

Digital agency trends to live by in 2016

 By [Stephen Sandmann](#)

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I have the continued privilege of working with some of the best minds in the digital marketing industry. While doing so, I've picked up a few things that I believe are worth noting for the year ahead.



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Don't babble

Cut to the chase. David Sable's term 'digi-babble' springs to mind because it sums up what can be an issue for digital marketers: 'Digi' as in 'digital' and 'babble', as in 'to speak seemingly useless sentences in the context of a client meeting'. Granted, it is so easy to slide into a 'technical mode' (jam-packed full of jargon) when discussing your work. That being said, if you can't explain something in simple terms, then you don't understand it properly yourself, to paraphrase Einstein.

When appropriate, relate your client conversations to marketing fundamentals (after all, it is digital **MARKETING**). A client may say, "that sounds great in theory, but how does it actually affect my bottom line?" Ask yourself the following, "What do you think would be your client's perceived value of what you're about to say?"

Creativity is not only for creatives

Imaginative thinking should matter to everyone in an agency. Potentially shrinking client budgets and increased competition mean that every digital marketer needs to fight harder to stay relevant and effective.

Internally (within an agency) speaking, be open to positive criticism of your ideas. It is only under the right kind of objective interrogation that your ideas either properly evolve or are disregarded. Ken Robinson sums it up perfectly, "If you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original." I've recently written an in-depth article on this topic [here](#).

Work together

The word 'disrupt' is frequently used in advertising circles. I feel that a handful of different perspectives may lead one to re-imagine digital marketing concepts. Each digital marketing discipline has the potential to provide a unique angle to coming up with the 'big idea'. When it comes to brainstorming, forget about the traditional agency hierarchy and the roles each

department usually plays. Sit down with your colleagues from the various agency departments and openly contribute towards a joint effort, as equals. So, allow for each applicable idea to have an initial equal weighting.

Digital-lead advertising

We can't play it safe anymore in today's world, so go ahead and sell that digital-lead campaign idea. Traditional advertising need not always lead the way, especially in 2016. Clients don't want to see regurgitated concepts - they want fresh thinking. Do your homework, build a solid case and sell that innovative campaign concept. [Here](#) is a South African example of what I'm talking about.

Yes, 2016 will have its challenges, with all the ups and downs, but in that lies the potential for great work that secures the future.

ABOUT STEPHEN SANDMANN

I have a keen interest in innovative, digital marketing-lead advertising and search marketing (SEO and paid search), which I've developed through my award-winning agency and corporate career at Ogilvy, Quirk (now Mrum), Vodacom and now a specialist digital marketing consultant at Sandmann Digital.

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