

Real people. Real estate. A great ad combination...



By [Brendan Seery](#)

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The decision whether to use real people connected with a brand or to pay actors or voice artists is often a difficult one to make.

In its favour, a marketing ad using real people, telling real stories, has the sort of authenticity that no slick script ever could. Seeing real people sends a message that the brand is not aloof, that it is part of your community and that it understands you.

On the downside, using some business people to speak about their organisations can tank badly. You know what I mean: close your eyes and hear the blunt, nasal tones saying: “Hi, I’m so-and-so...” If something grates instantly, it can turn you off the rest of the message.

However, in using real people for the new Pam Golding Properties’ campaign, ad agency 140 BBDO decided to use Pam Golding agents.

You see them, sometimes confident, sometimes a bit bashful, sometimes giggly, in their own environments or doing their hobbies. They are an interesting gender, race and age mix, reflecting the changes that are happening in our society, political points-scoring notwithstanding.

The message that runs through it is simple: “Hi, I’m Pam...” Everyone is Pam clearly not by name or even gender, but by their shared commitment to the real estate company.

The end of the commercial shows the actual Pam Golding, still going strong, as is the brand she established back in 1976 – a truly South African institution. She is the actual “Pam”.

I suppose one could wonder whether the idea came out of the global “*Je suis*” solidarity protests that have followed terror attacks.

But I don’t think that is a bad thing – on the contrary, it taps into a need (increasing, I believe, in this age of digital isolation) by people to be part of a group and to show that they care.

“I am Pam” is simple. It is comforting. And when you want to buy a house you need simplicity, comfort and, above all, trust. All of the various “Pams” convey that.

So, Orchids to Pam Golding and to 140 BBDO, as well as one to Michael Middleton and Janet Sender from Jump Films, who made it all come to life.



The message that runs through the Pam Golding ad is simple: everyone is Pam, not by name or even gender, but by their shared commitment to the real estate company.



Screenshots from the ad - they're all 'Pam'.

Warning: Grumpy Old Man about to rage about language (again!) I recognise language is always changing and that English, the world's most common form of verbal communication, is adapting to the influence of digital technology, where everything is quicker and short cuts abound.

However, sometimes companies use words in incorrect contexts that in effect render them senseless – and this has nothing to do with technology.

Latest culprit is MTN, which recently issued a breathless press release (aren't they all, though?) saying the cell phone network was “ranging the much-awaited Huawei P9 and P9 Lite LTE smartphone, for both prepaid and post-paid customers”.

Ranging? In correct English terms, “range” or “ranging” are words used to denote variations – in things like length, or distance for example.

Ranging can also mean going on ahead of something. I do understand what MTN was trying to say: that it is introducing the new smartphone range. But that is, emphatically, not what it said in the release.

I would worry about my cellular service provider being sloppy with the way it uses words, especially when I may have to argue with it at some stage about the fine print in its T&Cs. So, MTN, start (ar)ranging to collect your Onion.

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ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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