The Future in the Palm of Your Hand – Trends from the World’s Biggest Ad Festival

Every year the masters of the advertising universe gather in a small town in the South of France to pat themselves on the back and blow hot air about the trends for the following year. Sometimes so much hot air is exhaled in Cannes it competes with the famous Mistral – that searing dry regional wind that blows though the country and impacts on the climate of the Mediterranean and the very souls of the inhabitants.

This year there was no wind, rather a gale that blew through conventional thinking and finally gave life to the idea that digital advertising solutions are no longer the spoke in the wheel but rather the hub from which all communication is now flowing. And that is a massive lesson for South African marketers or more importantly their agencies. Too often traditional agencies are to steal this phrase from one clever blogger “…and we can also offer a digital solution…” which implies the digital concept is still seen as an afterthought. If brands in SA are going to be relevant, and maintain a real relationship with attention deficit consumers, a massive digital mind-shift needs to happen or they’ll be playing Nokia to Blackberry and Apple.

The crisp point of the world’s biggest advertising festival, the Cannes Lions was summed up in one pithy sentence by this blogpost: “Agency and client bosses have moved beyond droning declarations about digital to practical concerns” So with that in mind make a note of my five (plus one) big trends:

• Agencies are being forced to refine skills and embrace the role of inventors as digital continually breaks into smaller pieces.
• What used to be the staples, banners and websites, are firmly marginalized.
• The race to new platforms appears to have paused at least for the moment, allowing marketers to let current platforms serve the idea.
• What constitutes “best use” varies considerably depending on the region, compounding the inherent complexity of digital. Never before has acting local been more important.
• Clients themselves are pushing agencies to better integrate.
• We need to get beyond the rhetoric of 360-degree integration Bolt-on acquisitions don’t work.

So if all of that is lighting your brand-planning jets what does the short-term future look like. One of the master’s of the universe is former Google heavy Eric Schmidt. This is one insight worth chewing on: “In roughly a year, a third of all checkout stands in restaurants and retail stores will allow you to “tap and pay” with your mobile phone.” Roughly translated – all brands will end up in the palm of hands – you’d better get there fast.

By Jeremy Maggs