

Capital Legacy's humorous approach to serious legal advertising

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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For many years, there was a restriction on lawyers advertising their services. But the world has moved on and now, we see quite a bit of promotion of services that used to be discussed only in hushed in deep-pile carpeted, expensive attorneys' offices.



Advertising legal services – some of the most serious advertising out there, as they deal with matters of life and death and all things in between – is never going to be easy. How, for example, do you inject a little bit of humour into a dry subject, without looking frivolous and, therefore, not worthy of consideration? After all, nobody wants an attorney who feels they are a comedian.

Discussing end-of-life issues, especially the need for drawing up a last will and testament, is something that Capital Legacy has been doing in an entertaining style for more than a year now, and for which they have previously won an Orchid.

The latest ad is already some months old, but the first time I saw it I was immediately drawn to it. It's full of an almost soap opera-like family squabble storyline. In this case, we witness the whole family pitching up for the patriarch's birthday, all smiles on the outside but clearly itching for him to kick the bucket so that can get their hands on his money and all the knick-knacks he has collected over the years.

We see them clambering all over his house, staking their claims on items, from porcelain vases to the piano to artworks, by placing coloured stickers on them. The old man's vinyl record collection is not safe and neither, as he discovers, is the kettle he uses on his gas stove. He and his carer look at the circus unfolding around them and shake their heads. But once the ungrateful and avaricious family is gone, he smiles at his dog, his constant companion. It's a smile which says: "You lot have no idea."

The ad closes with the dog, who has inherited the bulk of the estate, lounging on the bed, underneath a portrait of him and the old man. The punch line is: "Where there's a will, there's a final say." And the old man had his: all to the dog.



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The ad is humorous but to the point, stressing that if you don't have a will, you might not get to decide who gets what. An Orchid to Capital Legacy. And that's my final say.

Mobicel fails to dazzle

One thing I despise more than influencers, and those who believe influencers are marketing's new "silver bullet", is the impact that these non-entities (for that is what most of them are) have had, not only on social and business discourse but also on the PR industry.

Rather than craft a clever campaign, using real ideas and real wordsmiths to put it together, the PR fashion these days is to hold "an event" to which multiple influencers are invited. Some of them are paid, which makes whatever they say about a product to be taken with a pinch of salt. Even the ones who aren't paid will sing for their supper (which is normally freebie gifts, food and booze at these functions).

But it is sometimes the PR agencies who go overboard with the gushing, as whoever does the PR for cellphone maker Mobicel did last week.



The event, to launch the company's IX Plus smartphone, was "a dazzling event" (aren't they all?) and it was "attended by elite celebrities and the nation's most influential trendsetters." I reckon that even the most schlub-focused out there would be hard-pressed to call all of the attendees the "elite". And it's as if the elite somehow magically gravitated towards the event, instead of being invited for food, booze and a freebie IX Plus.

The only dazzling thing about this gushing is that it sees the light of day at all.

The rest of the release is filled with a myriad of over-the-top cliches about the IX Plus which, in reality, is nothing more than a value-for-money smartphone with reasonable specs for the price. A "marvel of modern technology" it certainly is not. And the event itself could hardly be characterised as "a new era of innovation."



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Mobitel does have a good story to tell: it has an assembly plant in Joburg staffed by women and has some of the most popular (by sales volumes) smartphone products on the market.

No need to gush, people, just tell the story. As soon as you start spinning the superlatives, you lose touch with reality and you put a glimmer of doubt in the mind of the reader about why you need to overplay things.

That will always be an Onion in PR communication terms because the golden rule is: less is more.

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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