

Time to own and hone the advertising industry

 By [Wayne Naidoo](#)

9 Jan 2012

We have long lamented the draining of the skills pool in the advertising industry. And many people have made good arguments as to why we are experiencing the 'juniorfication' of the industry and what we can do about this. However, I think that unless we are able to address this issue holistically, on an industry-wide basis, we risk a further spiral.

We need to open the conversation about what we're doing wrong and what some of the solutions may be to what is a 'wicked' problem.

Not the same

So, the first question that is often posed is: how do we attract talent to the industry? But I wonder if, as an industry, we've really understood what talent we're looking for to start with, because it's certainly not the same type of talent that rocked the industry 20-30 years ago.

We all accept today that we are faced with an increasingly complex media landscape. This, combined with a growth in technology, are just two reasons why the industry is a lot more sophisticated than it was back then.

In addition, clients are far more demanding - as their own businesses have become more complex - with new technologies, new markets and new economic powerhouses shaping a new global landscape.

Three distinct value-add

Trends forecasters verify what we are already experiencing. Clients are seeking three distinct value-add from their agencies:

- the first is great ideas
- the second is an in-depth understanding of audience interactivity in a digital age, ie our understanding of: *client engagement, connection, community, media, etc* and
- thirdly, our ability to provide an *exceptionally high level of market insight* - which means our ability to gather, analyse and draw insights into audience behaviour is critical. As one international commentator said: *'If you don't have robust analytics, you're in big trouble.'*

All of this means that, as an industry, we are seeking three very different skills sets that can complement each other. This era certainly signals the end of the dominance of 'rock star' creatives - the market is simply too complex for a great idea to

sustain itself alone.

So let's take a long, hard look at what kinds of talent can fill the interactive and analytical role requirements and then look at how to attract them. This may include addressing issues such as remuneration, the provision of bursaries, mentorship programmes to impart the particular skills necessary for the ad industry, managing the reputational issues the profession faces, etc.

Then, there's the 'ideas' people and here we need to ask what, in our view, makes a 'great idea' and then we might understand who has those ideas. And once we find that core belief about what makes a 'great' idea in the African context, then we need to defend that belief and the people who have that talent - if we are to protect the integrity of our industry.

Agree we need to be less 'academic'

I agree fully with [Chris Moerdyk](#) that we need to be less 'academic' about where we find talent - we're unsure about the nature of the talent we're seeking - we will allow others to define what 'talent' is and therefore to define what ideas we generate.

This may, for example, mean a local client who is overly risk-averse and sanitises the creative output or an international client who creates a global offering that obliterates the unique flavour of the local industry, or it may mean that, in an effort to professionalise the industry, we allow the client to define who is 'acceptable' to corporate culture rather than truly discovering and protecting talented creatives - ultimately destroying the fundamental value that the client derives.

Our profession needs to take a look at what it means to be an advertising [agency in the next decade](#); then we need to work in unison to create industry-wide strategies to attract the talent that is the lifeblood of our industry, to protect and defend our profession so that we can sustain it and to redefine the approaches that have become outdated.

Advertising is no longer limited. In a global environment, it's about impacting on hard-core business strategy and the advertising profession can only claim its worth if it is brave enough to define itself and stand up for its belief in a new world.

For more:

- Bizcommunity: What will the future agency look like? [Part I](#) and [part II](#) by Abey Mokgwatsane
- Bizcommunity: [The potential of African identity in advertising](#) by Anton Crone
- Bizcommunity: [Stop using varsity degrees as barricades to advertising, media](#) by Chris Moerdyk
- Bizcommunity: [Remember all those wonderful TV commercials?](#) by Mike Abel

ABOUT WAYNE NAIDOO

Wayne Naidoo founded DUKE after leaving his CMO position at AFB (now JUMO), one of Africa's fastest growing consumer finance groups. Currently chairman of the ACA (Association of Communication and Advertising SA) and voted as 2019's runner up for 'Most Respected Agency Leader in Cape Town' by MarkLives. Former CEO of Lowe & Partners SA, former chairman of YPO (Young Presidents Organisation), previous chairman of the ACA and former director of the AAA School of Advertising.

■ #BizTrends 2020: Gearing up our people for the future - 27 Jan 2020

■ [Trends 2015] Power to the have-nots - 30 Jan 2015

■ A vision for Cannes Lions 2013 - 7 Aug 2012

■ Transformation: a matter of trust - 9 Mar 2012

■ Time to own and hone the advertising industry - 9 Jan 2012

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>