Being different is your superpower

By Angie White

23 Aug 2019

Tara McKenty, creative director at Google APAC in Sydney and Loeries digital communication jury president for 2019, was the second speaker at the Dstv Seminar of Creativity at Loeries 2019.

McKenty began by saying thank you for the warm South African hospitality, explaining that she has always felt a strong affinity to SA and South African work probably because her grandmother is originally from SA.

Creatively different

Often being referred to as 'one of a kind', McKenty says she used to think it was a disadvantage to be different, but she's realised that it is actually a strength. She explains that being different leads to a different and creative solution, and it is to be considered a superpower.

"Without diversity, there wouldn't be imagination. Without imagination there wouldn't be innovation," says McKenty.

Admitting to loving being a mom and a creator equally, McKenty's favourite work includes:

- *The Zimbabwean* Trillion Dollar campaign

- The Penny Pirate children's book and app for children's eye tests campaign

- Kicksticks: the Google special Converse campaign introducing shoes with Bluetooth connectivity to drumsticks to make it possible for those who may not be able to afford a drumset to play/learn to play.

- Kupu: An app for Māori people to translate and provide words for objects in the Māori language. In order to get this right, McKenty says they needed to listen and interpret all feedback they received from indigenous people, and then refine the approach and refine again.

- *The Zimbabwean* Trillion Dollar campaign

Google's care offerings – RARE

RARE is a platform that allows minorities, businesses and the industry at large to drive – and benefit from – a more diverse, more inclusive culture, explains McKenty. Co-founded with Google, McKenty says their new care offerings include RARE masterclasses, executives and sessions. New experiential offerings include RARE juries, access and interns.

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Mckenty describes two kinds of diversity in the industry. The inherent:

- Gender
- Race
- Religion
- Sexuality
- Class
- Ability
- Mental health
- Age

And the acquired:

- Tragedy
- Loss
- Illness
- Travel
- Care
- Language

She says that through looking at these forms of diversity, they were able to create something new and innovative through the Pedigree Found lost app:

Advice for leaders to hire and keep different talent

McKenty concludes with tips for leaders that can be used to hire different talent:

1. Look for different talent, in different places.
2. Collaborate with your marginalised talent on feedback across recruitment processes.
3. Create inclusive criteria across recruitment processes and focus on skills when recruiting rather than character traits, to avoid alienating different talent.
4. Have an on-boarding buddy for every new employee.
5. Identify and make reasonable adjustments to create tailored experiences for the needs of the individuals you are recruiting.

And tips for keeping different talent:

1. Get the data of your employees, to understand how included everyone feels in your agency's culture.
2. Collaborate with ERGs (or other internal I&D resources) to expand support of difference.
3. Remove bias from performance and promotion reviews.
4. Commit to mentoring one employee from a different background, and support sponsorship of employees from diverse groups.
5. Partner with external I&D initiatives (like RARE) and be humble and realise you don't know everything and there is more to learn.

Mckenty ends off with the following advice for creatives: "Find your difference, become a misfit, or for the very least buy a dog!"

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