

Ogilvy deliberates challenges in Africa

Despite the onset of a global recession the Ogilvy Africa network is not planning to downsize, says Ogilvy Africa MD, Ato Afful. Afful was speaking at a conference for leaders and creative heads from Ogilvy offices in Africa and the Indian Ocean islands, who gathered in South Africa among other things, deliberate on Africa's advertising and marketing challenges.



Ato Afful, Ogilvy Africa MD

“This is not to say that because our business is in developing markets, we will not be affected by the global crisis. Potential cuts in foreign grants and loans, which constitute about 40% of some of our national budgets; drops in remittances from emigrant workers; price drops on commodity exports; declines in expanded production and employment; and the inevitable suspensions of some government programmes and projects in the coming years will have their impact,” says Afful.

Ogilvy Africa has 49 offices in 31 African countries including South Africa, Lesotho, Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire and Cameroon.

Afful believes interest in Africa has heightened over the past five years.

“When Ogilvy Africa started out 15 years ago, interest in the continent was not nearly at the level it is now. It changed in recent years with large organisations such as SABMiller, M-Net, SuperSport, DStv MultiChoice British American Tobacco, IBM and Vodafone spreading their tentacles into Africa,” he says.

Afful says the key to adapting to the new economic environment is the ability to change fast. “This does not mean going off-course. Agencies need to adopt the best possible means for quality delivery, while remaining frugal, professional and valuable to their clients,” he says.

For Afful, great work is the obvious route to success. “In the words of Ogilvy Worldwide chairman, Shelly Lazarus: “Advertising is the work that is usually most visible and that we are most judged by. We will not be seen as a great creative agency, a great idea company, without great advertising,” he says.

“Your work is what speaks beyond your voices. It is why clients come to you. While agencies must continue to compete on price, they need to focus on making the work better and providing superior service. The associated benefits of this approach include more opportunities, higher rewards, greater trust, stable relationships and new business,” says Afful.

While current challenges may be new, Afful says clients will nonetheless want good work and service, even if they buy less. “It would be tragic to strip out quality from the service mix. The trick will be to continue

articulating and working tirelessly at two primary interlocking platforms: quality of work and value of service

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