

The next shiny innovations

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

29 Jan 2019

Scott Wilson, President Africa and Europe, Burson Cohn & Wolfe (BCW) looks at trends he sees as relevant to both the European and African markets...



Scott Wilson, President Africa and Europe, Burson Cohn & Wolfe.

Time and complexity

“Clients have gone through a level of consolidation and efficiency themselves, and therefore the days of our clients having teams and teams of people to manage their agencies is long gone. The result is we now work in partnership with our clients rather than sitting on the other side of the table.

“Our clients are often having to work with us to pitch for their own budgets which is interesting, but then when you think about the complexity our clients are dealing with, with multiple agency partners covering the full mix, you realise what a challenge it is.

“To overcome this challenge, ultimately someone has to manage those different skill sets to achieve a goal. Some clients try to do it themselves, others try to sub-contract responsibility to a lead agency, while others try to find a process to help them through this.”

Too much data, too little insights

“Layer on top of that data. Most clients tell me they are not short of data, what they are short of is insights. Giving clients more data is not the answer; finding insights that lead to creative ideas and then taking that creative idea into channels is. This requires selecting the right channels. Do you put your money into TV or outdoor? And then the danger is, if you ask different agencies to go off and do their own thing, you end up with 14 programmes rather than one programme.

“This is also a cultural change for clients and their agencies as increasingly the idea of channel neutral ideas has to be promoted. This means the PR agency can come up with the idea - and I think we do sometimes - which becomes the advertising. That is a change for our advertising agency partners as much as it is for us.”

Technology

“Alongside data the other big trend is technology.”

“ *These days we talk about how the marketers of the future are going to have to be creative chief technology officers. In our region we are quite proud to be doing the first artificial intelligence (AI) campaigns, but technology is an area where you can be overwhelmed by the next shiny technology innovation.* ”

“So, there is a danger that you constantly chase the new and the shiny, especially with the constant proliferation of new channels and new technologies. At the same time, as an agency partner, we need to stay ahead of the curve. However, I do sympathise with many of our clients, especially when you also add in the mix of channels and partners and internal pressures, then the job of chief communication or marketing officer is very difficult.”

Protecting and promoting

“The final trend I am seeing a lot of is protecting and promoting clients. Previously, if you had a crisis, you went to the crisis reputation agency. Today, if you are selling chocolate to children, when you are promoting that product, you are also protecting it because you are dealing with sugar, weight, diabetes, etc.

“Reputation management is no longer writing a crisis manual. Increasingly, people judge you on what you do, not on what you say, and that takes us into the area of authentic behaviour and purpose-driven marketing.”

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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