

Real time marketing: A South African story

 By [Tom Manners](#)

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Is it possible to replicate Oreo's Superbowl success locally? If this year's NFL Superbowl had one winner, it would be a simple biscuit.

Just after Beyonce's spirited halftime performance, an unexpected power outage at the Mercedes Benz Superdome in New Orleans delayed play by thirty four minutes. Enough time for Oreo's digital agency, 360i, to conceptualise and execute what is now regarded as one of the most outstanding examples of real-time marketing yet.

Just shy of six weeks later, 'that' tweet has been ReTweeted 16 000 times, earning the Kraft Foods mega-brand thousands of new followers and countless column inches across the globe.

We've all heard about this sensation. We've followed closely as Oreo took a victory lap across the digital landscape. There's no need to further debate the nature of its success.

What is more interesting is how this Tweet came to be.

According to 360i President, Sarah Hofstetter, the agency had prepared itself ahead of the time. By inviting Oreo decision makers and 360i staff to sit in on the Superbowl from the office, the brand was able to take swift action when the occasion presented itself.

"We had a mission control set up at our office with the brand and 360i, and when the blackout happened, the team looked at it as an opportunity. Because the brand team was there, it was easy to get approvals and get it up in minutes", said Hofstetter on a 360i blog following the event.

Although this approach may be effective in situations where agencies have direct access to global decision makers, local representatives often find it difficult to swiftly respond to similar opportunities via corporate social accounts.

How can we replicate this kind of success in South Africa? We certainly have the content. It's about overcoming the obstacles.

Global approval processes

Anyone who has worked on a globally affiliated brand will be well versed in the often gentle course creative concepts navigate through corporate structures before being granted approval.

This model isn't conducive to immediate reaction via social media. To overcome this, local brands and agencies should look to streamline the approval process - particularly when 'on call' or responding to short term events.

Admittedly, it's easier said than done. In such cases, a well laid out communication structure and conversation flow plan can help reduce approval time frames.

Regardless, without client buy-in, this can be extremely difficult to achieve. Success requires teamwork.

Budget

Responding quickly and creatively can be costly. Unfortunately, marketing budgets are usually planned well in advance, leaving very little 'wiggle room' for opportunistic executions which may go over and above agreed the scope of work.

Where possible, brand managers should focus on putting aside ad hoc online budgets for a rainy day. You never know when you're going to need them.

Sticking your neck out there

It takes a lot of guts to be a Nando's or Kulula. Aggressive, topical campaigns which capitalise on sensitive issues can sometimes attract the wrong kind of attention.

Effective real time marketing demands a willingness to 'stick your neck out there', for better or worse. Significant risk is sometimes met with significant reward. Choose your battles wisely.

ABOUT TOM MANNERS

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