

Don't self-impose a glass ceiling on your integrated marketing creativity!

 By Leigh Andrews

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At this year's Cannes Lions we heard about the '[3% stat](#)' and applauded the introduction of the Glass Lion. But does a glass ceiling really exist for women in the industry? I found out the views of four key players in the realm of integrated marketing...

At the IMC last week, most attendees were female. I chatted to four of the IMC keynote speakers on all things integrated and how to overcome gender issues in the industry this Women's Month. Melissa Attree, director of content strategy at Ogilvy & Mather; Paula Raubenheimer, MD of SouthernX; Lynne Gordon, Managing Director, Added Value Group South Africa give a strong female stance with and Alistair King, founding creative partner of King James, providing a male perspective...



Attree, Raubenheimer, Gordon, King

■ 1. Who is actually getting integrated marketing right in the industry?

Attree: Anyone working with the consumer at heart, managing to not get caught up in silos.

Raubenheimer: This may come as a surprise but to me, the brands getting integrated right locally are the ones usually at the bane of our existence - banks. As brands, they realise their touch points with customers are like additional services. They can extend beyond just a TV campaign and work in digital, and it's exciting to see them pushing the boundaries as they actually understand the medium.

Gordon: I think Coca-Cola still holds 'guru' status in SA. Their ability to crack a big idea that resonates, communicate it powerfully, and still bring a unique twist with innovative executional choices, are aspects we could all work towards!

King: Hmm, that's a really tough one. Many talk about integrated marketing as something taking place in the future but not so many are actually doing a great job of it now. We all need to stop deflecting and focus instead on where we sit now is more important. Agencies would do well to focus on the now and think 'What can I do to make my clients more famous.' We're all in our own worlds, trying to make it work. Sadly, I fear many clients are not fully understanding what integrated entails and are simply trying to tick a box. You can decide a campaign went well and broaden it down the line to other mediums...

■ 2. *What's your top tip for those now looking to move towards integrated marketing?*

Attree: I'd say you need to start by evaluating your current structure internally. How you handle the brief is critical, make sure you get the various parties involved upfront to tackle it together instead of working from a silo mentality.

Raubenheimer: As a marketer, you'll know that the essence of integrated is that it comprises many channels, but if you're trying to engage with a broad audience several channels, realise that you can't master all of it. Trust an agency or several agencies with your integrated marketing, and make a concerted effort to understand the mediums you're using. It's crazy not to dip your toes into a specific medium just because you don't understand how it works.

Gordon: Integrated marketing's impact is only as good as the idea underpinning the execution. That idea lies most often in a deep and unique understanding of how your brand can meet consumer needs - whether at the micro-level of your product, or at the macro-level of your brand's role in culture. Insights don't happen sitting at your desk - they are the product of getting out there and working to uncover a unique understanding of your consumer. Great campaigns are the result of digging tirelessly for the insight that inspires a great idea!

King: As I said in my keynote presentation, weak idea rolled out on a large scale is just more embarrassing as it's seen by more people across a variety of channels. Sometimes a good idea is only worth a few medium, no one will say it's weak for that. At the end of the day any advertising must serve its purpose. As clients start to better understand this and buy into the idea you'll find they're more willing to try out integrated ideas.

■ 3. *How does South African integrated marketing differ from what's being done globally?*

Attree: There's no doubt we do follow the global trends, but as a nation, one of our strong points is that we're great at collaboration and coming together to solve problems. Put that first and you start to tackle briefs and problems in a unique way that stands out from the global standard.

Raubenheimer: I believe SA is in a lucky position as we get to use examples from the US and UK as guinea pigs, but the assumption can't be that something that works in another market will work here. We have different audiences that gravitate towards different mediums. As South Africa, it seems we simply can't win a Grand Prix Cannes Lions in the cyber category as simply don't get the budget from clients to go 'balls to the wall' on it - but we get that spend for radio, as that's where much of our audience is. We can't expect budget where we don't have an audience. That said, for mobile we are streaks ahead of the pack so I'd love to see a South African campaign win the Grand Prix Cannes Lion for mobile as it would show we truly understand the medium and are backed with financial support from the clients.

Gordon: Integrated marketing in South Africa has the potential to be a really unique response to our diverse consumers - winning with the Rainbow Nation means it's hard work to uncover insights and ideas that resonate to the heart of what unites us all. For marketers, it's crucial to get clear about who your core target audience is within that diverse mix, and understand them deeply. Our execution is often challenging too - integrated communications need to operate in media from targeted online to mass media. Campaigns like Carling Black Label's 'Be The Coach' have done that well, capturing a powerful insight and translating it into strong integrated communications across a broad mix, including mobile reach on feature phones - that's a critical piece of the mix for SA audiences.

King: I'm personally very disillusioned with the industry and feel it's dangerously close to imploding on its own ego. Work is often done for the agency itself and not the client. We seem to want clients to request big ideas, and there are a lot of multinational show ponies out there. We want to be the top network at Cannes and don't care what we actually have to do to win awards, we just do it. We're all playing dangerous games. Any idea can explode into many places, as has been done for 30 years. It doesn't help that SAARF has such small digital numbers locally - in the US and Asia they don't hesitate as they have that audience.

■ 4. *Let's end off by talking about gender issues in the industry, as it's women's month...*

Attree: We need to celebrate all humans and the remarkable work people do. It was nice to see more female speakers at the IMC conference. It's all about how things were traditionally skewed, and addressing that. Now we need to celebrate all

good ideas and smart people going forward.

Raubenheimer: My aspect of work is so tech-driven that it's mainly all men, people generally can't believe I'm a woman talking programmatic. I picked the industry as saw it was young and dynamic at the time and accepted that any glass ceiling I encountered would be my own. I'm still testing the waters and testimony to the fact that believing there's a glass ceiling makes you your own worst enemy. As a woman, you actually often have a competitive advantage, especially if it's a typically male industry you're in.

Gordon: Marketing is an industry where women can thrive - we can apply both our analytical and creative abilities and multi-tasking is crucial. These are all things women are great at doing. The challenge is to create more space for women to progress into senior leadership. I think that takes a flexible culture, supportive policies and great role models, creating an environment where all great talent can develop and grow. We're very proud of the women in our business at Added Value - 60% of our local leadership team are women, and we're aiming to really create an environment that works for all our great talent.

King: I think it's a pretty complex issue and the gender imbalance is more prevalent in some areas and disciplines than in others. The majority of King James Group's directors are women, for example, as are the majority of our senior clients. Our PR company can also barely find a male to hire, which is much the same as our account management department. The real problem area is in the creative departments of both traditional and digital agencies, which is why it has been such a hot subject at Cannes. There is a definite [imbalance at senior and leadership level](#) and we obviously have to do everything we can to correct that. I am told that more women graduate from ad schools than men, so something is wrong at the grassroots aspect. I do know that our industry has a notorious drop-out rate, particularly on the female creative front, which can only exacerbate the problem. We simply have to retain our talent better than we currently do and make a concerted effort to nurture them through the ranks.

Wise words for any agency, both Women's Month and going forward...

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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