

#BehindtheSelfie with... Michael Oelschig

 By Leigh Andrews

24 Jul 2019

This week, we go behind the selfie with Michael Oelschig, MD at Cerebra.



Oelschig's favourite place – at the centre of the buzz in Cerebra's Rivonia offices.

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in northern Johannesburg, work in Sandton, and play wherever my younger friends say I should.

2. What's your claim to fame?

How do you answer this without sounding like you're blowing your own horn? I've only ever won one personal award, so I'll go with that.

I won a WPP Atticus award for a book I wrote on crisis communications and got to have lunch with [Martin Sorrell](#) in London – the last Atticus lunch before he, um, left WPP.



One of the best experiences of my life – unbelievably smart man!

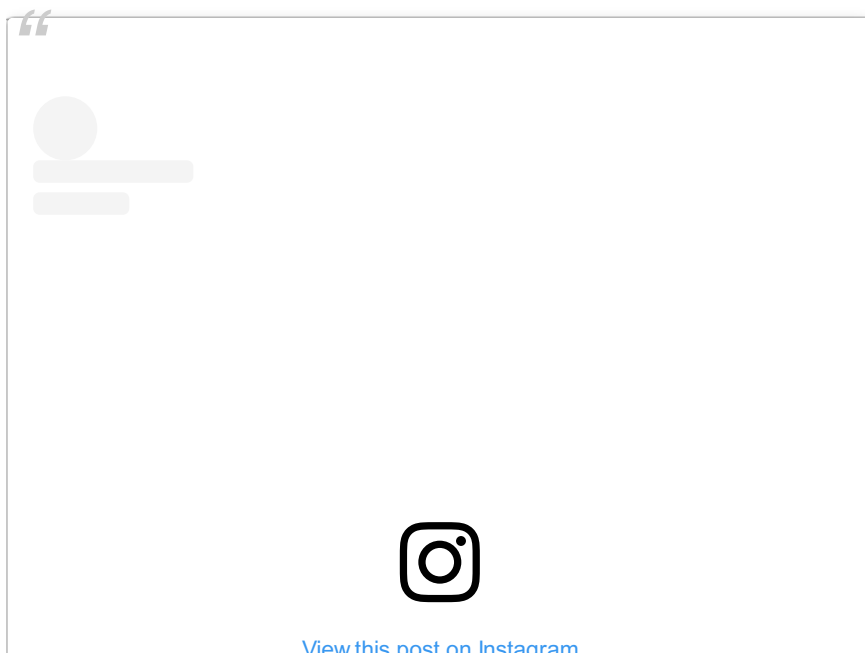
3. Describe your career so far.

Certainly not ordinary. I am not what you would call “traditionally schooled” in advertising.

I made a seemingly odd career move from being an attorney to being a copywriter about nine years ago – to my parent’s absolute dismay, as you can imagine – then sort of fell into strategy by mistake, where I have been for most of my career until becoming MD of Cerebra.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

- Cricket: the limits of being classified as “favourite” are currently being severely tested
- Most other sport





Sharks couldn't quite pull it off, but helluva game. #Sharks #lions #superrugby

A post shared by [Michael Oelschig](#) (@mikeoelsch) on Apr 1, 2017 at 10:37am PDT

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- My work: I am genuinely one of the lucky few that can say that
- My wife
- My mates
- A drink or two with mates
- Rolling green hills – what I call ‘anywhere quiet’, basically.

5. What do you love about your industry?

You very rarely work on the same thing twice – and it is constantly changing.



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I know that sounds super clichéd and is most people’s answer – but when you come from a background in law and have “seen the other side” so to speak, variety really is the spice of life!

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Yeah, that totally isn’t a thing. If I had to, where I spend most of my time though can be defined under four categories:

- Business strategy and building IP;
- Conversations with my exco team;
- Conversations with senior clients; and
- Proposals. So. Many. Proposals.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

“ Bit of a left-field answer, but I think an underrated, or at least not mentioned a lot “tool” is instinct. Leading an agency (or any business, I gather) is largely, maybe even mostly, made up of making multiple decisions a day on the fly – and people need and respect decisiveness. So your instinct (backed by experience, obviously) is really all you have going for you in those key moments. ”

Throw in a genuine caring about the people in the business and you are most of the way there.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Really any brand that understands what social media should ACTUALLY be used for.



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It is quite remarkable how far behind most companies still are in their thinking!

9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

I think our traditional hourly based pricing model is outdated – for two interconnected reasons.

Firstly, marketing budgets are generally being squeezed, which means hourly rates are being negotiated down and because there are only so many hours in a day, the only way for agencies to continue being profitable is to either squeeze more hours out of people or pay them less. This is not a sustainable way of running a business.



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Mike Oelschig 8 Jan 2018



Secondly, clients are demanding much more ROI-based marketing and yet how we charge them for it isn't matching up.

10. What are you working on right now?

So. Many. Proposals!

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Not really new or “at the moment” but it needs to be said!

“ In a social media sense, the one that is the most overused and yet also mostly untrue is the idea of “community” – brands love talking about their communities. We even have a job title named after it – community managers. Having a community is absolutely an ideal, but most brands just have an audience that they throw messages at. ”

Very few have achieved community status in the real definition of the word. And it matters, because thinking you *sommer* just have a community versus trying to actually build one takes you in two very different directions.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

When I am thinking about something completely unrelated.





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Top of the volcano. #view

A post shared by [Michael Oelschig \(@mikeoelsch\)](#) on Sep 23, 2017 at 9:33am PDT



13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Miraculously changing from being an introvert to an extravert.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Somewhere in the middle. I'm not a phobe, but I'm also way off on being anything close to an early adopter.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Cricket news. News news. And your general assortment of social media apps. Nothing fancy and, ironically, definitely no selfies!



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Some say he's immune to the negative stuff on social media. Others say he's solved every crisis that ever happened. We don't know about any of that, but he's the man behind our most ambitious editorial project to date: The Social Media Crisis Handbook, our Head of Advisory and Insights, @mikeoelsch. Follow the link in our bio to find out more about the Handbook.

A post shared by Cerebra (@cerebra) on Nov 7, 2016 at 10:33pm PST

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16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

There are two types of work. The stuff that is given to you by your line manager or traffic or whoever; and then the stuff you take the initiative on and put your hand up for. Your success in this industry is mostly determined by your willingness to do the latter.

Simple as that. Follow Oelschig on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#); and follow Cerebra on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds for the latest updates.

**Interviewed by Leigh Andrews.*

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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