

Jabulani Sigege to lead Machine_'s creative team

 By Jessica Tennant

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Creative solutions agency Machine_ recently announced the appointment of ECD Jabulani Sigege to their Cape Town team.

"For years I've watched as Machine_ created and led with smart, head turning work that made consumers and clients pay attention," explains Sigege, "and it's this and more that attracted me to this admirable agency who have not only been able to deliver exceptional work but also still managed to retain their identity and culture. I can't wait to lead the agency into its next creative chapter, working with this talented team to develop rich and meaningful work."

Here, he tells us what else attracted him to the agency and why he believes culture is the cornerstone of creativity...

■ ***Congrats on your new appointment. How did it come about and how do you feel about joining Machine_ next month?***

Thank you. It came about by having conversations with like-minded people, who share the same philosophy when it comes to creative work and the vision of how it could be and how to get it there. So I am really excited to be joining Machine_ and working with the team to create work worth talking about.

■ ***You said that you were attracted to the agency, not only because they've been able to deliver exceptional work but also because they've managed to retain their identity and culture. Why is this important to you?***

I feel that the culture of an agency is what helps it make unique work that couldn't be made anywhere else. Just as in South Africa, we have a creative culture that ensures there is work made here that can't be made anywhere else in the world. We should be tapping into this on the regular because it's what sets us apart.

■ ***Something else that drew you to the role is the agency's The Forge initiative. Tell us more about this and how you plan to get involved.***

The Forge is an initiative by Machine_ to blood new talent, from untraditional sources and backgrounds (according to the make-up of adland now). By partnering with Red & Yellow School, we make a bursary for a copywriter or art director available, and they intern with us, getting on the job training, while completing their studies. It's a way the agency actually makes a difference, instead of just talking about it. We will continue doing this and also partnering with Blackboard, hosting high schoolers and exposing them to the inner workings of an agency, to open up the industry.



Jabulani Sigege



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■ ***In the release you said, “I believe that culture is the cornerstone of creativity, and culture really isn’t culture until it shows up in the work. But in order to really make magical, memorable and effective work, you need to put something of yourself into it, be it your soul, creativity or love.” So true, but easier said than done. How do you go about achieving this on a practical level, and why do you think Machine_ gets this right?***

I think the first part of this is getting the right people who believe they can bring something of themselves into the work they create. People who look forward every day to creating something that hasn’t existed before. The people – the whole agency team – are involved in creating work, so you need them to always have that outlook.

Machine_ has had it because the people have not really felt held back.

“ Lockdown and Covid have certainly created a morose global outlook, but with vaccinations and businesses opening up, there’s a renewed sense of optimism, wonder and “let’s make magic” again. ”

■ ***What are some of your short-term goals at the agency or some of the objectives you’re setting out to achieve in the next few months?***

One of the first things is making sure you have all the right people and right skills in the right positions. This is to ensure that current clients are still secure and that we have the ability to land new clients when the opportunity arises. Of course, having a dependable, more-than-able team will also enable the quality of work to turn heads and deliver business results.

■ ***Tell us more about your career path to date.***

With over 15 years’ experience, I’ve worked from small to large agencies, including King James, 140 BBDO, M&C Saatchi Abel, Hero and Wunderman Thompson most recently. And I’ve seen some agencies go from small to medium to large during my time there. I’ve also managed to pick up some awards and do meaningful work for brands along the way.

■ ***And some career highlights.***

Often, you’ll hear “awards”, but I get a sense of fulfilment when I see people I’ve helped get into and navigate our industry become who they were meant to be and realise their potential. To see them filled with confidence and leave their doubts behind, as they embrace and utilise their skills and talents.



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■ ***What do you love most about your career, the ad industry and what you do?***

The opportunity and ability to shape people’s thoughts, tap into *and* influence culture, and sometimes shift a nation’s sentiments for the better. Every day, this can happen. Where else do you get to do that?

■ ***What impact do you hope to make or see in the industry?***

For me, it’s to help transform the make-up of the industry to make it more diverse and inclusive, allowing there to be more work that makes a difference to people and is uniquely “Mzansi”.

■ ***Any exciting plans in the pipeline you’re allowed to mention?***

Nothing I can mention at this stage, but it’s safe to say, “stay tuned”.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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