

IAB Insight Series: Beating the benchmark

 By [Maroefah Smith](#)

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The latest IAB SA Insight Series event - which was held at the Kantar South Africa office in Cape Town - was focused on beating the benchmark.



Left to right: IAB SA CEO, Paula Hulley; Stina van Rooyen, the head of brand at Kantar Insights Division, South Africa; Camilla Clerke, ECD at HelloFCB; and Luzuko Tena from the paid social team at 2U.

Before the panel discussion, Kantar Insight Division's Stina van Rooyen presented a talk on mastering momentum in which she shared key insights from Kantar South Africa on short- and long-term benchmarking of growth. IAB SA Paula Hulley also shared a presentation on beating the benchmark in digital, which included insights on Bookmarks 2020 – launching at the end of this week.

Moderated by Hulley, the panel – comprising of Van Rooyen, the head of brand at Kantar Insights Division, South Africa; Camilla Clerke, ECD at HelloFCB; and Luzuko Tena from the paid social team at 2U – each took turns unpacking the subject.



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What does benchmarking mean to you?

Tena – who recently joined 2U from Social.Lab South Africa – believes that benchmark is all about context. “Benchmarking is doing what is contextually right. I think a lot of the time, we’re chasing what the West is doing because they’re a lot more

‘sophisticated’ in tech, but if we look at the context of where we are and the people we’re dealing with, that’s the benchmark,” he says.

He adds that to ensure that you get the context right; you need both sides of the brain. “I don’t necessarily come from a marketing background in terms of studies; I’m a Humanities, Bachelor of Social Sciences student. So I always consider my upper hand – my understanding of context as opposed to understanding humans as consumers.”

And it’s that diversity in thinking that Tena reckons is the key to beating the benchmark. “The people who are doing well within digital, etc. are the ones who get the right balance of stats-based thinking and logic. Companies that embrace both types of thinking stand a better chance at beating the benchmark because the work they produce is more relevant to the place and people receiving it,” he adds.



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What does it take to beat the benchmark?

A woman who knows all about beating the benchmark, HelloFCB’s Clerke shared her insight on the nitty-gritty of doing so. Cutting right to it, Clerke says that it’s not at all easy and takes hard work, tenacity and patience.

She also feels that the client-agency relationship is essential. “You’ve got to get your clients deeply involved. The client-agency relationship has been a very respectful relationship for a long time, but it’s time for a bit more honesty and openness. Clients must get into the trenches; I mean if you’re not on the same horse, you’re not going to make the campaign work,” she says.

Clerke likens the client-agency relationship to marriage – sometimes it’s passionate and other times, you’re getting blue ticked on WhatsApp. Communication is the key. “You need to know from the word ‘go’ what you’re reaching for, you need to know that you’re sitting down to do a campaign that will blow the lights out. And both the client and you need to agree on it.”

And once the communication lines are open, clients need to be educated. “I think there’s a lot of education that needs to be done. From an agency perspective, it’s important to educate your clients on the nuances of digital and what works and what doesn’t and what stats are valuable,” she adds.

Clerke’s final words of advice? “Make sure your client is 100% on board and you’ve got the kind of relationship where you can text each other at 10pm and say, ‘sh*t, this idea isn’t working, we need to start from scratch.’”



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Are clients surprised to find that they haven't reached the benchmark?

Within the context of the recently-announced BrandZ Top 30 Most Valuable South African Brands, Van Rooyen explained how sometimes clients can't understand that they're not the bee's knees.

"But then when you start unpacking what the people who do great communications do – and it's not a rocket science question, we're just asking people 'which of these companies have really good advertising in your opinion?' If you start looking at who the competition is – who the people who truly overachieve in that category are. And then the client goes 'oh yes, that's true'," she explains.



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She adds that clients need to remember that it's not all about the category. "Clients also get so category-focused that they forget that they're not competing for their consumers' attention in a specific category. The fact that I'm a better retailer than you or make a better retail ad than you doesn't factor into it if Nando's is out there with some great funny ad that's getting everyone's attention," she says.

Van Rooyen says that clients need to remember the bottom line. "Clients need to not benchmark them against their categories because that's not where they're competing; they're competing with everything that is out there. We don't just sit around waiting to be amused by advertising," she adds.

For more such insights, stay tuned to the IAB Insight Series, which heads to Johannesburg on 10 October 2019 for Integrated Attribution: Digital in the Marketing Mix, sponsored by Mediamark. Tickets are available for purchase [here](#). And on 28 November 2019, the IAB Insight Series comes back to Cape Town for The Business of Digital Influencer Marketing. Tickets will be available soon or email Paula@iabsa.net for sponsorship opportunities. For information, go to the [IAB SA website](#) or visit [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

ABOUT MAROEFAH SMITH

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