

# The 4 themes of the yellowbrick road with VMLY&R

By  Karabo Ledwaba

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There are four key methods that can help creatives make magic in their campaigns.



Image supplied: CCO at VMLY&R Debbie Vandeven

Inspired by the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz*, CCO at VMLY&R Debbie Vandeven took us through her team's methods to create impactful adverts.

## Get smart before doing your creative work

Creatives in the modern day have access to data and insights that can help them with making smarter and more impactful campaigns.

Vandeven said access to better technology can help create campaigns for technological breakthroughs like the *I Will Always Love You* book which allows people living with Motor neuron disease (MND) to bank their voice.



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Before the VMLY&R advert, only 12% of people with MND had gone through banking their voice before the campaign.

Vandeven said when creatives do work in fields they have no experience in, they must bring in experts from these fields, such as in the metaverse or healthcare space. This is to ensure everything is done correctly.

## Create for humans

"If you are moved from a piece of work you are more likely to connect with that brand," Vandeven said.

Her first example was the fast-food brand Wendy's which has changed over the past ten years by getting in with the gaming world.

Wendy went from a traditional brand with a 50-year history to becoming a well-known gamer character across various gaming platforms like Fortnite and Mario Kart.

Keep in mind if campaigns can actually work for a brand.

## Is it brave enough? Standing out in the world

"If it makes you a little nervous it just might be the work that lands," she said.

Vandeven said there are clients who have decided to take a stand on an issue such as racism, homophobia or toxic masculinity. "If your client does this make sure the brand does the change or takes the stand internally as well."



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Vandeven used vehicle company Ford as an example which took a stand against toxic masculinity when a homophobic fan of the brand complimented a new model but said the colour was "gay". In response, they created a happy pride Ford vehicle called the "very gay raptor" which took the internet by storm.

This reached 22 million people who loved and hated it. "If it makes sense for the brand then do it," she said.

## Searching for a way home

Vandeven said creatives need to make sure they work in agencies where they feel at home but must not let their work become their life. "When you look back you realised you miss a lot when you are there [with your family]; make sure you are present," she said.

Keep it smart, human, and brave and you are on the right path to great work.

## ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SiVag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at [karabo@bizcommunity.com](mailto:karabo@bizcommunity.com)

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