

TMI Media



By Jessica Tennant

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TMI Media was founded by Quinton Jones and Peter Brooke-Sumner, director of TMI (The Media Image), in October 2016 as a joint venture with a fully integrated digital offering, specially focused on data and analytics.



Antoinette Labuschagne, Quinton Jones, Lerato Molele, Jenny Barenbrug and Phumri Masango.

In the agency's first year of operation, it has won – among other impressive accounts, some international – the above-the-line media business of Woolworths, and has received numerous awards, most recently being named 'Independent Media Agency of the Year' at the Financial Mail AdFocus Awards last month.



#FMADFOCUS2017: ALL THE WINNERS!

22 Nov 2017



I interviewed Jones to find out what this recognition means to such a young yet advanced business...

📌 ***Congratulations on winning 'Independent Media Agency of the Year' at the Financial Mail AdFocus Awards! What does this recognition mean to you and the agency, and particularly in its first year of operation?***

Winning AdFocus was the pinnacle of an amazing year. In truth, we didn't expect to win as we are a new agency and many of our achievements were excluded as they were out of the measurement period. This was particularly special as we did it together as a small team. Agencies wait years to win these awards, and sometimes they lose when they've had amazing achievements. We know how rare these occasions are. It's great to be recognised for the work we've done and the progress we've made. Not forgetting the judges who had the courage to award it to a very new agency.



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Danette Breitenbach 23 Nov 2017



■ **Why did you start TMI Media as an extension of TMI, but as a standalone business? Firstly, how TMI Media solves a problem/fulfils a need with its integrated media offering, and secondly, why you set it up in this way.**

TMI (The Media Image) was founded in 2008 by Pete Brooke-Sumner as a purely digital business and is owned by himself and his business partner Lauren Foster. Along with TMI Media we've now structured a joint venture where we work together in a completely integrated fashion. We've created a mega integrated agency solution. Considering we now have a 35 strong digital specialists team matched with a solid media strategy team, this was an easy decision. One office. One team. One solution. Many agencies talk integration, they talk specialisation, but they are not really doing it. We are doing it and it's working well.



TMI and Quinton Jones launch new venture

TMI Collective 29 Nov 2016



■ **Explain the agency's approach and focus on data and analytics. What is its competitive advantage/core differentiators?**

This is a very important part. Many media agencies bolt on a few digital people and claim digital competency. TMI started as a very strong performance digital business serving clients in the UK, US and SA. It's built with solid roots in digital, servicing large blue-chip clients – this makes a significant difference and gives us a very strong base to work from, and provides composite solutions for our clients.

Digital has added an absolutely crazy level of innovation to media. It has brought access to data, and the ability to bring the cost of marketing down through intelligence. Strategic thinking, data-driven decisions and tangible results are what the digital space brings above-the-line. The sheer versatility of the medium ensures that clients are receiving the right exposure, at the right time, and most importantly, by the right people. Additionally, as someone who has spent many years in creative agencies, I appreciate the power when creative and media work together. We don't just want to be buying space. Media needs to work much harder, whether it's delivering data or through a clever engagement.

Another key advantage is seniority of people and focused attention on clients. It sounds expected, but many bigger network agencies are lethargic, they're complacent and they are suffering from the inability to hire enough quality talent to service their very horizontal businesses. Margins and global fees put a strain on their business, thinning out the ability to service properly. We are not supporting a global group structure or paying global management fees. All the fees our clients pay stay in the country.



Quinton Jones, Lauren Foster and Pete Brooke-Summer.

■ **What are some of the barriers TMI Media has had to overcome in its first year of business?**

There are so many. This business didn't exist over a year ago. Setting up a media agency is certainly not for the faint-hearted. The biggest barrier is that your competition from day one is going to be bigger global players that are established, have the infrastructure and millions of Rs and \$s behind them. You often have to beat them to win business, especially business scale. It's also important to build advantage and relative parity as quickly as possible. That's why the digital partnership and our reliance on OMG for a buying and network are critical. It really is a slow build that takes shape and gains momentum as you go.

Self-belief is also incredibly important, especially in the beginning when the temptation to find an easier way to earn a living is very high. Most importantly, it's about people in the media business. I respect the team and value their contribution. You can be the biggest network in the world but the client experience is often measured by the main point of daily contact. It all comes down to people who actually work on the business and deal with the clients daily. People that do the work. People that innovate. People who want to make a difference.

■ **What was your most notable learning of 2017?**

I think the biggest learning for us as a team has been to accept that sometimes we won't win and that it's okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them. Personally, I have a tendency to operate at 100 miles an hour, often dealing with things as I go. It's hard for me to change my ways, but hey it works. I'm learning to focus on a few things that are more important. The learning curve has been a very steep one, but very rewarding.

■ **What were your proudest achievements this year?**

Although we've won business and awards and done some really great work, the achievement that makes me happiest is finding and working with a great team of people that are as passionate about the business as I am.



TMI wins Woolworths South Africa
TMI Collective 16 Aug 2017



■ **According to an article in the Financial Mail, the agency has built media billings of over R150m in under a year.**

We've built up a strong annualised billing through a range of clients that have joined us in the last year. The fact is media is a small margin business. I always say, "we bill in rands and make our money in cents." To be honest we are not measuring the business on billing. It has no bearing on the work an agency does or their capability, or even the fee

that they earn. I will always choose being the best over being the biggest. Size in this industry can be misleading. I absolutely believe there is a space for locally-owned media agencies. People who own media businesses have a stronger commitment to clients as they truly invest in the success or failure of client relationships. If you have the right people and offering, and you work hard, you will always be competitive.

■ ***Comment on the convergence of traditional and digital marketing, how things are changing in the space, and how TMI Media disrupting it.***

Convergence has happened. You cannot see digital as a separate stream anymore. It's about solutions that more often than not are led or supported by digital. When you are able to integrate media properly, you create something special. Quite often the best solutions come from media people who understand digital and can combine it with other channels seamlessly. We still have agencies that are either good digital agencies, who dabble in media or the reverse. Long term it is becoming important that agencies are able to provide the complete solution. Clients don't want to manage complicated partnerships with multiple suppliers. There is just so much grey area between the two in terms of fees, scope and delivery. We offer one point of contact and one team doing full-service media and comms.

■ ***What does the future of media look like to you?***

It's the most exciting time to be in media. If you're not excited, leave immediately, you're in the wrong industry. Possibly the biggest thing that's affecting the future is how we access content. Content has always been there – our ability to access is changing and shaping the opportunities that brands have to communicate. We still have media 'channels' which are vertical silos, but it doesn't really work like that anymore. Phones can now do almost anything and everything in the world. TVs are almost there... the industry isn't segmented vertically but horizontally. There's no reason why Facebook can't launch television or radio, or why DStv and Vodacom can't launch a video channel.

Digital has broken barriers. Insurance is no longer just sold by only insurers. You can be your own broker or advisor. Banking doesn't need banks. Almost anyone can sell anything if they are smart enough. Everything is tracked, everything gives feedback. People just aren't consuming the same channel or content at the same time anymore. The flexibility and the accessibility offered by the mobile phone and the internet have ensured that media journeys have become very individualised.

The target market is now sifting, sorting, accepting and rejecting as they decide what content they'd like to consume. Each moving through their day on their own media consumption journey with complete power. Much like an explosion or the big bang—the number of connecting points driven by the IoT (Internet of Things) is going to leave us with an ever-expanding number of connection points. There will be more connections with more messaging opportunities talking to consumers more often.

■ ***What's next? What are your focus areas for 2018?***

Although we have very ambitious plans for the future. The three most important things at the moment are – happy staff, happy clients and doing really great work that we are proud of.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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