


The plight of the ABF and why it needs your help

 By Leigh Andrews

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As a marketer or ad agency worker, you're likely to have attended (or at the very least heard of) the many fun events the ABF hosts - but do you know where the funds raised actually go, and how they could actually benefit you in a time of crisis? Read on...

Type 'benevolent' into Google and you'll see it's defined as follows:

benevolent
/bɪˈnɛv(ə)l(ə)nt/ 
adjective
well meaning and kindly.
"he was something of a benevolent despot"
synonyms: kind, kindly, kind-hearted, warm-hearted, tender-hearted, big-hearted, good-natured, good, gracious, tolerant, benign, compassionate, caring, sympathetic, considerate, thoughtful, well meaning, obliging, accommodating, helpful, decent, neighbourly, public-spirited, charitable, altruistic, humane, humanitarian, philanthropic; [More](#)
• (of an organization) serving a charitable rather than a profit-making purpose.
"a benevolent fund"
synonyms: charitable, non-profit-making, non-profit, not-for-profit; [More](#)

With that in mind, you may find yourself rethinking what you thought you knew about the ABF, or Advertising Benevolent Fund. It's a well-known acronym in the industry thanks to its frequent fundraising golf days, pub quizzes and more, but do you know what it truly stands for? Well, it's all that was mentioned in the above screenshot, and more.

Certain media owners have supported it from the start, but the people the ABF benefits the most come from media and creative agencies - that's you! In order to really bring home what the ABF stands for, I posed some questions to acting president of the ABF, John Bowles of NAB...

■ 1. Tell us more about what it takes to keep a non-profit organisation going for close to 50 years.



Acting president of the ABF, John Bowles of NAB

Bowles: The success of ABF is rooted in the fact that the organisation has always been very close to and involved in the advertising industry it serves. This, coupled with participation from members in the industry, has kept the ABF vision intact and strong. The ABF relies on not only ongoing donations that are critical to its success, but also for the industry to get involved in the fundraising by attending and participating where they can. In the years that the ABF has been most successful, it has always been as a result of committee involvement and an abundance of events and activity, so we are always encouraging those within the industry to get involved - **participate!** I'm pleased to say though that the ABF has stood the test of time, we've survived recessions and almost five decades of industry and country transition, and we're still here - here to stay and play.

■ 2. What's the process once someone realises their job is at risk?

Bowles: I think it's important to distinguish that the ABF isn't there to buffer income or help bridge a gap between jobs. It is a vital support fund that exists for people who are in desperate financial need. The ABF provides short-term assistance for those who are sick or really can't get work in the industry. It shouldn't be relied on as a long-term insurance policy.

■ 3. *OK then, let's look at how the ABF actually help people in the creative, media and communications industry when they lose their jobs?*

Bowles: There are very few people in agencies, media and advertising services who are not vulnerable to financial hardships. Since its establishment in 1969, the ABF has helped many families faced with a sudden crisis that has afflicted them. Anyone within the advertising industry can, and does, benefit from being a member of the ABF and can ask for assistance in the event of vital support being in need. It's a really smooth application process - potential candidates are asked to fill in a comprehensive application form, detailing the circumstance they are in, backed by a full discovery of the person's income and expenditure. Within the context that the ABF is there to provide vital support, the application is then reviewed by the Relief Validation Committee, which decides what assistance, if any, should be given, and for how long. This committee takes advice from two qualified social workers on each case before making a final decision, who go through an on-site meeting with the candidate and report back to the validation committee, which I chair. Each case is allocated and referred to by a number, in order to preserve the anonymity of the recipient. If approved, aid is then implemented. We can't guarantee that every application will receive assistance - it's very dependent on our cash-flow situation at that point, and we evaluate on a case-by-case basis.

■ 4. *Why is this support so important?*

Bowles: There aren't many industries that have a dedicated body that supports their own community quite like the ABF does. We have an important legacy to maintain and keep growing and we can only do that with ongoing support. Our committee members and validation committee give up their free time to support 'our very own' who are in an awful and desperate situation.



Members of the Bizcommunity team at an ABF event

I believe that's what makes the ABF so unique, and we thank the creative agencies, the media agencies and media owners that contribute and get involved. We ask those not involved to please consider assisting this important industry fund with either their time, creativity, advice or - most importantly - donations.

■ 5. *Where does the actual money come from for this assistance, as the ABF is not-for-profit?*

Bowles: Our key income zones come from industry corporate donations, donations from individuals, annual memberships and from our fundraising events - that's why they're so important. Our golf days, ten-pin bowling, pub quizzes and more are great fundraisers. The ABF Durban team is particularly good at getting local agencies involved in their fundraising initiatives, as they use the ABF network to get the local marketers involved too, and using these events very successfully for networking with the Durban industry.

■ 6. *How can media and creative agencies help?*

Bowles: The biggest assistance we can ask for is financial. We encourage the industry to pay their annual memberships and to get involved and participate in the events the ABF arranges, like our annual Crazy Golf Day, pub quizzes, ten-pin bowling and comedy evenings. These events are a great way for agencies to invite their own clients for a bit of casual networking, while raising much needed funds for those in need. Agency personnel can also contribute their time, whether as a committee member or to be an extra pair of hands during an event.

We have some great events planned for this year and we'll be sharing those on our [Facebook page](#), [Twitter account](#) and of course through our [Bizcommunity press office](#) very soon!

You heard him - the [click here](#) for a reminder of my article from late December on what 2014 was like for the ABF.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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