

Faheem Chaudhry returns to M&C Saatchi Abel

 By Jessica Tennant

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Faheem Chaudhry has returned from M&C Saatchi London to M&C Saatchi Abel as managing partner, assuming operational leadership of the Johannesburg office.

As strategy director at the London agency, Chaudhry led a diverse range of clients, including NatWest Bank and the British Government, as well as projects across Europe, Bahrain and Tokyo, whilst co-founding Black and White, a strategic consultancy within the PLC.

“This feels like a triple homecoming for me - returning to the city I grew up in, alongside a group of partners I admire and trust, in the agency where I spent my formative years. Gaining global experience at M&C Saatchi’s HQ in London for the past few years has been fantastic, but ultimately the pull of home and completing the M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg leadership alongside Neo, MK and Adam was too strong,” says Chaudhry.

“I believe South African creativity is going to enjoy exponential success over the next decade. Trevor Noah, DJ Black Coffee, Dr Ester Mahlangu, Nelson Makamo, Trevor Stuurman, among others, are all building SA’s cultural capital on the world stage. A huge commercial opportunity for organisations will be to stake their claim and contribute to South African culture. It’s the perfect climate to build brands that are locally transformative and globally admired. The chance to work with our people and in partnership with our clients to drive growth for their businesses, and for the South African economy, is a challenge I find both critical and irresistible.”

Here, he goes on to tell us more about his experience working in London and that he believes it will help create work that is both globally admired and locally transformative...



Faheem Chaudhry

■ How do you feel about your appointment and returning to the SA/Johannesburg office?

Fired up! It feels like a triple homecoming, returning to the city I grew up in, joining partners I trust and admire in the company that I spent my formative years.



An exceptional talent returns to SA to join the M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg leadership team

M&C Saatchi Abel 31 May 2019



■ What excites you most about rejoining the local team?

Firstly, the people. There’s a special bond and chemistry between the people at M&C Saatchi Abel that makes it a joy to come to work every day.

Secondly, the opportunity to do important work for our clients that drives growth for their businesses and creates a positive impact in South Africa. Finally, the agency is approaching its 10th birthday, which is a real milestone for us to celebrate and take stock of our ambitions for the next decade.

■ ***What do you love most about your career and advertising in particular?***

Every day we get to help incredible organisations of all shapes and sizes build their most valuable asset, their brand. It's incredibly fulfilling when your thoughts and ideas help companies to progress in leaps and bounds. Getting to call this work almost feels too good to be true some days.

■ ***Tell us a bit about your experience working at the London office, what you bring back to the local office and what you hope to achieve whilst here.***

The first thing is experience working at scale on big global brands across multiple markets.

The second is exposure to a wide array of global cultures, which broadens and widens one's understanding of different ways of working and approaches to client problems.

And, finally, was the pleasure of working with some of the greatest talent in our global company, including some of the creative and strategic minds responsible for the most famous work in our agency's 25-year history.

London is also a few years ahead of SA in technology, so it was useful to understand how consumer behaviour is shifting in line with new tech and, therefore, gives one a point of view on what's coming down the tracks for SA and the opportunities that come with that.

Finally, because of the number of companies competing in London across all sectors and how established industries are, progress exists in incremental steps rather than massive leaps forward. To gain an advantage, you've got to win in the fine margins. That forces one to become disciplined in spotting the gaps and intelligently joining the dots to get ahead.

I feel the London experience will help us create work that is globally admired, whilst being locally transformative.

■ ***Any career highlights you're particularly proud of?***

- Creating The Street Store, the world's first pop-up store for the homeless, which has gone on to clothe hundreds of thousands of people in over 120 cities worldwide.



The Street Store - supporting the homeless with dignity

12 Feb 2014



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- Being invited by the United Nations to deliver a keynote speech on 'The Power of Communication' in Vienna last year.
 - Being ranked in the Top 10 Strategists in SA in my first two years as a strategist.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to?***

South African creativity is vibrant and inspiring. I've missed it and I can't wait to be immersed in it again. And then reconnecting with Jozi and feeling its rhythm. It's an incredible city with so much on offer to those who embrace its opportunities.

■ ***What's at the top of your to-do list at work?***

- Enjoying being the new guy and listening and learning.
- Engaging with our people and our clients.
- Building a powerful partnership with our newest client, Standard Bank.

■ **What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?**

- Reading: *The First 90 Days* by Michael Watkins.
- Listening to: *On Second Thought*, Trevor Noah's podcast
- Just finished watching: *When They See Us* on Netflix. Still processing and recovering from that.

■ **Tell us something about yourself not generally known?**

"There are two rules for success: 1) Never tell everything you know." – Roger H. Lincoln

Follow Chaudhry on Twitter [@FaheemChaudhry](#) and M&C Saatchi Abel at [@mcsaatchiabel](#), and visit the agency's [Press Office on Bizcommunity](#) for their latest news.

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