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13,62 ♦ (-1.27%)

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0,1 ♦ (0.00%)

ZAR/USD

11,99 ♦ (0.59%)

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Reaching for the skies to sell cars

May 04 2015 15:45



Cape Town - A unique and innovative way of moving metal on the internet reveals how the sky is only the limit for those daring enough to challenge the status quo.

Take the case of Frank McDouall, founder and CIO of Carfind.co.za and Thomas Kritzer, CEO of Sky Messaging.

They are entrepreneurs in totally different businesses who realised that combining cars and aeroplanes on the internet would fly as a business model.

The topic of unconventional entrepreneurs, and how faith in unusual decisions and personal convictions conquering the traditional, was explored in a recent episode of The Growth Engines sponsored by Standard Bank.

Light bulb moment

McDouall said his moment of enlightenment occurred when he was sitting at his desk on the floor of a car dealership.

He realised that he was bored and his mind wandered, leading to thoughts about car sales and the internet as a tool for selling cars for dealers and private sellers.

The result of his thinking was Carfind.co.za, a platform that attracts almost 45% of all vehicle dealers in South Africa, and sees about 45 000 cars a month changing hands between dealers, private sellers and buyers looking for wheels that vary from entry level to super cars, new and used.

"I knew from my experience that every buyer has different reasons for buying a car, and that their purchasing frequency also varies widely. The strategy I settled on was creating top of mind awareness about the new service rather than concentrating on a single audience."

The rule of unconventional

It is here that the unconventional became the rule for McDouall.



"Instead of concentrating on flying banners at events, we concentrate on flying messages when road traffic is gridlocked," says Thomas Kritzer, CEO of Sky Messaging. (Photo: Facebook)

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He decided to cut through the advertising clutter and, instead of promoting his new service in car magazines, opted for radio and later aerial advertising.

Reinforcing these approaches were billboards that were deliberately posted upside down on roadsides.

"It is a known fact, that visually, humans spot the difference, hence using this when it came to advertising," he said.

"Advertising in a fishing magazine rather than a car magazine could drive a fisherman to go to the site to look for a vehicle that would be ideal to transport his fishing rods. In a magazine for petrol heads, the advert would be lost amongst all the other ads."

Head in the clouds

Enter Thomas Kritzer, CEO of Sky Messaging, and another unconventional thinker ready to turn the marketing of cars on its head.

Reinventing the old advertising art of aircraft towing advertising banners, Kritzer used modern patented technology to make banners that are six metres wide, 30 metres long and weigh a mere 10kg.

His approach enabled Carfind.co.za to literally reach for the sky.

"Sky Messaging provides a unique advertising platform and different type of engagement with audiences," he said.

"Instead of concentrating on flying banners at events, we concentrate on flying messages when road traffic is gridlocked. Drivers and passengers provide a captive, sustainable audience that is in place at least 340 days a year," said Kritzer.

Rush-hour skies

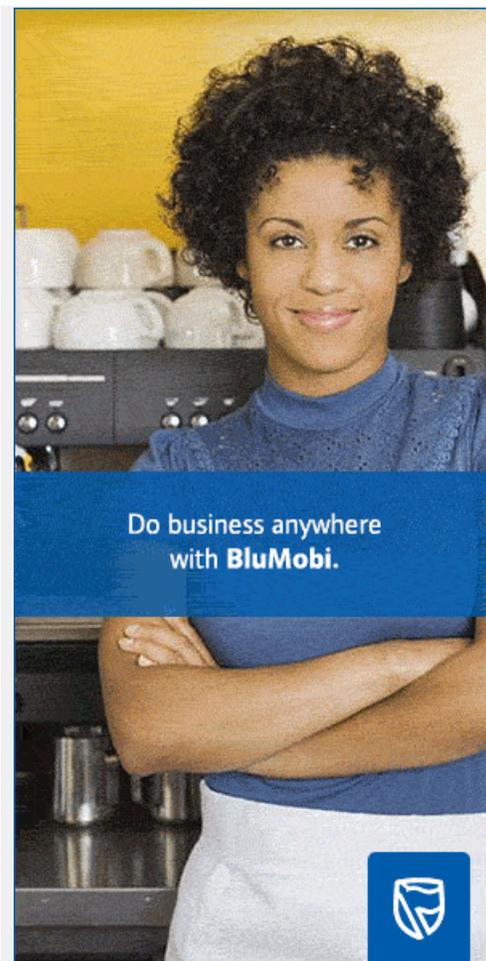
The advantage the company enjoys is that they have almost total dominance of the rush-hour skies.

This is because getting the necessary permits from the Civil Aviation Authority is a lengthy process that restricts access for many. Backing this with technologies that enable the banner to be attached and landed easily provides the final link in a unique chain.

The appeal of the aerial banner tactic for Carfind.co.za with their top of mind approach, is that Sky Messaging can reach in excess of 800 000 people over a period of two hours in the sky in Cape Town alone.

Having the support of other free-thinkers like McDouall, who embraces the unusual, has seen Sky Messaging expand to the point where it is forming alliances with media companies and has now expanded nationally, permanently serviced by five aircraft.

Sky Messaging has a permanent footprint in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban, with away-missions to Bloemfontein, Port Elizabeth and East London.



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Intimate knowledge rules

"The meeting of these unconventional entrepreneurs also confirms that traditional foundations are still invaluable when an entrepreneur decides to go it alone," said Ethel Nyembe, Head of Small Enterprise at Standard Bank.

"The first belief is that you are more likely to succeed if you have experience in the sector that you are choosing for your future. The second holds that your chances of success are further enhanced if you have an intimate knowledge of your potential market.

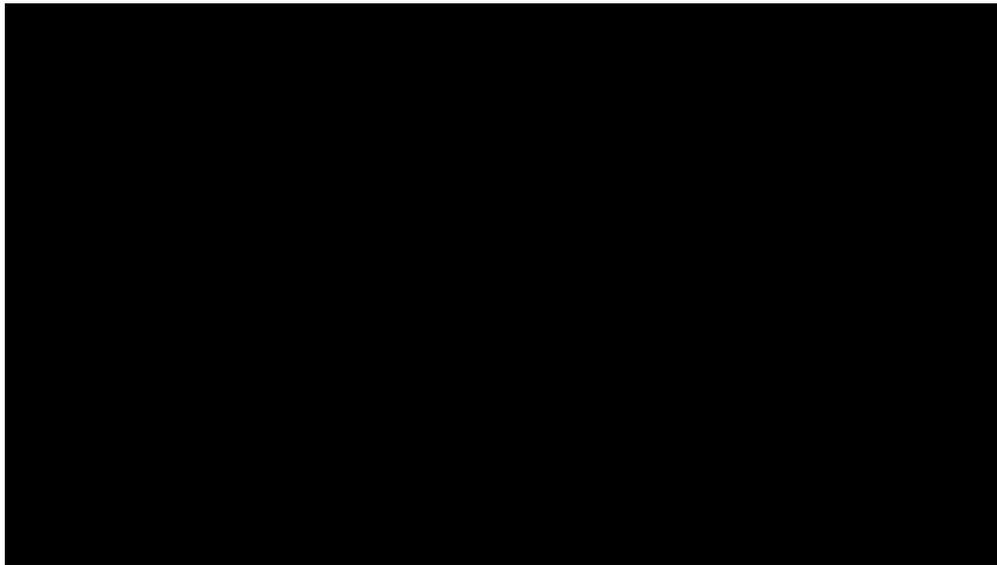
"If these two building blocks are firmly in place your experience is more likely to help you make intuitive decisions that can build your business, even though others may believe that by flouting the marketing rules you are heading for disaster.

"When entrepreneurs with focused, specialised niche businesses meet and combine forces to make the unconventional work for them, we as customers benefit.

"For entrepreneurs that succeed by doing the unusual, their triumphs are testimony to the deep understanding they have of their markets and customers. It is a combination that sometimes defies logic, but cannot be discounted in the business world today," said Nyembe.

The Growth Engines can be viewed on Business Day TV (DSTV channel 412) on Tuesdays at 21:30, with repeats on Wednesdays at 10:00 and Thursdays at 14:00. For more information and to view in-depth articles on the key themes explored on the programme, log on at bizconnect.standardbank.co.za.

Watch the series here:



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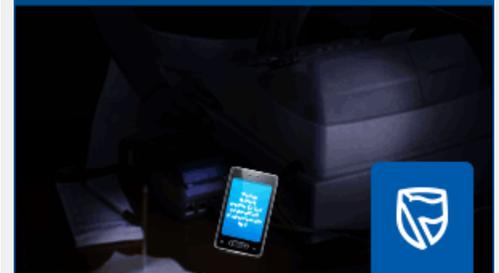
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