

# Cut through clutter with Creatrix's spectacular vernacular

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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September is Heritage Month as well as Innovation Month here on Biz. Lynn Joffe melds the two themes perfectly, having been inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame at the Liberty Radio Awards 2017, while also a finalist at the Absa Business Awards (Entrepreneur) in 2016 and a brand ambassador in the DBE's #readtolead literacy campaign. Also founder of Creatrix, she elaborates on the importance of 'celebrating local' beyond Heritage Month and telling specific brand stories with destination-driven radio content.

*"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."* – Nelson Mandela

A true South African great, Madiba knew what he was talking about. And 'talk' is the magic of the medium of radio, the theatre of the mind.

Creatrix has run with this brief, conceptualising and creating thousands of hours of entertaining, educational audio content, most notably three shows currently flying on SABC's African Language Stations or ALS – Vodacom's *Siyakha*, with ten programmes in five languages; Anglo American's *Makarapa City*, in partnership with Ogilvy Public Relations and now in its third season of twelve programmes in seven languages; and Absa's *Absaville*, in its second season, with 32 shows in nine languages.



Creatrix founder Lynn Joffe.

Each is an example of 'edutainment' at its best and proof that big corporates like these are now seeing the results of talking to people in their home language through radio. It's an interesting move, as the ALS and community radio segment is often neglected by mainstream advertisers because of the language barrier.

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Absa's edutainment soapie grows onto nine SABC African language stations

Creatrix 6 Apr 2017





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Here, Joffe lets us in on just how Creatrix offers brands a seamless way to reach audiences across all of our official languages by translating master scripts into the required mother tongue while respecting idiom, cultural and linguistic heritage...

■ ***Let's start the very beginning... Elaborate on your work history and what lead to the creation of Creatrix.***

I worked for many years as a copywriter in blue-chip agencies. I cut my teeth at Grey, toiled at TBWA for over a decade, freelanced everywhere, worked my way up to creative director and then out the door into my own maverick thing. And always, when the 'vernacs' were briefed, they were translated without empathy, relevance or resonance for their intended mass market. I always felt uncomfortable about that, gagging at the cultural mismatch with campaigns like having a black man in a dressing gown find the Cremora on top of the fridge, or transliterating a World War II metaphor as an OK Bazaars sale concept – e'OK Price Blitz.

“ Long form also wasn't agency style. Anything over thirty seconds was a stretch or a bore for creative teams and if it couldn't win a Loerie or a Clio, it wasn't deemed worthy of note. ”

'Long form' became my niche. But always, there was radio, the heard word, music. The first time I stepped into a sound studio as a junior copywriter, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

So Creatrix is the fusion of my writing and radio skills with the challenge of communicating with the mass market in the mother tongue. You can really only tell a story in a slightly longer format than a 30-second spot – even though every spot should tell a story. Creatrix has built our expertise within the branded storytelling space, bringing brand love to the mass market on their terms, on their turf and in their lingo.

But it's not just the work that's important. In empowering previously disadvantaged women to rise and shine in the business, I've raised a crop of young professionals who are strategists, writers, producers, production assistants and superstars-in-the-making. I get out of bed in the morning for my lobola crew, and Creatrix is truly female-empowered. I'm particularly proud of my writer-strategist, Thandi Ngwenya, who has been with me on this wild ride for over a decade.



The Creatrix crew.

Work we have done in the industry, for marketers who recognise the value of speaking to the target market in the mother tongue with storytelling campaigns created and produced by Creatrix, has seen significant results and shifts in their brand perception. Creatrix campaigns are alive and thriving on SABC ALS and community stations, and the briefs are rolling in. Creatrix has evolved from beans and banking into campaigns with a behaviour change at heart, including electricity awareness through Eskom's *Ruby and the Powerpals*, Pikitup's *Trash to Treasure* and my self-penned project, *Pitterpat the Craze Caterpillar* – a readalong, singalong children's story which is a theatre piece, picture book, CD and website.

■ **Wow. Elaborate on why it's so important to celebrate local, beyond Heritage Month, and tell specific brand stories in the vernacular?**

This article's opening quote by Nelson Mandela rings true in the work I do. Language is local; it locates a person in terms of identity, culture, origin. They don't call it 'mother tongue' for nothing.

There is such a secret, shameful scourge in South Africa – many people can converse and think, but cannot read and write their own mother tongue – the definition of literacy. Branded storytelling radio overcomes this barrier by bringing the intimacy, interactivity and resonance of a person's mother tongue.

We always conceptualise with the target market in mind, immerse ourselves in the culture and draw from stories of real South Africans, imagining them into being in soapies, talk shows, dramas and other features. Radio is the medium of imagination. I don't have to say 'pink flamingo' for you to conjure up its image. Add a sound effect and your flamingo can be dainty or clumsy, hoarse or squeaky. As much as the creative process can achieve in sound, the listener has to bring his or her imagination to the scene. That's why the ear is such a huge creative asset, together with the brain, of course. It leapfrogs over the literacy barrier.

■ ***Explain the power of destination-driven radio content then.***

Destination-driven content means that our radio campaigns are broadcast at the same time of day, each week, telling stories that have listeners tuning in to hear more the following week. They build up a loyalty listening pattern and identify and resonate with the characters. They are entertained while they are being informed through functional and emotional product benefits woven into the storylines. Best of all, the marketer's message is perceived as programming rather than advertising; so listeners actually tune in to hear their features.

■ ***Clever. Let's pull this altogether with a description of the production process for a series like Absaville or Makarapa.***

We move like a well-oiled machine from brief to broadcast. I don't want to give away our trade secrets, but from the time our storylines and scripts are approved by client – a process we always need steel balls for – the Creatrix Crew takes care of idiomatic translations, casting artists in several languages according to the dictates of the script, recording, sound design, mix and approval. We work closely with the broadcasters to ensure our dispatches run smoothly and monitor and feedback on all stations to client. Our recording days see between 40 and 50 artists giving their all; in character, on time and eager to see what's happening next in their particular soapie or show. Shout out to our production manager, Kat aka #Caster, who draws from a pool of South African talent in eleven South African languages!

*That's how it's done – the sound of true storytelling success. Click through to the following platforms for more information: [Creatrix press office](#) | [website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Soundcloud](#)*

## 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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