

# #BehindtheSelfie with... Farren Roper

By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Farren Roper, Microsoft's global engagement lead for collaboration.



At the party while nobody is looking... #ShamelessSelfie – @farrenroper

## 1. Where do you live, work and play?

**Roper:** I am from Johannesburg, born and raised, but I have recently started working out of the Microsoft corporate head office in Seattle.

## 2. What's your claim to fame?

**Roper:** I'm 'the startup guy'. I was part of two successful startups in FNB which won the renowned radical innovation prize and took many innovative firsts to market. I think probably what I am most proud of was being able to speak at TEDx. Post that phase in my career, being a part of leading the Microsoft South Africa marketing team to a global leadership position in new areas of marketing.

### 3. Describe your career so far.

**Roper:** Very non-linear. I have been in roles spanning from business owner to lawyer, risk and compliance officer, operations manager and eventually marketing leader.

### 4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

**Roper:** I love to write both personally and professionally, I love tennis, I love the outdoors and being a gregarious person. I love good company and good wine!

### 5. What do you love about your industry?

**Roper:** I love that I get to work in the technology industry, because it's changing the world as we know it. At Microsoft, although people might think we are in the business of software, we are really in the business of empowerment. Empowering every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more. Billions of people in the world are exposed to our technology, whether they know it or not.

### 6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

**Roper:** It starts with an early morning workout and then lots of procrastination before I get to work. I could literally wake up at 3am and still be late. I'm in meetings most of the day via Skype with people from across the globe and in my team. I then hit my productivity stride later. I am always on, though – I sometimes get ideas in the bathroom or treadmill and need to quickly write them down.

### 7. What are the tools of your trade?

**Roper:** Data dashboards are the most empowering as they enable me to tell the story of business impact behind the campaigns.

### 8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

**Roper:** I would say Google web experiences and re-targeting but then, that's to be expected.

### 9. What are the biggest pain points/challenges/areas for improvement?

**Roper:** I think for any digital marketer, understanding the customer journey and making sure you put yourself in the moments that count. Also top of mind for me is how we deliver personalisation at scale and land the campaigns with relevance across all of the Microsoft global countries.

### 10. What are you working on right now, during #SustainabilityMonth?

**Roper:** Amazing campaigns around the Microsoft productivity suite. We really have the best in breed tools and apps, from Outlook to Skype to social. The world needs to know this!

There's a sustainability angle too, as Microsoft is one of the locally relevant multinationals that contributes in South Africa in many ways, including our Student to Business (S2B) programme, which has given hundreds of students employment opportunities; as well as BizSpark, which has helped take thousands of tech companies online. Recently, Microsoft South Africa was in the news for its education training initiatives. Globally, Microsoft is also donating over a billion dollars in cloud services to research and there was recently some breaking news about how Microsoft is assisting in cancer research.

### 11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and

## some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

**Roper:** Programmatic – OK we get it, we don't buy impressions we buy audiences. Big data also is still a buzz word that gets thrown around all these years later.

## 12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

**Roper:** When I have alone free space to think and in a calm environment e.g. work or gym.

## 13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

**Roper:** I can sing really well. I used to be in productions when I was younger. I break out into a rendition of *In the still of the night*. I can also chug back a mean tequila.

## 14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

**Roper:** Sadly a technophobe. Isn't it ironic? Just a little too ironic?

## 15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

**Roper:** Selfies, pictures of my dogs and funny memes I've screengrabbed.

## 16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

**Roper:** Just follow your passion. There is no race. You can carve the career path you want. I didn't think as a boy growing up I could be a successful businessman. When I was practicing law, I didn't ever think I could be doing my passion (marketing)... but with hard work and a deliberate effort to do "not my job", anything is possible.

Simple as that. Connect with Roper on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and [click here](#) to view his thought leadership on Bizcommunity.

*\*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).*

## 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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