

Why one plus one equals three - Craig Strydom, Red & Yellow's new senior lecturer

By  Shan Raddiffe

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George Bernard Shaw once wrote: "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." Craig Strydom, however, is kicking that old assumption to the kerb as he joins the Red & Yellow Creative School of Business as the new senior lecturer.



Copywriter, creative director and Red & Yellow's new senior lecturer, Craig Strydom

With over 25 years of experience spanning nine agencies in three countries, this copywriter and creative director has proven his worth as a "doer", winning numerous accolades across the globe - from the likes of One Show, the London International Advertising Awards, and the New York Festivals, to name a few. His writing credits also include the Oscar-winning, globally acclaimed documentary *Searching for Sugarman*, about American musician, Rodriguez.

Now, Strydom is looking to pass on his wealth of knowledge and experience to the next generation by teaching the Advanced Diploma in Copywriting and the Higher Certificate in Creating Digital Content at the Red & Yellow Creative School. All while completing his own Master's in Creative Writing at the University of Cape Town.

Here we chat to Strydom about his new lecturing gig, advertising in the social media age, and his must-have teaching tools.

■ ***Tell us a bit about your experience in copywriting and why you've decided to start teaching.***

Craig Strydom: I have worked in the trenches as a copywriter/creative director for 26 years. During that time, I touched every aspect of the written text as it relates to advertising in all its forms and formats. I was invited to teach a course at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in the US in 2011 and the seed was planted.

■ ***What is the first or most important lesson you always teach your students?***

Strydom: One plus one equals three. It may sound like an odd mathematical equation, but creation that takes place in pairs is stronger by far than two individual efforts. 'Stay curious' is the second important lesson I drum into my students. A voracious appetite for information in all its forms (art, literature, cultural trends, etc.) are the things that we, as creatives, draw on in order to create concepts. Third, but not least, I enjoy demonstrating the fact that even the most incredible ad

ever made in the history of advertising started out as a blank sheet of paper.

■ ***What are some of the biggest misconceptions new students have about copywriting and digital content creation?***

Strydom: I think the biggest misconception writing students have is the idea that traditional advertising and digital content creation require a different creative process. At their core, both forms require the same level of creative effort if one is to produce work that is good and arresting. Both forms start with research, which leads to insights, which leads to a selling approach or strategy, and which in turn leads to the creative concept.

■ ***Social media has radically altered the face of marketing, advertising and brand management. How do you feel about the new landscape it's created?***

Strydom: The world of advertising and creative communications has always been in a state of flux. Early forms of advertising messages can be found in the ruins of Pompeii, which was buried in AD 79. Again, while the delivery mechanism might differ, at the core, an idea is an idea.

■ ***Up till now, bloggers, vloggers and influencers have largely been pioneering off a trial-and-error basis – experimenting to see what works and what doesn't. With this in mind, what do you feel is the importance behind the Higher Certificate in Creating Digital Content?***

Strydom: Social media, as it exists today, is in its infancy. It is therefore quite natural for there to be a level of experimentation as it tries to find its feet. The Red & Yellow Creative School of Business Higher Certificate in Creating Digital Content, however, focuses not only on content creation itself, which is really the end point of the process, but on the marketing principles that underpin social media communications itself, what one might call the thinking behind the thinking. In fact, to a greater extent, the higher certificate takes the hit-and-miss out of digital content creation.

■ ***What is your favourite / 'can't live without' tool (be it a technique, site, app, program) in your teaching arsenal and why?***

Strydom: While there might be a whole host of teaching aids, apps, or techniques out there, my two can't-live-without teaching tools are: (a) a jumbo sketch pad and a thick marking pen for one-on-one demonstrations of the creative process, from brainstorming through to scamps where the kernel of any idea comes to life, and (b) a good digital thesaurus like wordhippo.com, my daily go-to app.

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