

Using the unconscious mind to drive change

Social media has radically changed and continues to change the way people relate to each other but without understanding the unconscious mind, campaigns may fall flat.



Timothy Maurice Webster, author and contributor to *Destiny Man* among others, told guests at a PRISA breakfast: "Many messages are received at the unconscious level that serve a deeper subconscious need or desire affecting human behaviour."

This causes people to do things that may appear illogical. Every individual has an essence. For example, a woman may try on a pair of shoes costing more than her intended budget. Once her foot slides into the shoe, her essence is transferred to the shoe and she will make her purchase decision based on that feeling.

"Our brains are organised into two systems. System 1 is the fast side of the brain, which has a store of formulae that help us manage life. These comprise day-to-day activities such as dressing, washing, making a cup of tea etc. and require no expending of energy or glucose. It copes with regular activities.

"The second system has plasticity or malleability and can adapt when there is a challenge that can be justified." He used the example of being asked to learn Russian in three months for an overseas work assignment with a reward of R2000 on return. This is not a justification of challenge. However, should the reward be R1 million, the justification would meet the challenge.

Capturing the 'We' culture

Individuals have narcissistic values but it is about how the 'I' relates to the 'We', a value system that has its roots in African and Asian cultures. An 'I' value system stems from a Western orientation.

"Social media has caused people to adapt to more of a 'We' culture and it is these deeper values that need to be tapped. Messages seen to be self-serving will be missed. This is at the core of what drives people. It is important to make them feel they are part of something."

Simon Mainwaring writes, "There is a fundamental shift that social media necessitates in business today - the need to transition from 'Me first' to 'We first' thinking. People want to be touched. At a metaphysical level, as PR practitioners you need to understand that people want to feel important. People, who have been feeling smothered, want to feel liberated."

Webster spoke about beliefs, which are contained in the conscious mind, and 'aliefs', which are harboured in the unconscious. "Beliefs can be overridden by aliefs - nerves out of control, but if you consciously override your aliefs and drive yourself you are able to create clarity and controls. In PR, you must be able to calm a person's anxiety about something, in other words, provide a justification that aligns with the individual's deepest values. When you are able to tap into these higher values, everything about your business will change," Webster concludes.

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