

The state of integrated marketing

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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The need for an industry standard definition of integrated marketing and better understanding of the role of big data going forward were hot topics on the first day of the Integrated Marketing Conference (IMC)...

The 2015 IMC Conference kicked off with MC Warren Harding freestyle-rhyming an impressive amount of industry acronyms before introducing the first keynote presentation for the day, from The Jupiter Drawing Room Johannesburg's founder and chair, Graham Warsop.

Graham Warsop on the true definition of integrated marketing

Warsop took an informed look at the state of marketing today, offering a personal perspective on what the future holds in store. He argued that innovative thinking, creative entrepreneurship and an iconoclastic approach to business are just some of the qualities needed to give the top marketers of tomorrow a real competitive advantage. He also spoke of unexpected relevance and the fact that 'creativity isn't everything, it's the only thing', as a message most agencies punt at some point.



A slide from King and Parriah's presentation

When it comes to IMC, Warsop says there's a lack of true understanding and clear definition that's accepted across the board. It's about more than using every medium available, and rather deciding on the best way to get the message to market. To get in right, we need to challenge the way integration could, should and might work, and keep in mind that the whole area of integration evolves around one word - collaboration. Anticipating groans from the audience, he said "Just because people say it all the time doesn't mean it's not important." Speaking of how times have changed, he said clients used to engage with 'one-stop shop' type agencies, but you can't be good at everything, no matter how much you'd like to be, so focus on your agency's strengths and outsource the rest.

In asking the audience for a marketers' view on this, Warsop answered a question on who then gets the credit when there are combined thoughts and ideas by stating it's more about what the work looks like and whether the client likes the final outcome than about who did what. This highlights the need for more integration in an exceedingly complex world.

Bryan Melmed on optimising the results of big data

The second keynote of the day was presented by Bryan Melmed, Vice President of Insight at Exponential, on the topic 'big data is only human'. "Stop racing towards what big data has promised and what it can actually deliver," he advised.

Melmed explained the value of big data by saying that measuring people is hardly an exact science and our industry compounds the problem with overly optimistic assumptions and strategies. Added to this, we have the problem that data is fallible, prone to bias and easily manipulated, and letting technology solve problems with incomplete or unrepresentative goals can backfire. He asked how we can then harness what big data has to offer. As a global advertising intelligence provider, Exponential explains data is 'only human', meaning both that it's inaccurate and that we need humans to interpret it accurately, technology alone can't do it all. Big data is a powerful tool for better marketing, provided the data is used efficiently.

Speaking of how things have changed, Melmed explained the ubiquity of Uber and spoke of the concept of time based on location and proximity: A 20-minute wait for an Uber taxi in Darling won't seem so bad but a 5-minute wait on a busy street in CBD seems endless. "We have expected a future where robots will take our jobs since watching *The Jetsons* but there's a lot more to big data than that". We chunk data into patterns driven by emotions. Robots are bad at recognising this, so there's use for us for a while yet, he says. As robots can't understand emotion, as marketers that's the most important thing we can tap into in the current climate.

Lynne Gordon on the importance of cultural vibrancy

The third keynote session of the day was presented by Lynne Gordon, MD of Added Value on the topic of cultural vibrancy, which she dubs the 'new essential insight for growth'. There's no denying today's attention-deficit society makes it harder for brands to stand-out. To do so, they need to create meaning beyond their category by tapping into the current climate and what makes today's consumers tick by contributing to the rich fabric of culture surrounding consumers. But how exactly can brands connect with culture?

Gordon says the world is changing, gone is the simple life. Our brains have to adapt to maintain new levels of multitasking and filter out what we're not interested in. Consumers have the internet in their pockets, accessible 24/7 and constantly distracted, so you need to touch on an aspect of their culture to make a personal connection. If brands want to grow they must connect with culture by taking a stand and achieving something amazing that resonates with consumers. It may seem a daunting task, but Gordon says to simply start by creating a 'culture of culture' internally, then transforming it into a mission, and actually going out and spending to activate that cultural mission. "Start by thinking big, which goes against our previous thinking of focusing on the smaller, detail-driven insights," she says. Look at the world in a way that's not just about your category. As an example, she showed the Cannes Lion-winning Always #LikeAGirl campaign, which ties into the current anti-gender stereotype movement, embedded below:

Gordon also spoke highly of the South African '[One of a Kind](#)' ad by King James for Santam, pointing out that the ad works as it tells some human truths about the South African context that we can all relate to. In using this marketing methodology, brands can capture insights and draw a golden thread from current culture to what the brand is really about.

Alistair King and Yegs Ramiah on advertising for the two-brand family

Fittingly, the final keynote presentation of the day was by Yegs Ramiah, Chief Executive of Sanlam and Santam and Alistair King, founding creative partner of King James, behind the 'One of a Kind' ad Gordon mentioned as an example of cultural vibrancy. Ramiah and King spoke of how they work together as client and agency. King started off by explaining that King James actually incorporates six agencies but that isn't what makes them integrated, it's more than just a title, it's a way of work.

Ramiah then explained how the relationship works from the marketer/client side, stating that the first step is to understand what the creative is actually there to do and the differences between creatives and corporates. She encouraged other marketers to let their creatives do what they do best and to understand that creatives are only human and do have bad days now and then so to allow for that when setting deadlines as "we can't all be on the ball, all the time".

King also spoke of the difference between truly integrated and mixed media campaigns, saying many get confused between the two. Brian Searle-Tripp once told him on an early campaign that he was trying to make a lot of noise about nothing in particular, and King feels that's sadly the essence of much of today's supposedly integrated campaigns. He added that a weak integrated idea is still a weak idea, only you've shared it with a lot more people as you've shared it on a number of platforms. To prevent this, he says to put the idea before the medium and remember that an idea can be relatively mundane in one medium and totally compelling in another, so it's worth doing some research and thinking creatively about whether an idea is actually worthy of larger expression on a different platform or not - that's when creative starts to shine and the meaning of true integration.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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