

# Strategy and creativity have to work together says Grand Prix winners, BBDO

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Grand Prix winners, Impact BBDO and BBDO won Agency of the Year and Regional Agency Group of the Year respectively at this year's Loeries Awards, which took place on Saturday, 19 August, and Sunday, 20 August at the ICC in Durban.



Dani Richa and Gau Narayanan

In addition, BBDO also won 10 Loeries for Net#work BBDO featuring work for six clients, in six different categories. Chairman and CEO of Impact BBDO Mena (Middle East & Africa) and Pakistan BBDO, Dani Richa says the Loeries is important because it brings together and celebrates the region. "The awards are an opportunity for us to really talk to the global creative community and to tell them our region... allows for great work."



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Gau Narayanan, managing director at Net#work BBDO and regional director at BBDO Africa agrees, adding that the Loeries is significant because it is *for* the region, *by* the region. "It allows us to do great work that's celebrated and hopefully we will start seeing some of the work that has won at Loeries, has won at Cannes, has won at One Show, has won D&AD."

Here, both Richa and Narayanan shares further insights into BBDO's Loeries 2017 experience below...

■ ***Congratulations on your wins! Please tell us what receiving these awards mean to you?***

**Narayanan:** Two things are very important to us with regards to awards. The one is that as a creative industry, that we don't forget why we are here. From our perspective, you want to do great creative work that builds our clients' brands and business, but validation is also really important – the hard work that the whole agency does, not just the creative department.

But now, and as we go forward, it is also very important with regards to the amount of hard work our clients are doing, to get these kinds of campaigns out. If you look at the work of Loto Libanaise, if you look at the work of Vagina Varsity and the work that we've been doing the last three or four years and at all of our clients, both in the Middle East and Africa, these campaigns are really, really complicated. Without the support from great clients this would not have happened. It's really great recognition for some of our clients who don't always get the level of recognition they deserve in the corporate world.

**Richa:** Award shows allow the industry to say who is really doing well and I like the fact that the agencies that are there all deserve to be recognised. It helps them in business to command a premium for the work that they're doing and get clients to pay for the real value for creativity, for them to be able to continue investing in talent, developing talent and developing the industry. It's never been more strategic for us and it's never been more important. It's something that takes a lot of hard work and preparation, training, sending people to jury, investing – it's a costly exercise – but it's something that we will continue to do because it is of strategic importance.

■ ***This year's entries really upped their game in terms of delivering top-notch content. How do you continue staying ahead of the pack when it comes to creating award-winning campaigns?***

**Narayanan:** I think everything has changed and the importance of clarity of thinking has never been more important in our business. So, from our perspective, the understanding of the human psyche is so important because we need to understand how people think, how people decide and, in fact, how people buy. Then the creativity is a multiplier and nowadays technology for me, is a further distribution-based multiplier, an enabler of that behaviour we want to elicit from consumers. For me, technology is a means to an end. This is why, from the BBDO perspective, strategy is really important.

Strategy and creativity have to work together like a double helix. Long gone are the days where you hand a baton from client service to strategy to traffic to creatives. You're never going to get to Loto Libanaise's work if you do that. You can't work in silos. You are never going to get the Libresse's Vagina Varsity work that we've been doing, if you don't have a team that works together. It's a challenge for the industry because things are much more complicated. Things take longer. We need to make sure that we are paid fairly for the value we add and that not just for the time we spend.

When we talk about digital here, we talk about integrated. Because digital forces you into a certain mindset, which is closed doors, closed departments and closed thinking. Integrated, for me, opens all of that up. And that's when creatives have the most brilliant ideas and people around them can amplify it and distribute it and make it relevant in a way that we've never been able to do in history.

**Richa:** One thing that technology has also helped us get, is like it's live on stage and you get an immediate reaction. Based on those immediate reactions, we shape the work and we change it and we improve it as we go. We never had this before. We used to do the work, wait for the research to be done after and tried to improve on the next campaign. Now, we shape it and the messaging changes, it's so dynamic and programmatic. It's not 'one size fits all' anymore. We look at the different profiling, the different touch points, and we engage with people in a way that is much more meaningful, thanks to technology.

**Narayanan:** It's like a stand-up comedy show. You tailor your routine to the audience and the feedback you're getting live.

### ■ **Going forward, what can we expect from BBDO with regard to creative innovation?**

**Richa:** Right now, the type of people that we have and the type of people that we're attracting – we're going a lot more experimental and stepping outside the complication channels and working with our clients on product innovation through technology, for example through apps and actual physical product innovation and through design. Our design department are going well beyond and working with clients to developing product variations, design variations. So, I think it's going to be interesting moving forward in looking at opportunities where creativity is not just limited to ads and it's not just limited to content. It's also helping clients in finding business opportunities, finding new services that they can offer to clients and new product variations and developments. So, I can't say much, but hopefully for the next Loeries we will enter things that we have never entered before. And the categories will also reflect this, as our industry continues to evolve and mature.

**Narayanan:** This is where culture and values become very important. For me, there are two types of agencies. There are carrot industries and there are stick agencies - neither is right and neither is wrong. It is based on the culture of the people who have founded those companies. At BBDO, we believe that we are a carrot industry. What we mean by that is that the more you can collaborate and work and create that environment for fostering collaboration, the better we will do for ourselves and also for our clients and for their businesses. We're not going to be collaborating with ad agencies. We are going to be collaborating with Google, with Facebook, with MIT. That's the way the world has got to go because we offer two things to consumers, no, to humans; entertainment or utility. And those are the two things we can add. The kind of talent that we can start working with is going to become very different but the culture and the values of the company will have a disproportionate impact on how successful the one can be.

*Sounds very exciting! Click [here](#) for a recap of all the #Loeries2017 winners and connect with BBDO on the following social media platforms: [Net#work BBDO Facebook](#) | [Net#work BBDO Twitter](#) | [Impact BBDO Facebook](#) | [Impact BBDO Twitter](#)*

## 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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