CREATIVITY THAT WORKS

Brands should take note of the latest ranking of the most creative ad agencies as a guide to effective advertising

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For a second year Ogilvy & Mather tops the Creative Circle rankings — the prestigious list determining, by awards, the most creative agencies in SA.

Points are allocated according to success achieved at awards shows locally and internationally, including the Cannes Lions, Festival of Creativity and the Loeries. Ogilvy’s self-standing agencies in Joburg and Cape Town top the list and are followed by TBWA Hunt Lascaris Johannesburg and its group counterpart, OpenCo. Y&R Cape Town rounds off the top five.

In the agency group ranking, top spot is occupied by Ogilvy, followed by TBWA and FCB. Outgoing Ogilvy CEO Abey Mokgwatsane says the Creative Circle accolade matters because “it demonstrates our agencies are achieving the hardest thing of all: consistent and persistent creativity.” Ogilvy chief creative officer Pete Case says the secret to topping the rankings is delivering creatively all the time and on every brief, “to build brands that matter”.

A leading marketing director urges brands to take note of the rankings and use them as a guide to selecting communications partners. “At a time when the economy is forcing many of us to cut budgets, brands should be looking at agencies that not only provide cut-through work that is creative but also effective.”

That thinking is picked up by Deon Wiggett, creative director of the agency Fairly Famous, which cracks the individual agency list for the first time. He says: “The moment the economy tightens, clients start cutting their marketing budgets. This is short-sighted. If consumers are spending less, companies need to work harder to make sure consumers spend their money with them. Luckily, their competitors tend to be equally short-sighted. During recession, clever clients dominate their categories and keep building awareness and brand equity. When the economy turns, those brands are front of mind for consumers. Sustained spending during recession makes commercial sense.”

Rounding off the top 10 individual rankings in the 2016 table are FoxP2; Net-a-work BBDO; FCB 1886; DDB; and FCB Cape Town. These results all reflect success in the 2016 advertising year and are collated only in the following year. Multi-award winners King James and M&C Saatchi Abel drop off the top 10 list in 2016. Wiggett says creative advertising should be embarked on not because it appeals to the agency, but because it captures the heart and soul of consumers. Wiggett’s biggest client is the Nando’s global account. “People like Nando’s because it occupies a unique place in their minds and hearts. The company asks what it can mean to consumers and not what consumers can mean to it.”

One trend emerging from the latest list is the inclusion of smaller agencies such as Fairly Famous and Utopia.

Wiggett suggests the power of bigger agencies is starting to be questioned. “Clients are increasingly reluctant to pay for all the line items big agencies add, and are frustrated by the bureaucracy between marketers and creatives. Clients are tired of waiting. They face commercial pressures of their own when their advertising needs to respond to market conditions.”

Cracking marketing tech

Brands in the UK and the US spend as much as 16% of their marketing budget on new marketing technology, mainly software programs. Accountancy firm Moore Stephens says increasing spend is on tools that can enhance brand optimisation, and is being driven by dissatisfaction with what respondents have available. Many of them say they don’t have the right marketing tools to get the job done. When analysing by agency vs brand, 58% of agencies said they didn’t believe their clients had the right marketing tools or, if they did, thought they were not using them properly. Limited budget was the main barrier to the implementation of marketing technology tools, followed by a lack of understanding of the technology.