

Lessons for African creatives

 By Leigh Andrews

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The African Cristal 2015 prove that African awards are being taken far more seriously than before. Even better? You don't need a massive budget to be successful, merely to do great work based on smart, relevant ideas that tell the authentic African story...



Kevin Tromp, CEO of Publicis Africa Group

African Cristal 2015 was a memorable event for Publicis Africa, as they won 'network of the year', with holding company of the year going to Publicis Groupe, and an emerald to Liquorice Online. The network had 50 shortlisted pieces in total.

Who better to share some insights into the state of African advertising? Kevin Tromp, CEO of Publicis Africa Group, attended the ceremony and reports back that it was enormously international, and being based in Morocco, very French.

This is the third time the awards have been held in Africa as a sister awards show to the well-known European Cristal awards.

Tromp found there was great competitive spirit amongst the participants, with a real sense that it is Africa's time now. Whilst the competition is fierce, there is an overall sense that the entire industry in Africa wins when the work is great.

Tromp shares further insights...

■ 1. *Well done on all your wins! Tell us about what your African Cristal 2015 showing means for the agency and the continent alike.*

Tromp: Many of the competitor networks have been in place across Africa for decades. We've only been operating as a network for around four years now, so it's very satisfying for the teams in the agencies across the continent to have their work and their network acknowledged.

One part of the judging group was a contingent of clients, who added a valuable perspective as to what should win and what shouldn't, and the core judges were mainly international advertising people, with a number of senior European creative directors who held the work to a very high standard.

It is testament to the fact that African awards are being taken far more seriously and more interest is now being paid to the continent. Winning is a source of pride for both our clients and ourselves!

■ 2. *Give us some insight into the 'smart strategy and great creative ideas' that went into your wins.*

Tromp: I think it's fair to say that the most remarkable work, across the board, not only from Publicis Africa Group, was non-traditional work with very strong ideas. This is very reassuring as it shows the African advertising community that they don't need massive budgets to be successful. They simply need smart, relevant ideas and innovative delivery mechanisms, whether digital or analogue, to do great work and deliver a return on investment for their clients. Work like the Slimfast "Chocolate Bar", which won a Gold Medal for Publicis Machine and Liquorice's #BattleoftheSpreads for [Marmite](#).



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Africa is finding its voice. Much like South America did 15 or so years ago, we are now telling stories that are internationally accepted and locally relevant and uniquely African.

■ 3. *As this is an African award ceremony, elaborate on the SA advertising standard compared to rest of continent.*

Tromp: There is no question that the work from across the continent is improving in leaps and bounds. Havas in Tunisia did some great work for PNB Paribas, Insight in Nigeria is world-class, and DDB also had some really lovely work entered from many countries. On the whole, it's fair to say that the South African work still leads the continent in terms of craft, scale and refinement.

The Publicis Africa Group agencies did some fine work out of South Africa, but there is not a shadow of a doubt that this leadership is not assured as we go into the future, as there are some wonderfully smart and creative people working in agencies in all corners of the African continent.

It is enormously important that African agencies be encouraged to enter into awards competitions, as they underestimate themselves, and I believe they will be surprised by the success they will enjoy.

■ 4. *How does work from the continent compare globally and what's our major competitive edge?*

Tromp: African work is beginning to speak with its own voice in many cases and it is here that the African agencies should be focused, rather than trying too hard to emulate global work. The purity of the ideas, the simplicity of the executions, and the adventurousness of some of the work speaks to an industry that is developing and finding its own way. Therein lies the promise. Digital work is just beginning to emerge in a meaningful way, and there is huge opportunity here - obviously, especially in mobile - but also in other areas.

Idea-based work breaks through. Smart, innovative thinking can be delivered successfully in a simple fashion, while work without good ideas, no matter how big the budgets, simply is not as memorable.

We are also seeing that brands with a wider social purpose emerging and being recognised. As digital and mobile level the playing field somewhat, Africa, the leapfrog continent, is perfectly placed to reap the rewards of operating wholeheartedly in this space. Expect interesting, creative ideas from Africa in the mobile and digital space, globally, not only at the African awards.

[Click here](#) for the full African Cristal 2015 prize lists and [here](#) for more on Publicis Africa.



ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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