

Bringing the value of purpose-led work to the world through creative product

By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

2 Sep 2019

For the second year running, Joe Public United was recognised as Agency of the Year at the Loeries Awards - which, this year, took place on Saturday, 24 August 2019 at the Durban ICC.



The Joe Public United team. Image credit: Julian Carelsen/2019 Loerie Awards.

The agency won a total of 17 Loeries, including two Gold, six Silver, five Bronze and four Craft Certificate awards.



#Loeries2019: ALL THE WINNERS!

24 Aug 2019



"Our ambition remains to turn coal into gold for our clients. Because award-winning work (meaning the calibre of the thinking and emotion rather than actually winning) is what ultimately yield growth for our clients. It really is as simple as that," said Pepe Marais, group chief creative officer at Joe Public United, when we sat down to talk about this latest accolade.

Here he talks more about what sets Joe apart from the rest and comments on the current landscape and how it compares globally.

■ Huge congratulations on being named Agency of the Year, among all your other Loeries wins this year! What does this recognition mean to you and the agency?

As a purpose-driven agency, we are very clear that awards, just like money, is a by-product of our striving to deliver product excellence to our clients. That said, I would be lying if I didn't say that it is an unbelievably good feeling to be recognised – as the daily striving and the drive for the high-level work that is needed to cut through at the Loeries can be relentless. We are grateful to have an exceptional team of down-to-earth people in our fold and equally grateful for brave

clients who support brave work.



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■ **Why are you proud of these achievements?**

I am proud because we have come from such a low base at the inception of this business. We have literally built it through a sheer effort from the E League, through bankruptcy, to the B league and finally to the A-league over the years. I am also very proud that this is the second year running that we are at the top because it shows that we are doing something differently – that it's not just luck. But we remain humble. We know we still have a long way to grow.

We enjoyed the moment, basked in the glory for the whole of Sunday and then it was back to the coalface on Monday.

■ **What do you think set your agency apart from the rest?**

I believe that our purpose is deeply embedded within our business. We exist for something beyond money and awards. We want to bring this value to our world (our people, our clients and our country) through our creative product.



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Purpose gives focus, and what you focus on will ultimately manifest. But again, I have to reiterate that we remain humble and grateful. We don't take this achievement lightly and we are very aware that it is simply not achievable without every single one of our people – our clients and all our suppliers.

■ **Please share your Loeries Creative Week experience with us.**

Unfortunately, due to my workload (I am proudly in the trenches of creativity) and my studies, I only managed to get to Durban by Saturday, so I can't really comment on the week. That said, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Andrew Human and his team for what they are doing for the creative product of our industry. I don't think, as an industry, that we take enough time to recognise the stature of him and his team who have built this show.

■ **Comment on the current creative landscape in South Africa and how this compares globally?**

I think the global state of advertising is in a dismal state. Sure, the less than 1% at the top is spectacular, but half of these projects are self-funded by agencies (both locally and abroad). We need to start a debate on why more of the real paying clients' work are not of the same standard. Creativity sells, it is a researched and proven fact.

The business of advertising as a whole (again, both locally and abroad) has become a service industry, driven by bottom-line obsessions. This needs to shift towards a product obsession. Easier said than done, but that is what we are doing at Joe Public United. We are putting the purpose-built product at the top of our objective and allowing the bottom line to go back to where it belongs. The bottom.

■ **What's next?**

Back to the trenches (and I mean this in a positive way because nothing that doesn't take sweat is really worth it). Daily improvement of all areas of our business: people growth, product growth, client growth, country growth, bottom-line growth.

And, ultimately, to improve to the levels of global best practice in our craft.

For news and updates, visit Joe Public United's press office by clicking [here](#) and keep an eye on our [Loeries special section](#) for more in-depth coverage of this year's Awards.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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