

# Today's the day...

 By [Mick Shepard and Nick Liatos](#)

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The 24th of September is celebrated as Heritage Day in South Africa. It's supposed to be a day that celebrates our diverse cultures, beliefs and traditions, which in itself is a noble sentiment. But, how many brands will be sending out 'Happy Heritage Day' messages and what will they be hoping to achieve by doing so? The simple response to the first part of the question is "lots". The second part of the question is a little trickier to answer.



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A big word out there at the moment is 'relevance'. As the world spins faster and faster and the rate of change in today's new normal increases almost exponentially on a daily basis, it's understandable why it has become so important. Brands, products and services are desperate to iterate and clarify their 'why'. Their reason for being.

## Crash the conversation

The ones that have, are succeeding. Think Capitec, Bottles and Nike. But many of those that apparently haven't, still seem to be looking for moments or opportunities to crash "the" conversation, expecting to be noticed yet without delivering on any real relevance.



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As creators of communication, the industry should be trying to build more *select* conversations that deliver on value, even if that means fewer exchanges. We know that audiences are becoming harder to connect with and more judicious in their engagement. So, as opposed to saying increasing things of diminished relevance or value, we can, in fact, be supporting brands by urging them to say less, yet, **say it better**, always laddering up to their "why".

The 'why' is super important because it not only helps guide internal strategies, inform R&D and define corporate culture, it's also the link beyond the intrinsic that allows for a deeper connection and understanding with consumers.

Sure, if your brand has relevance to the occasion or if there's a brilliant idea in the execution, then go ahead. But double check if it's of *value* first. A brutal question to ask when it comes to developing conversations and content is "how is this helping my audience do a real job in their lives?"

The 'job' can be to make me laugh, or inform or help me connect, but if the content is just an excuse for the brand to make an appearance, it's nonsense and will be treated as such.

## Asking why

Asking 'why' is something that we're not doing enough of, apparently. Perhaps it's the pace of today's new normal that's causing this lack of interrogation. But the results are clear for all to see, with few too many outputs that don't seem to have a much relevant connection between the occasion and the brand.

It's just content butting into a feed and clogging it up with stuff that doesn't really mean ... anything – or worse, smacking of insincerity. And ugh ... as consumers in our private lives, we all know that nothing is more of a turn-off than one of those.

So, what's the solution?

Well, for starters, let's try and interrogate the real reasons for these types of requests from brands, and drill down into the real value component the task can provide. If those markers are unclear or thin, go back to your client with a more relevant opportunity, that's ownable and unique to the brand's intrinsic and extrinsic promise.

Let's guide our clients rather than simply serve them and make sure that we're always driving a valuable relevance agenda. Oh, and be sure to look out for which brands are doing what today, on Heritage Day, and check if their conversations delivered on the, 'Why'?

## ABOUT MICK SHEPARD AND NICK LIATOS

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