

... with Heidi Brauer

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Heidi Brauer, chief marketing officer at Hollard...



Brauer's 21st was a Purple Party, so this is a long-standing love affair... and proof of her love of layering things so they are unreplicable.

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Brauer: I am a full-on, lifelong Jozi person. I work on a hill with the best view of this beautiful city, on a national heritage site with indigenous gardens, families of peacocks, and swings and slides in the atrium. I live in a house that we chose way back in 1880 [Ed: Not a typo, that's a spot of Brauer humour. She's not **that** old] because we loved its huge jacaranda tree and old rose garden. I play in my head and in my soul, and wherever people are really, really nice.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Brauer: I came third in a figure-skating competition when I was about 10. There were only three people in the competition. They said they didn't have to give a third place. I also got the ball in the one and only hockey match I ever played in, and hit it. The wrong way. So I'm no sporting legend, but I know how to grow humans, and have two amazing sons who love me despite my sporting inadequacies.

3. Describe your career so far.

Brauer: My career went like this: I got an E for Science in matric and an A for English and then got a BSc at Wits. Education is a fascinating thing. I chose to do a degree in nursing science after literally scratching OT out on my varsity app form because someone told me about the nursing degree. I have delivered babies, looked after State President's patients - murderers with mental illnesses - and carried amputated limbs out of operating theatres. My kitchen at home is stocked like a labour ward (three of everything, lined up, in case). The then-five year degree left us, the seven who stuck it out to the end, a bit overqualified for bedpans, so I went into market research in the pharma industry, which led me to market research **not** in the pharma industry, which led me to market research in the brand space, which led me to the brand space, an airline or two and some epic airport lounges. That was 30 years in 697 characters. I've always followed the thang that says 'do what you love/love what you do'. And I remember imagining, at some stage, every space in my career

that I've landed in. Your mind is a magically powerful thing.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things...

Brauer: Donuts and noodles and whispers and kittens. I love collaboration. I love crystal salad rolls. I love a spa day (not a Spar day). I love being a mama, even though my boys are men now. I love integrity. I love generosity of the heart. I love attention to detail. I love layering things so they are unreplicable.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Brauer: That everything is possible. Even if budgets are awful.

6. What are a few pain points your industry can improve on?

Brauer: We don't have enough mature and experienced marketers to partner with agencies to raise great brand children together. Marketers need to earn their stripes. It takes time and dedication and time, time and more time to learn to parent a brand.

And we need to be able to speak business, because it's unlikely that the accountants are ever going to speak marketing.

7. Describe your average workday (if such a thing exists!)

Brauer: I'm pleased to report that I have no idea what an 'average workday' is. Sadly though, there are (for realsies) too many long meetings. Actually, I think any meeting more than 30 minutes should be called a workshop. Write shorter mails, friends! Have shorter meetings!

8. What are the tools of your trade?

Brauer: Balls of steel (I have a pair - ask my former airline colleagues), a sensitive heart (to always remember things from the customers' point of view), patience (so you can repeat your idea over and over and over until they get it - or until you get it), energy (for all of the above) and a drone (so you can see things from above the detail and put strategies together).

9. What are you working on right now?

Brauer: A book about chocolate cake that has nothing to do with chocolate cake and everything to do with layering, learning and sprinkles. Nurturing a beautiful brand called Hollard that needed some love. Doing my small bit to grow a special agency called [Halo](#). Loving [Umuji Photo Club](#) so that it can create a future filled with creative professionals that are relevant. And trying to get back into gym (not hockey, don't worry).

10. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Brauer: I could give you some great insurance buzzwords, but let's stick to the marketing space. My colleagues say I never stop asking for 'the sprinkles' on everything we do. The world is full of vanilla, we need sprinkles. Oh, and 'your invisible signature is on everything you do'. Because it is.

11. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Brauer: Early, early in the morning, before I'm really awake. Makes it a bit of a bltch to remember them.

Once I am awake though, I love to think on my feet, in the moment, the more pressure the better. Makes me access the back drawers of my brain's filing system that get a bit cobwebby otherwise.

12. What's your secret talent/party trick.

Brauer: Tequila. And 'killing them with kindness', always being the lady and remembering that grace wasn't just a little girl that didn't wash her face. And tequila (oh, I already said that).

13. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Brauer: Totally a friend of tech. Evidence: just sent my son a pin drop location on WhatsApp, because he's lost coming to meet me.

14. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Brauer: Too many photos. I take a photo of everything - beautiful things, things to make me go 'oh!', and flipcharts, meeting notes, flipcharts notes of meeting notes and ideas, whiteboard notes of meeting notes, flipchart notes of whiteboard notes of meetings and ideas.

15. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Brauer: Make sure that you can always say what you've done and not only where you've been (thanks [Sechaba Motsieloa](#)). Be a *mensch*. In an industry full of ideas and egos, we need *mensches*.

16. Plug your contact details, punt yourself - list all the places people can find you/your work online.

Brauer:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Click here](#) for Brauer's views on the 2015 trend of convergence marketing.

**Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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