Marketing matters

Apartheid has been dead for a decade now and still far too many South African companies are unable to come to grips with the competition created by democracy and a move towards a free marketing economy.

Back in the bad old days there really wasn’t too much of it in our over-regulated and protected economy. Price collusion, cartels, monopolies and big fish swallowing little fish were the order of the day. Consumers were brainwashed by government never to complain. But things are different now, and a lot more competitive and unrestricted. Despite this I am hearing more and more floundering companies admitting that they ‘really would have wanted to put more effort into marketing their products and services if only they had the money’. As though marketing is some sort of optional extra.

A fundamental necessity
It is quite staggering how many new and long established businesses, now finding themselves up against stiff competition, refuse to accept that marketing is a fundamental necessity. Not only that, but a lot of them actually believe that they have some sort of divine right to succeed. Which is about as arrogant as spending every cent you have on a top of the range Mercedes and then standing on the side of the road with a piece of cardboard begging for petrol money and expecting every passing motorist to feel obliged to contribute.

Well-considered investment
Even more remarkable is quite how widespread the notion is that big name brand companies spend vast sums on marketing just to flash their money about or generally show off. They don’t of course. They make every cent count and while the ill-informed see marketing as some sort of whimsical process involving a combination of smoke, mirrors and vast amounts of money, the global FMCG players are doing nothing more than making well-considered investments for predictable returns.

Marketers need to start campaigning among non-marketers the fact that marketing is not a luxury to be enjoyed by those who can afford it. In this day and age of open markets and crippling competition it is as essential an element to any business as staff or capital equipment.

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