

Don't forget age and experience as a diversity and inclusion factor

By Leigh Andrews

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The industry's lack of diversity and inclusion was made notably clear by last year's #TimesUp movement, largely focused on equality in race and gender. Now, with a rise of 'diversity and inclusion' focused roles popping in advertising, here's why it's important to focus on a range of ages and experience levels for true business transformation.



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Today, Yashica Olden steps into her role as worldwide executive director for diversity and inclusion at Ogilvy, reports [AdWeek](#). Olden will report directly to Donna Pedro, Ogilvy's worldwide chief diversity and inclusion officer and executive partner.

Olden was chosen for the position as she has already implemented diversity and inclusion initiatives in more than 50 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, North America and South America.

Internal diversity on the rise at ad agencies

Her first 60 days' focus on the job will include implementing similar diversity and inclusion initiatives in EMEA and then Latin America, such as expanding Ogilvy's gender wage gap report to include other metrics, such as race, and will ensure there's support for people with disabilities and those who identify as LGBTQ.



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Ogilvy's also run a '30 by 30' internal campaign, aimed at increasing the number of young females in top leadership positions. As part of Ogilvy's Center for Talent Innovation's new disrupting bias report, Pedro explained to [HuffPost](#) that elevating women at Ogilvy has been an area of tremendous visibility and strength.

The rest of the world agrees as it's important for ad agencies to be as diverse and inclusive as possible behind the scenes so that the work they produce is as representative of the real world as possible.



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So while there's definitely awareness of the need to make agencies as reflective of culture their work is meant to represent as possible, ageism in the agency world is one aspect of diversity and inclusion that's often overlooked.

The age of experience: upskill yourself to stay relevant

Unfortunately, ageism is experienced at both ends of the spectrum. For the more experienced set, fewer opportunities come your way if you can't prove you've actively kept up with the times and trends.



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It's a wake-up call for most of us who did our basic studies a decade or more ago as many of the jobs of today didn't even exist back then.

So if we keep doing things the same way and don't keep up with the technological changes and resulting business trends, if we don't embrace an attitude of life-long learning and upskilling ourselves, we could easily get left in the dust ourselves as the tech-savvy set steps into the limelight.



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But the ad industry of 2019 is in an odd space, where lack of access means that despite increasing awareness of the importance of offering internships, those bright young digital things often can't even find a foothold into the industry.

If they do, they're often not given opportunities to grow as they 'don't have the experience' to succeed in those roles.

The South African jobseeker's Catch-22

It's a real Catch-22 where you can't get a job without experience, and you can't get experience without a job.



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This means they're encouraged to go the entrepreneurship route, without adequate training and guidance on important business skills.

That's why digital transformation is high on the agenda, aimed at solving both problems.



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Luckily locally, we're also increasingly hearing the call for better transformation in business, which factors in experience and age. A shining light in this regard, Digify Africa has won a Black Pixel for Best Contribution to Transformation in the Digital Industry twice at the IAB Bookmark Awards.

Where the opportunities don't yet exist, create them

Nomacala Mpetla, head of learning at Digify Africa, recently explained that they do so by creating programmes that help young black people create valuable and meaningful careers in an industry that is still largely untransformed.

Mpetla explains:

“ Young people have been born into a digital world and have a lot to teach the older generation. They also understand the consumer on the ground. In order to close the digital divide, we need to equip young people and professionals with digital marketing and content marketing skills... They have the talent but may lack the means or opportunity. They rarely

disappoint. ”

Only in having a truly diverse workforce can we hope to truly connect with consumers, by making every effort to ensure our work reflects their reality.

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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