

Making the MOST of education in the media industry

One of the pertinent issues in the media industry is the quality of media education. To address this Wag the Dog Publishers included two questions in its sixth annual MOST Awards survey.

The first question posed to respondents from media agency and media owner sectors, was whether the quality of media education was good enough. The second question was whether the Advertising Media Association of South Africa (Amasa) was fulfilling its obligation to industry, putting the educational funds it collected to good use, and whether these could be put to better use. This is what the results revealed.

Courses often outdated and expensive

Responses were both positive and negative, but according to Brad Aigner, MD of Freshly Ground Insights (FGI) who conduct the research, the lack of depth in training of digital and new media was a real concern. Existing education programmes are outdated, and course materials need to be regularly updated to meet the challenges of an ever-evolving media environment to remain relevant.



You can teach new recruits the systems, but what is difficult is being able to interpret the data. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Only a very basic overview of media agency work is covered by colleges and after that there is little further education. Courses are often very expensive. There is not enough commitment to training in agencies, with planners being promoted to strategists without sufficient knowledge, resulting in a lack of senior strategists and planners. Strategists, planners, and buyers are often spread thin, doing two people's work, and there is a lack of mentors for juniors, who are often given huge budget clients straight out of college. New graduates coming into the industry are often overwhelmed by the pace of the work, the long hours, and the levels of excellence expected.

Haemorrhaging senior people

"The problem is that the media industry is haemorrhaging senior people, and there is no one left to mentor new talent. You can teach new recruits the systems, leaning how to operate Telmar is not difficult, but what is difficult, is being able to interpret the data," says a respondent.

It seems that colleges do not provide a clear definition of the differences between planning, strategy, and buying. Many respondents agreed that there is a lack of practical application of what is being taught in media training courses, with students being given textbook insights, when what is needed is credible in-house, on-the-ground training. Student holiday internships at media owners and media agencies would be an ideal solution, giving students the information that need to make informed decisions about pursuing a career in media.

What does Amasa do?

The vast majority of respondents believed that funds from Amasa were being put to great use, but there was an extensive lack of knowledge about Amasa's role and activities in the industry, which is to raise funds, and provide facilities for media education and training. Amasa is affiliated with the AAA School of Advertising, they provide six-month learnership programmes, planning workshops, and they regularly update their textbook, which is soon to be available as an e-book.

"We keep trying to improve on Amasa's industry offerings and as such, every few years, we review the portfolios and adapt them to keep current with the industry's needs, from a media education and training point of view," says Karen Bailey, Amasa JHB board member and managing partner at Cinevation.

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