

All Together Now

Paying the 1.5% levy on all advertising to the Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation to fund the biannual Zimbabwe All Media and Products Survey will become one of the criteria to be an accredited advertising agency from next year.

Barry Manandi, chairman of the Zimbabwe Association of Accredited Practitioners in Advertising and CEO of Columbus DDB, announced this at the November Advertising and Publicity Club breakfast.

It's time the whole communications' industry joined together for the good of the economy and country. This was his powerful message, which was well received by members from across the communications' spectrum.

Manandi used illustrations from Zambia, where the Zambian Institute of Marketing is the umbrella body for all the stakeholders, who all have representation on it, and South Africa, where everyone in the industry recognises the severe penalties for infringing agreed codes of conduct and regulations.

He described the local advertising industry as being in recovery mode from the first half of 2017. It has suffered from under-investment and the brain drain to South Africa, where many of the creative directors in that country are Zimbabwean, and so are most of the Agency heads. "Advertising in that country owes us a huge debt—but it has caused us to struggle," he said. Zimbabwe's entire adspend of between \$18-25 million, which is equivalent to the turnover of just one advertising agency in SA.

"We are heavily dependent on a sound economy. What do companies do first when times are hard? They cut back on advertising—even though every qualified CEO knows that this is the time when they should spend to back their brands.

"Money is really tight. A number of agencies have been told to double the advertising with half the budget. We have lost one major agency in the last two years and there are rumbles about others being in trouble."

Apart from the economy, he sees several major brakes on the growth of advertising. One is the loss of brave marketing managers. Many have been promoted from sales and when agencies develop a campaign, the first question is: "Where's the call to action?" Building your brand is about so much more than special offers and deep discounts.

"The agency always loses this argument—because we have to stay in business. I see fatigue creeping into even the most creative agencies: it is just too exhausting to be rejected constantly."

APC members agreed that they know of no lecturers in marketing and communications at tertiary institutions who have had hands' on business experience. "It doesn't help that we have graduates who do well in an interview and are employed to manage marketing budgets, yet they have no knowledge of how the industry works. We must engage with the institutions offering degrees and diplomas in our areas.



In Zimbabwe, advertising agency income comes from areas where they have no control: commission from placing advertising in the media and on commissioning production. “In South Africa agencies don’t book advertising space: their income is fee-based and this has to be the way forward.”

For it to succeed, Manandi sees the need for professional standards. “In this country you can open an ad. agency in 90 minutes. You buy a backpack and a computer with reasonable speeds and you set yourself up in a café. Are you professional and accountable? No—but you certainly are cheap.

“We need a code of conduct that is endorsed by everybody and I would like to see an Act of Parliament specifying what we can—and cannot—do. How else can you enforce professional standards?”

In Zambia, practitioners must either have acceptable qualifications or be certified by the Zambian Institute of Marketing. If you are doing something in the marketing space and you are not registered, you face a fine of about \$10,000 or two years in prison.

He horrified delegates to the recent MAZ conference when he told them that ZAAPA is introducing a rejection fee for campaign pitches. “Company X will send a brief to 13 agencies. One will win it—if it’s lucky: if not, the company will pick the ideas out of the various campaigns and try to implement them themselves—and we have no recourse.

“All invited agencies will present their credentials for free. If there is a rejection fee involved, Company X will commission perhaps three agencies to develop

campaigns, pick the one they like best and pay a fee of about \$2,000 to the two whose ideas they are rejecting. The way it works now, all creative departments are spread too thin and the result is sub-standard work.”

In South Africa, all pitches must be registered with the ACA. “Telkom went out to look for an agency and didn’t lodge its application with ACA. Consequently it was deemed an illegal pitch and Telkom was fined—and the three agencies who pitched to them were suspended.”

Not only does South Africa have respected institutions: it has a template for Proudly SA advertising. All material from there portrays the country in a positive light—and there is no doubt which country is behind every campaign.

Not so in Zimbabwe. “Whatever your opinion of SI 64, we have had a taste for the finer things in life and no locally produced product can send the message that it is taking us back into captivity. Both the product and its marketing must compete.” He sees this as a major, missed opportunity.

Being an excellent adman, he is not despondent and determined to find a better way of doing business. “In my humble opinion, we all operate in silos and have never found the sweet spot where we interact.”

He pointed out that very few APC members present had been at the Marketers Association of Zimbabwe conference at The Kingdom the previous week—and pointed out that interaction with marketers is the key component to success in the communications’ industry.

The Flowering of ZAAPA

ZAAPA is the policy-making body for Zimbabwe’s advertising agencies. “It needs to be a strong body, because we are all suspicious of one another,” Barry Manandi said.

It has a number of sub-committees: the recently reformed Advertising Standards Association—more on this later—the Media Directors’ Forum under the chairmanship of Peter Phiri, media director at ShiftEngage and ZARF board member, the Creative Directors’ Forum chaired by Brett Goosen of Shift Engage and, in its formative stage, the Financial Directors’ Forum.

It meets three or four times a year and holds an AGM.

The Media Directors’ Forum lobbies for changes in

the media and engages AdMA “... who come up with bizarre and cruel punishments for errant agencies at times.” The Creative Directors’ Forum represents ZAAPA’s lifeblood and is heavily involved in the Ngoma Awards, advertising’s flagship event, which moved upmarket this year.

“We are struggling to form the Finance Directors’ Forum because, as I said, there is a great deal of suspicion in our industry. It is essential, because we need to develop a predictable way of charging for our services,” Manandi said. “We need to be financed properly so we can retain our best talent, yet at the moment we are all fighting for crumbs.”

Since its rebirth in 2012 under the leadership of Alistair Carlisle, ZAAPA has made major strides. It



now has 34 members, because an agency cannot claim commission from the media unless it is registered with ZAAPA and accredited by ADMA. He was followed by Praxie Dzangare and Barry Manandi has stepped into “those very big shoes.

“The media is represented by the Advertising Media Association,” he said. “Back in the day, the media houses sent their marketing managers to AdMA. They would come back and say that such and such had been agreed and the CEO would say ‘No.’ That was the end of that initiative.”

ZAAPA lobbied to have the CEOs represented on AdMA and its current chair is Jacob Chiseke from the Daily News group. “They are making decisions now—some of which have really moved the industry forward and others painful.

Manandi was referring to the agency blacklist that is published periodically. This gives the names of the agencies that are not in good standing financially with the media—and no-one wishes to appear on it. “We all agreed to this, however, and it is part of enforcing standards.”

Advertising Standards Association



Manandi's proudest achievement during his presidency is the re-creation of the Advertising Standards Association of Zimbabwe. This is the place to go for anyone who sees material that is offensive, untrue, destructive or in any way inappropriate. It is chaired by Sapi Bachi of TBWA and it comprises two members from ZAAPA, two from AdMA, two from MAZ and one from the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe.

"It is a court of appeal for anyone who is offended by advertising," Manandi said. He cited an incident when a parent had taken exception to a perfume advertisement on an electronic billboard in Sam Nujoma St. It depicted a lady on board a boat with

a bare-chested man who embraced each other in an intimate way. The parent thought this something no child should see because it was too graphic.

"The ASA reacted swiftly. It contacted the company responsible for the billboard, which in turn contacted the South African agency who had created it. The perfume company, through its SA agent, issued a swift apology and offered a replacement advertisement. The issue was dealt with fast, because South African agencies have respect for their institutions."

In stark contrast, some of the cases we witness locally are fought in the court of public opinion—all 13 million of them.

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