

Key learnings



By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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This year marks a big change: we normally hold our AdForum Worldwide Summits in New York, where we meet the global CEOs of the networks, the large multinational agencies and some independent agencies.



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As a group last year, we decided that it would be worthwhile spending a week again in Los Angeles (LA) (7–12 April 2019), which is a big centre for the advertising, media and entertainment industries, as well as the tech companies, and the competition for talent is a huge issue for all concerned.

To give some context to California and LA, California is the most-populated state in the US, with a population of 39m people. Los Angeles has a population of about 3.8m people. It is a big sprawling city; it reminds me a lot of Johannesburg, with many tall skyscrapers and then lots of smaller, residential areas in between. It is, without doubt, an entrepreneur's city, where many pioneering spirits have come in the past and no doubt will continue into the future.

Santa Monica — where all of the consultants are staying at the Viceroy Hotel — is a seaside community of about 86,000 people. Surfing shops intermingled with fashion boutiques and a huge choice of restaurants make up Santa Monica, where everything revolves around the beach and the ocean.

Our theme for the week was “Surfing the Trends” and what better place than in LA? Californians are open-minded people,

with a great capacity for living in a balanced way. This permeates through to their attitude to the advertising industry and its foibles!

This year's Summit had some interesting learnings:

- Most teens and young adults put their number one job preference as creating video content for YouTube – creators
- More digital video content is watched via TV now as opposed to via the computer
- While there is very slow growth in traditional media ad spend, digital media is growing very fast and those agencies who are already in that territory are growing too
- The growth of film and branded content is now exponential and businesses are being formed around this extraordinary phenomenon which tends to be more pronounced within youth culture.
- Agency positioning is becoming more and more critical in defining the types of clients to work with and in order to attract the best type of clients.

McDowell will take agencies through the detail of this session and others at an IAS master class that will take place later in May this year.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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