

Tracey Turner of Ticketpro Dome on embracing digital in the live events space

 By Ruth Cooper

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Tracey Turner has worked in the live events and entertainment industry for over two decades and has been responsible for bringing some of the most memorable live events to SA - from John Cleese and Russel Brand to Jamiroquai, Beyoncé, The Black Eyed Peas and Kanye West. She joined as head of marketing at the Ticketpro Dome in January this year.

We got in touch to chat about adapting strategies during Covid-19, diving into digital and her advice for aspirant young marketing and branding professionals.



Tracey Turner

■ *How has the Ticketpro Dome had to adapt strategies since the Covid-19 pandemic?*

As our venue had only accommodated the live events industry up until lockdown in March last year, it was a difficult and frustrating year. The limited number of people allowed at an indoor event venue due to the Covid protocols literally crippled the events industry. The Ticketpro Dome quickly realised that it would need to start playing in a virtual eventing space to remain relevant.

■ *How are you navigating the new digital event space?*

The Ticketpro Dome installed a hybrid studio in November 2020, which is a combination of a virtual studio and a live studio; creating a far more versatile space that meets a variety of requirements.



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8 Feb 2021



We hosted Prime Circle's Music in Empty Spaces concert in February, which was pre-recorded in the empty arena and then streamed. It doesn't beat the energy of a live event, but it is a way to stay connected. Streaming has become an acceptable eventing platform that many are excited about and we believe it will be here to stay even after live eventing resumes.

■ **Can you tell us more about the new Hybrid Studio?**

The Ticketpro Dome Hybrid Studio comprises three stages and 12 green screens, so the sky really is the limit when it comes to creative options. You can have a live band on one stage, an MC on another and a streaming platform showing live polls and participant engagement on the third stage. The beauty of this is that you can connect globally, making this an ideal networking and sponsorship platform. From conferences to product launches, music videos and virtual exhibitions, this platform can accommodate maximum event creativity.



Ticketpro Dome introduces Hybrid Studio in light of Covid-19

9 Dec 2020



■ **What have been some of your highlights while working as a brand manager?**

My career started out with the Edcon Group when we introduced a music sponsorship division in order to find ways to relate to the youth market. Working with Big Concerts to bring out the top international bands was incredible and being part of the team that brought out the likes of The Black Eyed Peas, Kanye West, Jamiroquai, to name a few, was such a vibe!

“ Marketing and meeting our target audiences, working with the artists and creating hype and a buzz in the live events industry is what it's all about for me. That is when I first became closely associated with The Ticketpro Dome, which was even then the Johannesburg venue of choice for all our concerts. I have walked more steps in this venue than any other in the world. ”

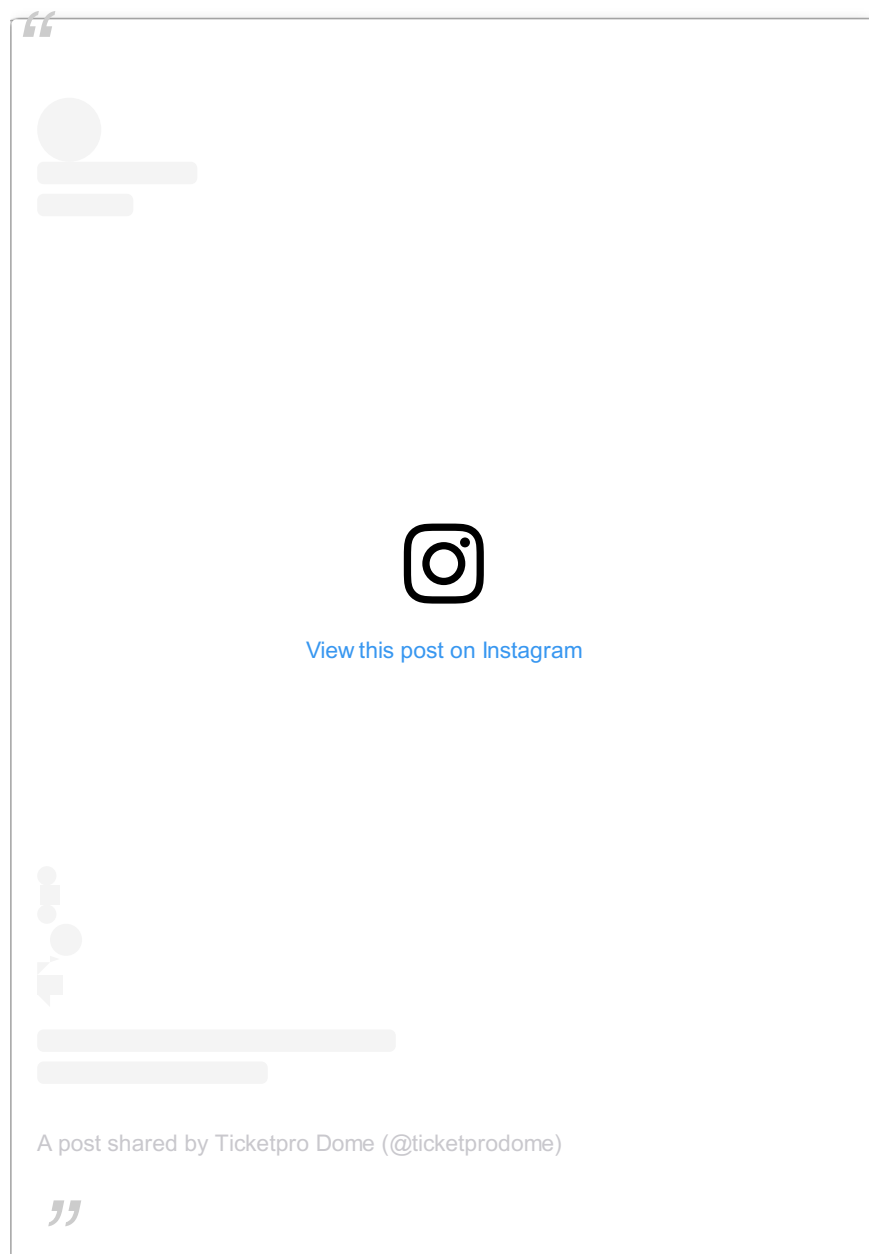
When I headed up the events and entertainment division at Tsogo Sun, it was a whole new learning curve having to represent and market international musical theatre brands. Learning how other countries engage with audiences and promote brands was fascinating. Managing local and international brand teams was challenging, to say the least. But, man, when you get to sit in the audience and watch that first performance, there are no words to describe the elation.

■ **Can you share with our readers about your recent brand campaigns and the rationales behind them?**

We are currently running a hybrid studio competition with Hot 91.9FM, where listeners can enter via the Hot website, watch a video on the benefits of a hybrid studio and how it can be used, then answer a question to motivate how the Ticketpro Dome Hybrid Studio can get their SME back in business.

The rationale is two-fold: First, to make this virtual space less intimidating by showcasing the many ways in which it can be used for both small and large scale events and, secondly, to boost the small and medium enterprises that have been so

badly affected by this pandemic. We want to work with them and – with this competition – get the winner back into business through a hybrid studio experience for their company, valued at over R100,000.



■ What do you think are the most successful channels for getting your brand message out there?

Digital marketing is both cost-effective and targeted. Direct marketing via newsletters always works well as you have a captive audience that responds to your brand. Social media is, of course, incredibly effective if you take the time to carefully select the right target audiences for your campaigns.

■ What would you say the future looks like in the eventing space? Are you hopeful for a return to 'normalcy' when it comes to live events?

We are all waiting with bated breath regarding the vaccine roll out and the possibility of a third wave. This will affect the timeline and when we will be allowed to host more than 250 people in an indoor event venue.

We are hoping to be able to start live events in the fourth quarter of 2021, but that depends on the factors mentioned above. Rapid testing is being used around the world with positive results and we are hoping this may provide a solution in the near future.

“ I believe people will initially be cautious in venturing out, but once we are able to prove that we can host safe events, we'll start to see a return to what we knew before. ”



#BehindtheBrandManager: Terri Verhoeven of Big Concerts on navigating the new events, entertainment space

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What career advice would you give to aspirant young marketing and branding professionals?

- Work with brands that you relate to. If you believe in a brand, you're more easily able to get others to do so.
- Keep learning, especially in the digital space. Readers are leaders.
- You're only as good as your last job – credibility and your network are everything.
- Take time out to be personally creative – this is what fuels and drives us. Make the time, it is as essential as breathing!

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

Ruth is the production manager at Bizcommunity. ruth@bizcommunity.com

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