

James Burton

 By Louise Marsland

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James Burton is the CEO of Hero, an integrated marketing communications agency which is a group of companies that includes sub brands: Hero AV, Black Spade Racing, 1Address.com, Medialoop and The Broccoli Project. The business has just undergone a repurposing, with Doug Lockhart becoming executive creative director and Warren van Rensburg appointed at Hero Cape Town as the new creative director.

Hero has also launched Hero AV (a video production division) as a separate business with Hero as the majority shareholder. Brendan Stein as managing creative director heads up Hero AV alongside technical director, Pierre Steytler. While in-house, Hero AV completed well over 200 videos and AVs and has gained a reputation for providing creative and visually attractive productions with good marketing and communications insights.

"Most of the people are in place and/or identified and only need some further experience and mentoring. My focus is now firmly on the business - and fine tuning the mix of skills, technology and human resources required to move the company from its current position to one of the most capable, technology driven, marketing and communications agencies in South Africa.

"My creative focus is also around managing and driving negotiations with an organisation which wishes to buy in to the company. This deal will allow Hero to take a totally different niche/position and open up potentially very rich new markets, plus opportunities to expand the company way beyond its current shape and form."



ABOUT JAMES BURTON

James Burton is a seasoned industry veteran and CEO of Hero agency. He has been a copywriter and always wanted his own agency. In 2000, with Hero set up, he co-founded Latitude Blue, an ICT incubator. He was a participant in the reality TV series The Volunteers; in 1996 founding of one of SA's first digital agencies, Hyperactive (later renamed Fuse and subsequently absorbed into Hero); and founded Rocketseed, SA's largest outbound email enrichment platform.

Q: Most important attribute needed to do your job?

A: The ability to 'join the dots'. In other words, the ability to not only completely understand the current context in which we operate, but to be able to accurately and clearly see where everything is heading -in the next six to 10 years - and what fundamental changes must be initiated right now, to enable the company to be exactly positioned to take advantage of the envisaged future context.

Q: The biggest trend?

A: The rising rate of attrition of those professionals and agencies who cannot adjust to the increasingly rapid changes to

communications and technology - and ultimately to society. Business is rapidly deserting the agencies that don't quickly show they can cut it - in many cases, despite deep and long relationships - and turning to those local agencies that do understand the big picture and have managed to remain on top of current and future trends. This should be a major cause for concern for the local marketing, communications and advertising industry.

Q: How do you make an impact?

A: We prefer to make an impact through consistently generating excellent, measureable bottom line enhancing work for our clients. We've watched the flashy agencies come and go. Winning awards and clients in good times is easy, but when things get tough, businesses turn to those who guarantee bottom line returns. This why we grew 30% over the last financial year when the whole industry was taking massive strain.

Q: Where do you draw your creative inspiration?

A: I read and view voraciously and eclectically. I am also inherently intensely curious about everything.

Q: What are you currently reading for work?

A: 'The Watchman's Rattle - Thinking Our Way Out of Extinction' by Rebecca Costa.

Q: Your life philosophy?

A: A bit clichéd perhaps, but 'you only live once' sums it up perfectly. Everything else flows from that.

Q: At the top of my 'bucket list' is...

A: Seeing my children achieve long term happiness and success in life; write a decent novel; ride the great mountain bike trails of the world; sail a yacht around the world, exploring countries and surf spots.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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