

Celebrating creativity in business

 By [Ann Nurock](#)

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Ann Nurock spoke with Standard Bank Group's senior manager of brand creative Greig Jerling at the recent Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity about the importance and effectiveness of creativity in more than just marketing and branding but also in business as a whole, as well as how he'll implement those learnings.

Nurock: From a Standard Bank perspective, why are you at Cannes Lions?



Greig Jerling

Jerling: Standard Bank accepts the importance and effectiveness of creativity in marketing and branding. It's something that we as a brand and a marketing team have been doing for a number of years, and it's always delivered learnings and insights and a different perspective of what we have back home in South Africa. It's important for us to keep our minds open to learning from some of the great minds, from some of the great brands, from some of the great agencies around the world, to see what's happening in a world that's much larger than just Standard Bank and just South Africa. So it's about trying to find learnings, insights and opportunities for us as a brand, and to take them back home and find ways to implement them. Sometimes subtly, and sometimes perhaps slowly, but nevertheless to keep pushing the agenda of creativity within the branding and within the South African landscape, so that our brand maintains its edge and grows, gets better and more relevant and more interesting and engaging with our consumers.

Nurock: You have also brought a team here from Standard Bank Nigeria to Cannes...

Jerling: Yes, two years ago we implemented an internal creative awards incentive programme within Standard Bank group globally. It's about expanding the reach and influence of creativity on all of our marketing teams, so not just South Africa and not just head office but all of our markets. So this is the second year that we have brought other marketing professionals, from other parts of Africa, and other disciplines within marketing, and it's about giving them the opportunity to get the same knowledge first-hand, and to experience it first-hand, and then to take that into their market. So for instance, last year was a team from South Africa and a team from Mozambique, and this year is a team from Nigeria. Slowly but surely, what we should be able to do is to plant the seed of creativity in multiple marketing teams across the continent, which will ultimately raise the bar of creativity across all of our offices and all of our operating markets, so that it's not just a head office South Africa initiative, it's something that we're spreading across all of our marketing teams.

Nurock: How have you found Cannes this year?

Jerling: I've found Cannes very busy and very overwhelming. What I have experienced even in the four short years I've been coming to Cannes, is that the Festival has become somewhat more commercialised, and it's overwhelming in terms of the number of brands, and the number of sponsors, and the number of media owners, and the number of agencies, all vying for your attention and trying to get a message across. So I found that quite intimidating to some extent, in that you don't necessarily know where to focus. What's really important is to have a mission when you're here, and to know what you're looking for and then to go and find it. Because if you don't have that sort of mission or purpose, it can become a bit of a blur.

Nurock: What have been the most exciting talks that you've listened to?

Jerling: For me personally, I've gotten the most out of the Procter & Gamble Global talk, as well as [Under Armour](#). I also

enjoyed listening to the [founder of Airbnb](#), who brought a different perspective – not necessarily a marketing perspective, but a business perspective. That's something that I find quite interesting, that Cannes is not about creativity in advertising, it's about creativity in business. So the mix of speakers, and the mix of things you can hear and see and learn makes you a better, more rounded business person, not just a marketer necessarily. At the end of the day, all businesses are brands and the brand is everything. Hearing from leaders and innovators and people who have founded or started new companies and have built massive brands – to understand what drives them, and how they see the world, is universally useful. It's something that I can take with me, not just in marketing but in any business endeavour. It makes good business.

Nurock: What are you going to do with all the insights and the learnings when you get back to Standard Bank?

Jerling: There's a number of things. Firstly there's personal change, so I'm going to try and behave differently, even if it's marginal and even if it's incremental, to how I behaved before Cannes this year. The second thing then is to try and influence people around me in each and every interaction. To try and get certain messages across to all of our marketing team and to all of our agency partners in terms of the kind of vision that we want to have, for marketing the Standard Bank brand.

Of course I'll do a formal review and share that with our global marketing teams so that hopefully everyone can take one or two things from and apply in their daily marketing lives. I also intend to have quite deep conversations with our senior marketing leadership, and try to tackle some of the ongoing marketing and branding and agency challenges we all have, and try to make some core decisions about how we as a client and a brand want to behave differently and better. I want to influence some of the decisions and practices and processes we have back at the brand and start to see an improvement – that is something that every brand wants.

ABOUT ANN NUROCK

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