

## : Sarah Britten chats to VML's Vandeven

How does creativity drive business? How do you inspire creativity in others? In an exclusive series for Bizcommunity, Sarah Britten interviews seven creative leaders from around the world. See them in person at the International Seminar of Creativity in Cape Town on 20 September, which forms part of Loeries Creative Week Cape Town.



Debbi Vandeven, Chief  
Creative Officer at VML.

This week, Sarah Britten chats to Debbi Vandeven, chief creative officer at VML.

### ***1. How important is creativity when developing successful solutions for your partners?***

Marketing solutions will not be successful without creativity that evokes an emotional connection. However, creativity can't succeed alone; brands must make a meaningful connection with consumers in today's complex media environment. Client partners expect creativity to go beyond the "big idea" and engage consumers where, when and how they consume media with less push and more pull tactics. The most compelling and successful ideas will deliver value and shareable content, often executed in real time, and connect the experience across platforms.

### ***2. What's the most exciting project you've worked on recently?***

Our work with educational non-profit organisation [MINDDRIVE](#) has been one of the most exciting and rewarding campaigns we've done lately. We partnered with the organisation to help drive awareness about the benefits of experiential or hands-on learning for urban youth. The students converted a 1967 Karmann Ghia into an electric vehicle and planned to drive from Kansas City to DC to gain support for experiential learning in communities along the way. To help amplify this, we came up with the idea of the "Social Fuel Tour," using the power of social conversation to fuel the car - every tweet, Facebook post or [video view](#) gave the car fuel. The story of these students quickly spread across the nation and world. The initial goal for social fuel was met in three days and the impact in each community and in the nation's capitol resulted in a desire for MINDDRIVE programs in places such as Ohio, Massachusetts, Colorado, and even Melbourne, Australia.

**3. *There's less and less segmentation between traditional and digital agencies. Where do you think this is headed?***

There is less segmentation between traditional and digital agency models but the truly successful agency of the future must embrace the convergence of media. Consumers are more difficult to reach because they are exposed to thousands of brand messages every day and are likely sourcing the content on multiple screens and devices. An agency may not have to offer services in paid, owned and earned media channels, but the future agency will have to know how to integrate these marketing channels seamlessly and effectively for client partners in order to be successful. It will also take more than integrated channels for clients to succeed; creative content needs to engage and disrupt in the sea of brand messages each day. Therefore, regardless of agency model, there is pressure for agencies to have integrated planning approach to help deliver the "big idea" holistically.

**4. *Can you name an example of a brand that has inspired you lately?***

There are several but the Dove brand stands out for its inspiring work. The "Real Beauty Sketches" campaign reaches well beyond the surface of beauty to inner beauty once again. The new social experiment proves the insight that women's perception of their own beauty is more negative than the way others see them. The films have an emotional reveal and the campaign was cohesive between multiple touch points. It's also inspiring to see a campaign re-imagined that continues to connect with consumers.

**5. *What's your favourite vacation spot?***

My favourite vacation spot is anywhere there is a beach and several books. I love living in the central part of the United States, but I really enjoy being on a coast or an island when vacationing. The Caribbean is my favourite region and a few of my favourite islands are Anguilla and St. Martin. And in the US Virgin Islands, Saint Thomas and Saint John. I have only visited Cape Town on business but it is beautiful as well. In our always-on world it is nice to take a break and unplug, and the beach is a perfect place for me and family to spend time together.

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