

# Creativity is really about problem-solving

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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*As part of our #LockdownLessons series, Bizcommunity is reaching out to South Africa's top industry players to share their experience of the current Covid-19 crisis, how their organisations are navigating these unusual times, where the challenges and opportunities lie, and their industry outlook for the near future.*



Wayne Flemming, founder and managing director of Brandtruth// DGTL.

We chatted to Wayne Flemming, founder and managing director of Brandtruth//DGTL to get his take. He tells us that work and life continues in very much the usual way - except that it is now within the boundaries of his home. "I miss face-to-face interaction and collaboration sessions. In most ways, I've relentlessly kept to my morning and evening routines before, during and after work - finding new ways to integrate work and life."

He says one of the highlights of his workday is their daily morning huddle with their full team, where they do some breathing and mindfulness work, set an intention for the day and connect with each other - whether it is sharing their #TunesDay music tracks or digging a little deeper to understand what fellow team members are experiencing, feeling and learning how they can support them.

"Other than that, I spend my days connecting with clients, having 'pow-wows' for new ideas and running the business remotely, and then finding some time to eat in between meetings and cook a meal, which is a real struggle. LOL."

**■ What was your initial response to the crisis/lockdown and has your experience of it been different to what you expected?**

My initial response was, "What the heck is happening!". My business partners and I then moved into first gear to develop a plan to ensure business continuity and moved our teams into full remote working environments as a test run about 10 days prior to the actual lockdown.

As a digital agency, we are fortunate to have an agile business approach with systems and tools in place which have allowed us to move our full team into a complete remote working plan quite quickly.

I don't think any of us could plan or foresee what will happen or how the lockdown experience would be. On the whole, the experience has been very good and our team has worked together to create a total new way of working. On a personal level and as an extrovert, there have been days when Queen's song, *I Want To Break Free* resounds in my head all the time.

#### ■ **Comment on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the agency and creative industry or economy as a whole.**

As an industry and as a business, we've seen the impact of the pandemic in many different ways. From good days to days where you hope that this entire journey is like a Neverland dream. I've seen friends struggle to save their businesses. I've seen some businesses reinvent themselves. It's been challenging, but also good.

“ I've seen some clients increase their spend and activity on digital to get their support messages out, to some clients being severely impacted by their respective industry rules and forced to cut budgets. It's been like seeing a massive juggling act. Some are glass balls, some are rubber balls and some are helium balls. As an agency, this has tasked us with learning new skills to command many different scenarios at the speed of light, being agile to respond to anything and everything - and looking ahead of what could, might and should be. ”



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### ■ **How is the agency responding to the crisis and current lockdown?**

Our response has been one of business as usual. We have a magnificent team that has displayed enormous courage and resilience to continue towards building our company culture remotely, delivering our magic to our clients and at the same time maintaining our business operational principles - basically just as a distributed team.

As leaders of our agency, it's about showing up to assist our team - whether it is with supplying and equipping them with tools to create their home office environment or providing guidance on how to navigate this lockdown, even on a personal level.

The upside: we've become more productive, more synchronised and even stronger as a team.

### ■ **Comment on the challenges and opportunities.**

One of the key challenges is to find a new way to effectively and inclusively communicate through only virtual means. I mean, if you think of it, we've taken away a key element of feeling someone's vibe when they sit in front of you. So we need to learn as a world how to better communicate virtually to drive common understanding, including people, so that they feel heard and part of your team, learning how to deliver inspiration and how to maintain your culture virtually.

“ *It's in this uncertainty where the massive opportunity lies - an opportunity to thrive, to grow, to connect, to show up, to make the world better, to learn new things, to reorient yourself, to reinvent your business, to look after yourself, to serve and to ultimately adapt. The one certainty we do have right now is that our lives, our jobs, our companies will be completely different from this day forward, and we have to embrace it.* ”

### ■ **Speaking of opportunities, the world has really turned to creativity during this time. Why do you think this is the case and what does this mean for the industry, agencies and their clients/brands?**

Creativity is really about problem-solving and in my view, everyone can be creative in some form. It's in times like these where the creative magic happens - when industries, agencies and clients are challenged to reinvent, rethink and reformulate themselves. These types of challenges are what the human was designed for... to find solutions, to innovate and to thrive. To find new opportunities and make that a new reality. Whether it is in the way we work with each other or how we interact with clients or how we actually need to insert ourselves into our clients' businesses to be at their side to help solve their problems, which are often way bigger than just their immediate marketing problems.

### ■ **How has the lockdown affected your staff? / What temporary HR policies have you put in place regarding remote working, health & safety, etc.?**

I'm sure we've all experienced various types of emotions during this lockdown and there is no doubt that everyone has been affected in some sort of way. From team members who find it really hard to work from home and balancing time to do homeschooling, to days where people struggle with a good internet connection or having a day filled with back-to-back meetings.

We've built and implemented a 'working from home code' to help our teams with guidelines on how to work from home effectively (like how to structure your day and your routine), how to stay connected to the core of our business and culture (like tea time dates and our daily huddle).

In addition, all of us as business leaders have to show up even more to inspire their teams, to keep them safe, to motivate co-workers and set a new vision alight that will reinvent the economy, workforces and catapult us into the information era.

### ■ **How are you navigating 'physical distancing' while keeping your team close-knit and aligned and your clients happy?**

As a digital business, we will continue with working from home for now. We've adapted to this new way of working

effectively after exploring and testing various options on how to maintain our culture and keeping our clients happy.

To maintain a close-knit team and happy clients links back to our culture code, how we operate and how we show up for our clients based on our business principles.

This is one of the most magnificent gains that we've experienced in our own business: the affirmation that not only we can operate 100% remotely, but we also have a champion team that remains dedicated to staying connected with each other, delivering exceptional work for our clients and, more importantly, maintaining the culture of our business virtually, day after day.

### ▣ ***What are you busy working on? Any initiatives/campaigns relating to the coronavirus?***

We have some exciting projects in our creative lab pipeline at the moment. ;)

### ▣ ***How have you had to change the way you work?***

I've certainly learnt that I can work from home and that I'm almost more productive now. I've had to change my thinking about being office-bound versus the opportunity to work from anywhere in the world at any time.

### ▣ ***Has this global crisis changed your view of the future of advertising/marketing in any way?***

Yeah, for sure. The major shift to remote working and having distributed teams have now opened the opportunity to also work with clients and co-workers wherever they are in the world.

This has also proved in our advertising and marketing industry (agencies and clients alike) that remote partnerships, co-creation and collaboration are 100% possible. For example, at Brandtruth//DGTL, we've managed to produce a body of work for one of our clients within 24 hours which required many team members scattered all over the country to make the impossible project happen.



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### ▣ ***Any trends you've seen emerge as a result of the crisis?***

- More virtual, more digital, more information and more connected.
- Work from home space (home office) integrated into your livable space.
- Partnerships are everything - industry, media, creative, clients and platforms.

### ▣ ***Your key message to fellow industry folk?***

There is now the opportunity for each of us, our agencies and our industry to reinvent ourselves. On a personal level we have to go within; from an emotional, spiritual, mental, physical and health perspective to prepare and create the best version of ourselves we could ever be, and, in turn, create a better version of our businesses and our industry.

When we resurface from this lockdown, there will be a massive opportunity to reconnect with people, rebuild businesses and serve others. Find that opportunity now. Opportunity is everywhere.

## 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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