief, looking beyond the price point. Since we're a mobile-first country, mobile often plays a key role in our solutions but we need to keep in mind that by simply land grabbing we're not doing any favours and end up shooting the whole industry in the foot.



In the BMW 'Are you 2 Enough?' campaign, virtual key owners waited to find out each week if they'd get a live call on radio, to tell them they were a finalist for the final shout out to win the car.

■ **Wax lyrical on the recent awards you've won.**

Case: We've had some great success at the first two shows we entered this year, and they're big ones - [the Loeries](#) and the [inaugural AMASA Awards](#), with a different range of work featured in each:



An example of the switch messaging that popped up when inserting a Nedbank card into an FNB ATM machine

- Our Gold Loerie and AMASA Award for Best use of Technology was awarded for our FNB Bank ATM work. This involved creating a sales channel out of a channel previously used purely for service, by advertising how easy it is for non-FNB clients to switch to FNB if they inserted their non-FNB card into an FNB ATM. Through clever copy we grew the bank's ability to directly switch on new customers with a 66% spike in new clients based on national roll out of the campaign.

- We received a Silver (Highly Recommended) Loerie for Best Use of Mobile as well as a Highly Commended Best Use of Mobile AMASA Award for the PUMA Pixel Pong campaign, which allowed PUMA to data-mine their audience and actually get hold of their phone numbers by adding a fun lifestyle element and turning their mobile handsets into table tennis bats - users logged in via Twitter, interacted with other users and could boast about their wins on social media - a big win in a very competitive market.

- We received another Silver (Highly Recommended) Loerie and AMASA Award, this time for Best Use of Technology, for our BMW 7 Series Ad. Instead of simply running a static print campaign to show off the vehicle's features, we went for innovation in rich media advertising by allowing the intended clientele, all upmarket, busy, tech-savvy people, to interact with the 7 series through the first table-enabled ad in South Africa. Users simply swipe onscreen for the car's door to open, they can zoom in and use the iPad's technology to move around inside the vehicle with a 360 degree view, which truly sold the quality of the interior by putting potential buyers in the back seat.



The BMW 7 Series iPad ad allowed users to explore the inside of the car with a full, experiential 360° capability all made possible by the iPad's gyroscope and magnetometer.

- Our other Gold Loerie was awarded for Best Use of Mobile in the BMW 2 Series Launch Campaign, titled 'Are you 2 Enough?', which also won a Gold for Best Use of Mobile at the AMASA Awards. It was an integrated campaign using digital at its heart and radio to help drive a wide audience. We got the BMW 2 series' key into consumers' pockets by turning the key into an app and offering a BMW 2 to those who completed a weekly task. Those who succeeded took part in a phone-in competition with DJ Fresh and had a day of racing the car at a track.

- We're also proud of our FNB rich media 'almost' impossible banner, used to recruit the cleverest people by getting them to complete a tricky online task. It ran for just 24 hours and resulted in the successful graduates skipping a step of the usually rigorous application process.

■ ***On the topic of awards, what did it take to become the most awarded digital agency for both effective and creative work, as well as the nation's Digital Agency of the Year from 2007 to 2013 and Ad Agency of the Year at the 2012 AdReview Awards?***

Case: Believe it or not, we've actually been criticised for winning so many awards - it's all about consistency for us. The key things are our group tenacity and belief in ourselves as we often have to sell an idea two or three times before it takes. The trouble is that we're doing things people haven't seen before, and it often takes a long time to get this off the ground so you have to believe in what you're doing. We did so when we invested well ahead of the curve in people, technology and our ideas.



We've also been brave and realistic enough to keep reinventing and evolving ourselves as the market shifts and evolves and we're honest about the constant need to reinvent as other businesses in the sector that seem to do well suddenly fizzle out, it's a constant reminder of the need to keep on top of things. We're fundamentally different to the way we were just a year ago. We've never sat back and thought we were on top - we've kept pushing and pushing again. This has led to amazing growth in people at Gloo and also consistency of the work we create. We're also happy that lots of our competitors actually started out at Gloo, it makes for a more interesting industry.

■ ***Talk about the state of the local advertising awards industry...***

Case: There is some really amazing work being done in South Africa, just not enough of it. There's also a misconception that your work is nothing if it hasn't won big internationally - you won't win at Cannes if you don't enter the Cannes Awards. People misrepresent the industry when they say there is no great work coming out of it. I personally feel the biggest dry spot lies in truly integrated work. No agency network yet has a truly integrated offering, and it doesn't help that many clients are still briefing in silos. But, watch this space - as we want to crack this first!

■ ***Tell us about key account wins this year that have made an impact on your portfolio.***

Case: Vodacom was won end of last year but really came online this year. It's our biggest client and has had huge impact for us as was previously managed by three agencies, so it's huge for us to have the whole thing. We're starting to do some very progressive work with them. We have also just won a pitch for Sun International, and earlier in the year we won the Beiersdorf account, which covers brands like Labello and Nivea. Lastly, we've been growing Pearson publishing this year dramatically, which is fast becoming a major client for our Cape Town-based business.

■ ***What's next for Gloo?***

Case: We want to continue to go deeper in our experience of blending ideas and technology, especially where digital meets the real world, so at events or shopper activations as this allows for a truly integrated offering. As we want to be the first agency to be able to offer truly integrated marketing solutions, we're building in the background some very smart new technology solutions of our own. We also want to open offices in other cities next year...



Potential candidates had their application put to the top of the virtual pile of CVs by completing a 'near impossible' online challenge...

■ ***What trends do you see as the biggest to come in 2015?***

Case: The three most obvious ones are experiential, mobile and data, as they point to the realities of living in a digital world. We need to move away from simply using gut instinct as a marker and use data more intelligently, such as with programmable media buying, in order to achieve more progressive targeting methods.

In closing, Case says it's amazing to see the talent they've surrounded themselves with and the depth of skills they now have, all under one roof. As he looks across the business, Case feels they're doing the best work they've ever done right now, and what they have in production is leaps and bounds ahead of what's already out there.

While it's been an exciting year, Case hinted at lots of surprises up their collectively creative sleeves, so watch this space for more! If that's not enough for you, [click here](#) for more on Gloo.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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