

Marketers, get your digital shift together!

 By [Fred Roed](#)

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Marketing agencies can be forgiven for feeling a little insecure right now. Across the globe, scores of well-manicured fingernails are being gnawed to the quick. Friday afternoon champagne and sushi parties are being traded in for toasted sarmies; and the lines of coke have made way for lines of worry.



At a time like this, we can take heart from Schalk Burger Jr. "I thought Credit Crunch was a new breakfast cereal," said Schalk recently.

Boardroom tapdance

In South Africa, despite Trevor Manuel's best intentions, we're going to feel it just as much as the rest of the world. Marketing budgets are suddenly less free-flowing and the boardroom tapdance (you know - where marketing execs present their fiery rhetoric to clients) will now have to be supported by *real* motives and *real* data.

One ray of hope has begun to emerge through this (SA's marketing professionals take note!): the *digital* marketing industry is booming.

Since the sub-prime debacle kickstarted the financial freefall, online advertising has been increasing as fast as traditional advertising has been falling. In the UK, Internet campaigns run by advertisers rung up £1,682.5 million in the first half of 2008, a 21% year-over-year increase. At the same time, [old school advertising spend has dropped by 4.6%](#). In SA, we're seeing a similar trend, with online adspend recently overtaking cinema advertising.

Four factors

So, what is behind this shift? Here are four factors that are driving digital success:

1. An online presence is an accountable and cost-effective destination for creative strategy.
2. Smart ideas are a highly persuasive, and fast moving, currency online.
3. The value exchange between agency and clients is measurable. Yes, you heard right: 'measurable'.
4. Compelling revenue models for marketing agencies (you just have to think a little differently).

I was chatting to my old mate, [Pete Smith](#), recently. He works for a top online media broker in the UK: "Fred, in the northern hemisphere nowadays, marketing agencies have moved wayyy past just advertising and creative communication. A marketing person will fall very short in a high-level meeting unless they understand digital strategy with all the terminology that goes with it."

That means, as a marketing professional, you should know the difference between SEO and SEM; how to conduct an effective ORM strategy; understand 'persuasive momentum', 'information hierarchy' and 'calls to action'... and, above all, get in touch with your inner gravatar.

The great thing is: it's not that hard. Old school principles still apply. Ideas still rock. Creativity still rolls. Online is just another channel - with a whole new set of rules, sure - but the audience are still just ordinary people, just like you and me.

So, what are you waiting for? Quit chewing your nails and get your shift together.

Glossary:

- SEO: search engine optimisation
- SEM: search engine marketing
- ORM: online reputation management
- Persuasive momentum: term given to the compulsion to a sale when a site visitor objectives match the site objectives
- Information hierarchy: layout of information of a web page in order of importance to both the site visitor and the site objectives.
- Calls to action: the actionable areas of the site that lead to the site attaining its objectives

ABOUT FRED ROED

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