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**Shoot from the hip**  
BrandsEye helps its clients better understand "why people love them and why people hate them," says CEO JP Kloppers.

## Hitting the target

The first crowd-integrated media intelligence company can tell you what the world's saying about your brand and business

BY CHRIS WALDBURGER

**"We believe that** what people say and how they feel matters too much to ignore. In a world where consumers are publishers and can elevate or crush brands—listening to them, tracking relevant topics and learning from them is no longer a luxury." This is the rationale behind BrandsEye, an online reputation management company that's making international waves from its base in Cape Town. Under the chairmanship of internationally renowned South African businessman Etienne de Villiers, CEO Jean Pierre (JP) Kloppers is taking the business onto the world stage via its chief innovation of combining the digital combing of social media



platforms with the local knowledge and contextualisation of crowd 'raters'. The data is then converted into a customisable digital interface by BrandsEye software.

Kloppers describes what makes BrandsEye so innovative: "We have built a globally unique crowd-sourcing platform that is able to rapidly, efficiently and accurately make sense of unstructured data. Through our tech, we're able to help our customers understand why people love them and why people hate them. It's like an always-on, real-time focus group giving you insight into what is driving consumer sentiment in your industry." These locals review social data from feeds like Twitter and Facebook, then compete with one another and earn money when they independently agree on the sentiment and relevancy of an online conversation.

BrandsEye, with its expansion into African and European markets, exemplifies the value of basic problem solving: in this case, the problem of knowing what a world in constant communication is saying about your brand and company. In a digital economy, solving universal problems immediately allows you to play on both a national and international stage.

In May this year, the company launched a service that added print and broadcast media monitoring to its existing platform—allowing users to track real-time social, editorial and multimedia engagements within their brand. "Despite the global move toward social engagement, 'traditional' news still has a key role to play in the management of one's brand," says Kloppers. "As a business, you need to know what people are saying, when they are saying it, and why."

Kloppers has had an interesting journey to his



position at the helm of this exciting South African company. He studied mechatronics at the University of Cape Town, and straight after graduating he secured funding from Mark Shuttleworth's venture capital fund to set up a tech incubator at the varsity. From there he springboarded into his own endeavours, eventually linking up with founder of BrandsEye, Craig Raw, who offered him the CEO role in 2013. Since then he has moved the company from the online reputation management space to that of business intelligence and research.

### **Fast Company SA: Who inspires you, and why?**

**Kloppers:** Inspiration comes from many places. The internal inspiration comes from a deep conviction that I have been created with purpose, and that my best gift to the world is to live in the fullness of that purpose. My wife and kids inspire me to be a better human being. They are a real-time barometer of my leadership, and I'll look to

them to see at first hand if I'm becoming a better or worse version of myself. As our chairperson Etienne de Villiers always says, "Children are great mimics; are you worth mimicking?" I'm privileged to work with an incredibly smart, curious, kind and tenacious group of people. A big shift in my leadership style came when I realised that our success will only be achieved through the success of the people I'm leading. I care deeply about this country and the people in it. It concerns me to my core that racial tensions, social inequality and unemployment are at an all-time high. As I've wrestled through my privilege, I've come to the conclusion that one of my best contributions to South Africa at this moment in history is to build a global company that will inspire, employ and equip thousands of people.

### **In what ways do you take time out to reflect and strategise?**

I have a few habits that help to keep me fresh and focused.

I like to get up at 05h30 to have 20 to 30 minutes to read, reflect and quieten my soul. I'll take time out about once a month to draw a big mind map on a whiteboard of everything going on, and then to prioritise work from there. I like to start early in the morning, so will often hit a wall by 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. I'll often leave the office at that time, go for a run, watch my kids play sport, or hit the gym. That'll refuel me to get in a few more critical pieces of work in the evening. I'll very rarely book anything on a Saturday. I reserve that for time with my boys, time with close friends, and time to build things in my garage (which I actually find incredibly relaxing). I have a weekly conversation with our chairperson in London who is incredibly sharp in asking the right questions to keep me both focused and free.

### **What is one thing about your job that would surprise other people?**

I really love coffee, so I don't let anyone else make it for me! ☺