

Experiential marketing: production, a new work of smart

 By [Romy Paul](#)

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I couldn't resist recently 'favouriting' a [Robin Sharma tweet](#) that said "Excellence lies in the follow through, not in the brilliant idea." While there is no one without the other, seeing those words out there on my timeline in the 'twitterverse' had me excited about this affirmation of the art of execution.

Our department in turn had a new motto and I couldn't help but be grateful for what the birth of experiential marketing has done for our profession. From a production perspective, there is now global recognition of a specialised multifaceted skillset that allows us to transcend the basic associations of toolkits and tape measures.

As the new millennium was born, brands were faced with the challenging scenario of a proliferation of media coupled with a worsening global economic crisis. In a world of ROI and growing competitiveness, specialisation in all departments - including production - has quickly become 'the new black' in the quest for agency and campaign supremacy.

Gives us the edge

So, from a production perspective, what is it that gives us that edge in terms of executing an impactful customer journey that ultimately delivers on strategic campaign objectives?

1. Team selection

This involves 'bilingual' production heads who, while speaking set-up and spanners, are still able to understand that strategy is critical to campaign success.

The perfect dish is made up of just the right combination of different ingredients. Similarly, the best production teams comprise a square meal of the right qualifications, big-brand campaign experience, can-do attitudes, a dash of creativity and heaps of undying dedication.

2. Concept development involvement



The Stretch-produced Elizabeth Arden's 8 Hour Summer Swagger campaign was testament to this, where an aerial stunt was staged with the creation of a giant figure of eight made out of yellow sun

umbrellas on Camps Bay beach, with aerial shots seeded to South African media to create awareness of skin protection.

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It's important that production is in on the birth of the big idea. A specialised brand production team should know a little about a lot of things and have a lot of contacts who know a lot about a few things. The knowledge they hold should be a marriage of creativity and practicality, logistics, timelines and costs.

The concept of brainstorming is like the lovemaking for a hybrid genius so surely a perfect, well-rounded and healthy brainchild can be born. All angles should be covered and a big impact (but at the same time achievable!) concept and journey sold (that won't land up in your being arrested).

3. Comprehensive campaign research

Building a campaign is a bit like watching a child grow. It needs to go through the right development stages to become human.

Becoming an expert on your current brand and product, and also on the means to make the fantasy at hand turn into fact, is important. Compiling a set of accurate costs to work with, coupled with your own unique 'drawing board' methods, are what is going to aid this growth from start to finish.

By drawing inspiration from elsewhere and researching methods that have been tried and tested - while throwing in some spice of your own - is what will ensure rollout works out, despite the inevitable meanders on the way.

4. Innovation and experience design



In an effort to make a festival's memories last as long as Stimorol's Infinity gum, Stretch executed SA's largest ever 'silent disco' concept with state-of-the-art radio technology imported into SA, allowing consumers to tune in, via headphones, to their favourite DJs for a truly memorable experience.

[click to enlarge](#)

Get in on the latest and greatest! Find new ways of doing things, learn about technology and ensure you know how to incorporate the relevant campaign and brand factors into experience design.

Also, understanding the possibilities of going viral through social media and PR channels is big.

Using subliminal colours, relevant objects, shapes and methods while being able to orchestrate rollout is what will set campaigns apart. While big and bold creates impact and hype, the finer details count a lot, too.

Find and grow a niche and feed off of your team's special interests.

5. Proper management

Processes sound boring to most, but once you've done your homework, provided a solution and your superstar account team has sold the concept and plan, it's time to make things happen.

Ensure you manage your budget correctly, grow an internal means of keeping track, manage relationships with your

suppliers, provide comprehensive and required information to your account team, coordinate logistics, schedules, timelines and foreseeable risk aversions in advance.

If you've managed things tightly, you'll find that most of your post-op admin is done. Do it properly and you'll find that everything will fall into place in the end, every time.

Lastly, teamwork is vital; making friends with the right internal and external individuals is a necessity.

6. D-day

What more is there to say? You've immersed yourself in a campaign. You've planned this day ahead. Stick to your game plan, remain calm and put on your best troubleshooting hat.

Also, laugh a lot to keep morale up while at the same time ensuring you get through it with enough time for all the small details (including presentation of the smaller 'fairy dust' such as dressing and décor). Never forget to think 'outside in' by asking your "consumer-self" what will elevate the end-user experience.

It all happens in the blink of an eye, so it's very important to garner key learnings along the way for post-campaign evaluation and overall agency growth.

Gone are the days

So, gone are the days when production was a team of men who required a floor plan, a spreadsheet, a bakkie and a lot of coffee for the all-nighters. Sure, we need them, but today we require a team who can contribute their diverse areas of expertise and really bring that brainwave to life.

Despite growing up in the industry, being a young woman and heading up production on many large-scale projects, campaigns invariably bring with them all kinds of unexpected challenges. It's these obstacles that push you to your limits, forcing you to use your whole brain, to constantly push yourself and those around you, to think outside the box and to put your creativity and logic in a ring together.

It's all made worthwhile, though, in those 'exhale moments' when you stand back from a distance watching, with goosebumps, another successful campaign creation. It's like what sunshine is to a flower, or what fuel is to the generator... it's what lets you believe you can grow to be a small pioneer in the bigger scheme of things; a little Leonardo - artist, musician, scientist, inventor, engineer AND ninja turtle.

ABOUT ROMY PAULL

"Show biz is in my DNA. With my creative super powers, I find solutions in 'off the wall' ideas & bring them to life. I'm what Geppetto is to Pinocchio & what the Blue Fairy is to Jeppetto. If we can dream it, we can do it." Romy is now freelancing after leaving her post as head of production at Stretch Experiential Marketing. Romy joined Stretch after working locally & internationally on unique experiential & special productions. Email romy@romypaull.com Follow @RomySarah
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