

# Mark Tomlinson joins Hoorah Digital as chief innovation officer



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Renowned in the industry as one of the foremost digital minds, Mark Tomlinson has become the latest addition to the top team at Hoorah Digital, the consultancy that's become known for attracting leaders in the space since their launch a mere two years ago.

One of the early digital entrepreneurs, Tomlinson started his first digital agency in 1999, going on to start Hellocomputer, which grew into one of the pre-eminent digital agencies in South Africa. Throughout his career, Tomlinson has remained passionate about ideas, the determinants that shape people's behaviour, and how to apply data and creativity to solve real business problems.



Mark Tomlinson, newly appointed chief of innovation at Hoorah Digital

I catch up with Tomlinson to find out more about joining Hoorah Digital, and he shares what organisations can no longer ignore when it comes to strategy.

■ ***Congrats on your appointment. How do you feel about it?***

I am particularly exhilarated about the opportunity to be a part of The Hoorah Group, as it is a company that exhibits many of the themes I am passionate about.

“ *It is constituted by some of the industries best and brightest minds, as it is a company that is committed to building value for partner clients, as well as employees, ultimately creating positive change in South Africa.* ”

It was founded and is led by a collective of digital and advertising industry trailblazers, and possesses a relatively unique ability to grow and adapt through innovation.

■ ***What is your new job title and what does your role entail?***

I joined the C-Suite leadership team as chief innovation officer, ensuring that innovation remains a core strategy goal for this organisation and our clients. In today's hyper-changing, technologically saturated world, it has emerged as even more fundamental, providing a platform for adaption and re-invention. If we are to partner our clients, we must possess the skills to guide them as market disruption and various challenges present risk for their business models.

■ ***How and when did this come about/when does it take effect?***

We have been in conversations for some time now as I was originally providing consulting services to the leadership team, but I was motivated to be more involved with the teams as I believe wholeheartedly in the brilliant leadership and the world-class client relationships the team have formed over the years.

I was also excited to partner with my previous partner from HelloComputer and Generator, Simon Spreckley, who is himself a highly awarded entrepreneurial creative with considerable business nous, and Shaune Jordaan, founder of Hoorah not to mention the highly successful Saatchi & Saatchi Synergize, which was successfully sold to Publicis and finally one of the leaders in the customer engagement, whom I had the privilege of working with at FCB on Toyota for more than five years, Reagan Kok. My appointment is of immediate effect.

■ ***What excites you most about joining Hoorah Digital?***

The unique way the team here approaches communications, media, technology, data and creativity. The thinking is rather progressive, and speaks volumes of the quality of strategic counsel available to our clients. I think that this is the type of magic you simply cannot invent, and the wonderful people who make this approach possible, meant it was impossible for me to turn the position down.

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

I absolutely love playing a role in solving our clients' problems, and providing out-the-box strategic solutions which are seldom found in corporate institutions. The reward of seeing a business achieve greatness, or avoid disaster because of the sound advice we are able to offer is unmatched. The industry is also charged with immense energy and provides a growing platform that supports genuine and real change in the lives of our teams as they develop with the group.

■ ***Innovation and creativity are key, especially in the time of Covid-19. What can organisations no longer ignore when it comes to strategy?***

I believe that the most crucial commitment that organisations need to make in terms of business strategy, is the establishment and support of a dedicated CIO or team, who are able to assist the CEO and fellow C-Suite teams make agile and future focused decisions, to ensure the organisation maintains relevance in the marketplace. This approach coupled with a high performance team can defend their market share should they experience a disruptive market or competitor.

■ ***Throughout your career, you've been passionate about using data to solve real business problems. What advice do you have for organisations?***

Stop doing the same thing you have been doing for years and expecting different results, if you truly are ambitious about change, you absolutely must make innovation core to your business strategy, creating space to partner with people who are able to lift your organisation to a new level.

■ ***The digital landscape is forever changing, what are some of the trends we could see in 2021?***

I think there will still be a degree of conservative spend as we all recover from the challenges of a 2020 stunted by Covid-

19. On the flip side, it also presents incredible opportunities to re-imagine and re-invent clients to be more successful and agile. I expect to see many changes in traditional employment, committing to more remote working, embracing more digital spend, platforms and looking for new and innovative ways to solve challenges that traditional thinking cannot

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