

# Getting Naked in Johannesburg

## The IMC Conference



One of the nice things about visiting Johannesburg in March is that you're pretty much guaranteed a warm welcome and wall-to-wall sunshine. Ideal weather for marketing to get naked – the theme of this year's IMC Conference that thenetworkone sponsored.

Now in its second year under the direction of **Dale Hefer**, the IMC has grown to become southern Africa's largest marketing conference, attracting over 500 delegates from both the agency and client worlds.

As with many things in South Africa, the IMC event has a typically edgy irreverence to it with Dale and her team wanting to strip away the buzz words, 'have less blah', confront difficult issues and 'focus on the bottom line' with 19 fast-paced, non-sales pitch, 'TED' style presentations from a variety of presenters.

Based in the urban chic of the Fox Junction venue and compered by **Pepe Marais, Group CCO, [Joe Public United](#)**, one of South Africa's leading independent agencies, the IMC provides a platform for an array of views perspectives. These were some of the highlights for me:



Dale Hefer, IMC Conference



Anne Thistleton, LIGHT Consultancy

### ***What's your unconscious thinking?***

Born and educated in the US, **Anne Thistleton (Founder of the LIGHT Consultancy)** started her career in marketing for Kenner Toys (now Hasbro), and then moved to The Coca-Cola Company where she rapidly developed an interest in how the human mind works - specifically

the power of the unconscious mind to determine the decisions we make every second of every day.

Today, Anne lives in Cape Town, where she helps agencies and brands to understand how to create communication messages that cut through the maelstrom of the conscious mind and become embedded in an audience's long-term memory.

"We hear with all our senses" Anne argues, and brands (and their agencies) need to better understand how our 'mental operating system' processes things if they want to be remembered for more than a few minutes in today's multi-channel environment.

[Watch the presentation.](#)

### ***Worthwhile technology?***

In recent years, there has been much talk about Africa's digital revolution, with the Kenyans even coining the term 'Silicon Savannah' to describe the growing digital infrastructure in East Africa. However, across such a vast continent, is technology making a real difference?

**Musa Kalenga, Chief Future Officer, [House of Brave](#)** explored the API of humanity and technology, that's to say the interconnectivity that makes technology, A.I and humanity work together to create real value. Musa highlighted the case of [Zipline](#), a Californian based drone delivery company that now delivering urgent medical supplies in rural Rwanda, Ghana and Tanzania.

Doctors simply order what they need via WhatsApp or SMS, the drone's cargo is loaded at base, the best flightpath is determined by A.I and then on arriving at its destination, the drone parachutes the medical cargo to where it's needed, saving time, money and ultimately lives.

[Watch the presentation.](#)



### ***What's the purpose of marketing?***

One could argue that purpose marketing is much over used and misused in equal measure. Maybe it's to align with a popular cause, to sell more product or, even to gain more 'likes'.

**Grant Pereira (Brand Director, Carling Black Label, Anheuser Busch InBev)**, has a different perspective. He believes that purpose marketing can be important, pay back and even change an organisation for the better.

Pereira explained that Carling Black Label is South Africa's most popular beer, and that it's mostly marketed to men. Indeed, 1 in 4 beers sold in any one day in South Africa is a Carling Black Label, giving the brand a significant place in local consumer culture.

In the past, the brand has espoused traditional view of masculinity in all its communications. However, societal change in South Africa has meant that the brand needed to update its values to better reflect those of its new customer base – values of authenticity, (male) self-worth and the desire to making the world a better place.

But in order to do this, Pereira and his team first felt that they needed to confront the darker side of male beer consumption; gender-based violence against women in South Africa. A crime that sees three South African women die every day at the hands of their partners.

The result? **Carling Black Label [#NoExcuse](#) Campaign.**



[Click here to watch the campaign](#) and [click here to see the event take place](#).

You can also [watch the presentation](#) here.

### ***Learning to play...***

**Prof. [Elaine Rumboll](#), Managing Director, The Creative Leadership Consultancy**, explored how the pressures of the modern marketing environment that's often driven by speed, volatility and uncertainty, can be counter-productive; creating managers who're 'schoolground bullies,' over-controlling and who build less productive teams.

The answer to living in this fast-paced world of work? Bravery, playfulness and curiosity.

Citing the example of Ernest Rutherford who told his team to be “fascinated by their own ignorance”, Elaine explained that when we take the time to play and experiment, it creates an environment in which we become more accepting of failure and learn to embrace what we don’t know. The result of which is greater curiosity that in turn leads to greater creativity and innovation.

[Watch the presentation.](#)



***Have you heard about the KasiNomic Revolution?***

**GG Alcock, [Author, traveller and entrepreneur](#)**, is a unique individual. Raised in the poor Zulu community of KwaZulu-Natal, Msinga, GG was home schooled, became fluent in Zulu and developed an intimate insight into local African cultures in and around the townships.

GG’s day-to-day experiences of Africa’s huge informal business sector resulted in him focusing on and writing about something he terms the [KasiNomic Revolution](#).

This mostly untapped and certainly misunderstood off-the-radar business sector includes many thousands of small business, such as street vendors, street bars, cabs and food stalls that can generate substantial revenue for their owners, in some cases enabling them to afford luxury homes and large 4x4’s.



And yet, these successful business people go unnoticed by the majority of brands that remain focused on the traditional established status quo.

For sure, technology like M-Pesa (Africa's biggest mobile payment system), has helped South Africa's informal business sector grow but, GG believes that this new 'Afrropolitan Generation' is just getting started and it's going to become a significant marketing opportunity in the future.

[Watch the presentation.](#)

### ***Why do we need events like this?***

Perhaps it's a cliché, but change is a constant and nowhere more so than in South Africa. Sometime these changes are not for the best, but for the most part, they are.

South Africa seems to be re-discovering its 'mojo' and what it means to be a part of 'Rainbow Nation'. This is especially true in the creative industry, which after several tough years, is now picking itself up, producing good work and tackling the social, political and gender issues that face the sector.

In our online world, events like the IMC have an important role to play. They bring people together to discuss, argue and debate the issues that matter – these events create communities that, whilst often made up of competitors, also provide a space for the collaborators to flourish. That's when great things happen.

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