

Chelsea Owens - 4 digital marketing trends that will shift the needle in 2024

 By [Chelsea Owens](#)

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2024 is the year when agencies and brands reinvent how they work with one another, with collaboration between brands and agencies unlocking more spending power and delivering greater results.



Image supplied. Chelsea Owens, client service director at Incubeta SA, gives four digital marketing trends that will shift the needle in 2024

Tapping into the power of martech and AI, in particular, will boost those efforts, ensuring solid profits even in a downturn market. But, with South Africa in for a bumpy 2024 agency – and business - leaders must take a very hard look, not just at how much they are spending, but at what they are spending on.

Tough decisions need to be made and spending money on the right tools that will meaningfully shift the needle is what will separate the winners from the losers.



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4 digital marketing trends

Here are four digital marketing trends that should feature on your business radar in 2024.

1. AI can solve any problem. But first, you need to figure out what those are

Companies will be aggressively looking at how AI, and in particular, Google Cloud Platform (GCP), can help them address organisational silos, which remain one of the number one challenges faced by most South African companies. GCP allows organisations to access a suite of computing services that can help them deal with everything from data management to AI and machine learning tools.

This can be an exceptionally useful way to help connect the marketing department to the rest of the organisation, harnessing data from across the business and even other partners, to help drive business insights that will allow for aggressive growth strategies.

How to deploy it and properly harness its capabilities must be a recurring point on board agendas this year.

AI is already making a huge difference to agency delivery. While there must still be humans making informed tonality decisions, when it comes to pumping out huge volumes of ad copy, there are now AI tools to help you meet all your requirements. However, we can't simply throw AI at all our problems.

When it comes to getting the most out of AI this year, companies must first properly identify their problems. The solution no doubt exists, but companies that can properly quantify their challenges are the ones most likely to solve them.



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2. Co-branding takes off

We see 2024 as the year when brand partnerships in advertising kick-off. For example, the obvious benefits of having seemingly unrelated brands such as a car, an insurance company, and a vehicle finance brand appear together make huge sense.

Co-branding will mean access to bigger budgets and result in a far bigger reach and publishers will jump at the earnings potential. To prepare for this, agencies will need to gear themselves up to work more collaboratively, which will be a step outside their comfort zone, but very necessary if they hope to capitalise on the trend.

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3. The rise of the specialist agency

The local market will continue to evolve as agencies realise and promote their niche strengths. Specialist agencies will take off and, while they would previously focus on providing services directly to clients, the market will shift to see them consulting to the generalist agencies. This works for everyone.

As martech improves and becomes more complex, having teams with deep technical and strategic insight means that brands can get the best IP available, without having to forgo their usual agencies with whom they have long-term relationships.



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4. Finding the best skills in a shrinking pool

Skills remain an ongoing challenge for South African agencies and brands alike. The growing trend of right sourcing will continue into 2024, but it becomes increasingly important for HR managers to take the appropriate time and care with how they recruit if they hope to fill positions.

Brands must pay attention to the job specs agencies are putting out to ensure they are hiring the right skills. Use the same language, titles, roles and responsibilities.

If brands poach staff from their agency, they should be prepared to pay a referral fee. After all, the agency has invested time and money into training that person up and that has value.

There is no harm in having an upfront agreement with your agency where they hire and train staff while they work on your brand. Everything is transparent with an agreed fee attached and this arrangement works for all parties involved with no surprises.

ABOUT CHELSEA OWENS

Chelsea Owens is the client service director at Incubeta SA. A results-oriented digital media marketer, she has accumulated significant industry experience working across a range of verticals.

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