

Kru & Co on 'going viral', why TikTok is the future of social media

 By Leigh Andrews

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Lanie Krugel has just launched Kru & Co, a South African social media agency - yes, the name originates from her surname. We discussed the agency's startup story and social media trends for South Africa to wake up to, on a summer's day, over icy drinks at Jason's Bakery in Green Point.



Meet the Kru & Co crew, from L to R: Lanie Krugel, Johan Krugel, Stephen Mnnaar, Mike Joubert, Roy Ingle.

Our discussion touched on an interesting comparison of social media market maturation, as well as the industry pressure points of clients saying: "Make us go viral"...

 **Let's start with the basics. Talk us through the context of launching Kru & Co and the gap you're filling.**

All clients of my original company, the Social Kru, are based in the USA and UK. We didn't have any South African clients until we did a campaign with a client who said they would love to start an agency in South Africa.



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I experienced South Africa to be a little bit behind on what's working elsewhere in terms of global social trends. In some instances, we're two years behind, especially when it comes to paid traffic.

I decided this was a gap we could fill, especially on the educational aspect.



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Juanita Pienaar 29 Oct 2018



We also found that many of South Africa's digital agencies have a social media department, which means they don't actually have social media skills throughout the agency.

That's why we decided to launch Kru & Co. We're filling that gap, educating South African agencies on exactly what's working in the social media space.

■ **Mike Joubert commented that he's funding a few startups at the moment – Kru & Co is one of them as he "really likes the people". Talk us through how you put your team together.**

Well, we promote ourselves as an extension of the companies we work for, not as an agency in and of itself. We like to be seen that way as we have amazing relationships with our clients.



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For that reason, I handpicked each and every person on the team. We also train them ourselves on our backend system, which is very different to what else is out there – even when it comes to such aspects as creating content – from the traditional agency way.

We handpick team members not only according to what their skills are in the business, because we know we can train them on that, but also on the way they see life.



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So their character is really important to us, as well as that they're family-orientated people; that they want to invest their time in other people's businesses and not just 'our company'. That mindset is very important to us.

■ **Let's get into what you do at Kru & Co. What goes into calling yourself a social media expert? How much training, how many hours on the job, what does it take?**

That's an extremely good question! Let me give you an example: All the trends change weekly, from the likes of Instagram to TikTok, the algorithms update every few days.

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So let's say you were an influencer in 2012 on Instagram, with a following of 15,000, at the time, but you haven't been active on the platform since then. You can't tell me you know what's going on with that platform today if you're not actively looking at the data and trends since then. You may have had a good understanding at the time, but times have changed.

“ So this type of work takes a lot of insight into how the various social media algorithms themselves work, but it also takes experience in how to read data. It's an almost 24/7 responsibility. A lot of people don't understand that. They see metrics and just think of reach and impressions. ”

They carry on the way they have been posting all along as it seems to be working, but when effectiveness suddenly drops, they won't know why.

🎯 **Sounds intense! What's the process then, when a client asks you to 'make me viral'...**

That's a great question, as 'going viral' isn't necessarily something every brand should aim for. Most brands actually don't have capacity to handle that amount of traffic, and to suddenly willingly bring it on would be damaging to the brand.

First, we need to analyse the business. What are the goals the business wants to reach? More importantly, what are the reasons behind those goals? Many brands will tell you they want to go viral, but even if you help them achieve this, at the end of the month they'll ask you why it's not making them any money.

Kru & Co
21 followers
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That's where we need to get clear on what the brand actually wants to do. Do they want to make money, or do they just want to be on everyone's lips and have increased brand awareness? There's a very distinct difference between the two.

Our process is therefore to sit down and have a strategy meeting followed by an immersion week, where we sit with the company for an entire week to immerse ourselves in their content, in everything that's happening in their business.



I see this very rarely in traditional agencies. They tend to take on the job, look at the current project they need results from and put their focus on that, but not on the business overall.

In most of our client work we go so far as to sit in on their board meetings, because we need to give them insights into what's happening on social media. It's no longer like it was in 'the olden days' or even a decade ago, where it was a case of focusing first on TV, then radio, and only then on social media. Things have turned around completely.

■ **Looking at further differences, Kru & Co is focused on Africa but you still run The Social Kru in the UK and USA. Talk us through some differences and similarities in these markets.**

In America, it's usually the company CEO who says their social media marketing is not working and requests our help to map that out. We'd go in and analyse their social media marketing efforts, much like a doctor doing an autopsy to find the reason of death, because oftentimes, it's already dead.

“ In South Africa, it's a very different scenario. The bulk of the work we do is from an educational perspective, as you almost need to tell brands why they need social media, as difficult as that may be to comprehend. ”

If brands knew their audiences well, they'd know that almost everyone is active on social media. It links back to your earlier question of being a 'social media expert' – there's a difference between social media management and social media marketing, as well as 'smart social' – that's where we like to play.



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It's about using social media in the smartest possible way, not in the traditional: 'Oh, I'm posting this and hoping people will like it and follow us and also engage with our traditional social media marketing.'

■ **You're also 'social media storytellers'. Please elaborate on the importance of storytelling, with consumers' attention spans so limited, especially in 2020.**

We still strongly believe the old saying of 'people buying people, not products'. What we've actually seen convert, not just what we think works, is that people respond well to stories, and short copy does not convert as well as long copy does. The longer the copy and the better the story, the better the trust.

I won't touch on influencer marketing, but just looking at the trends in that space, it's true that the longer the copy, the better the conversions. So tell stories that people can relate to, as these convert well and are the essence of turning a follower into a fan.

Social media is about people, so if your clients can relate to the stories your brand tells, you'll have them in the bag.

■ ***There's been so much focus on social media reach and engagement, but that doesn't really help if those likes don't convert into purchases. Talk us through the process of social media sales conversion.***

Cheers to that; now we're really talking my language! Brands need to keep in mind that there are two different sides to social media: organic and paid, and both need attention to succeed in this marketing space.

First, the organic side is usually for brand awareness and how you as a brand educate your prospects or people who might like your brand. Then there's also different types of conversion on different types of content.



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Brian Mechem 15 Mar 2019



This is the different layers of content you push out in different stages of the client life cycle, from awareness content to trust content and decision content. This is what we map out for organic social media.

Then there's the paid-traffic level, which is usually built for specific conversions. For this, we build a campaign with a clear goal of sales, or conversions, or booked meetings – whatever your main business goal. We then build the sales funnel around that.



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Overall, we take the client by the hand from the organic side and lead them into the sales funnel through different steps. It's much more complex than saying: "Oh I saw you liked our page. Here's a link to our product. Please buy it". Instead, we build an entire sales funnel, we get the maximum amount of ROI or ROA on the ad spend. This has proven to lead to almost

six times better conversions.

■ ***Impressive! Sounds like you're onto something really good. Let's end with your future plans and where you'd like to see the business grow.***

The eventual aim for Kru & Co is to showcase to South Africa the real meaning and value of social media marketing, even if it's just on the educational aspect of how to 'do' social media – that it's not a traditional media platform like a magazine, where you can dump content on a one-off basis.

Instead, it's a means to constantly communicate with your client, which means they also need to communicate with you.

We'd also like to rebuild ethical business practice in South Africa. This is a personal goal for me as I was brought up in a household where: "Your word is your word and that's all you have." I really miss that in business, even in the USA and UK.



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Depending on the culture, in SA many businesses are also run unethically. I want to bring ethical business practices back, where if you hire an agency, you hire a whole team of support.

On a technical front, I want to niche down to specific social media marketing funnels. These are the new-age sales funnels we spoke of earlier, as I'm very excited about platforms like TikTok, but I fear they're misunderstood.



TikTok 101: How to get started

22 Oct 2019



Many brands perceive the likes of TikTok are largely for teenagers, but the stats at this stage show that 66% of TikTok's users are younger than 30, meaning that the rest are over the age of 30.

Worthy insights for anyone working in the marketing industry. Follow Kru & Co's success story through Kru & Co's [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#) updates.

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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