

Great lessons from today's great marketers

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

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I have, over the past year, had some form of interaction with four people whom I believe to be among South Africa's greatest marketers.

Michael Jordaan, the outgoing CEO of FNB; Brand Pretorius, retired chairman of the McCarthy Group; Mark Lamberti, chairman of Massmart and Charles Hughes, who retires this month as CEO of True-Cape Marketing - one of the country's most successful fruit exporters.

They all have a lot in common.

They all see marketing as something simple and based on the premise of keeping customers happy and keeping customers at all costs.

None of them has any particular interest in winning advertising awards. Rather, their focus lies in building their advertising on what their customers want to hear and not what they have to say.

All of them interact with their customers at the coal face as often as they can.

Even though Mark Lambert is involved full time in Transaction Capital Ltd, a new and very successful business he started when he retired as CEO of Massmart and became chairman, he still regularly visits the group's stores, usually accompanied by his successor, Grant Pattison, who might have graduated as an engineer but who is fast becoming one of the country's top retail marketers.

Mark Lamberti is a marketing legend in this country and his philosophy is one of straight forward logic. A great believer that advertising without marketing is a very expensive folly.

Passion... by the bucket load

Another thing all these great marketing leaders have in common is a passion for what they do. In bucket loads.

Brand Pretorius has always been an inspiration to me. A living demonstration of how humility and integrity can combine to grow a business. I remember once taking my car into a Sandton dealership early one morning for a service and there was the group chairman, Brand Pretorius himself, armed with a clipboard and serving customers.

He insisted on checking my car in and doing it better than I have ever experienced before.

Both Pretorius and I were mentored by the great Colin Adcock, South Africa's most awarded marketer and Brand has certainly demonstrated Adcock's obsession with customer service as being the basis of great marketing.

Another man with whom I have worked over the past year is Charles Hughes, who in the past few years has taken Africa's largest apple and pear marketing organisation to the highest levels in history.

Keeping it simple, straight-forward

His simple approach to marketing and passion for the job, both in terms of logic-based advertising and painstaking interaction with his customers, has the makings of a marketing case history. I hope he uses some of his retirement time to write a book on how to be a successful marketer. Somehow though, I can't imagine he will retire.

Another marketer I admire but have never met is Michael Jordaan who turned the entire process of retail banking on its head by leading from the front in terms of marketing innovation and high level interaction with customers.

Jordaan has become the doyen of social media active CEO's in this country and although he is retiring from FNB at the end of this month, he has taken on the chairman's role at Mxit, which is wonderful news for marketers like me who really believe in the extraordinary power of social media and the increasingly important role communications technology it is going to play in the retail environment in future.

My mission for 2014 is to try and get all four of these legends into one place at one time and videotape the conversation. The result, I know, will become one of the most watched informal marketing lessons of all time.

Michael Jordaan's wine farm might just be the ideal venue.

Yes, Michael, that *is* a hint.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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