

Jacki McEwen-Powell, founding partner and strategist of Eclipse Communications



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Something which many women can relate to, is taking the plunge to start a business with little/no resources, a family to take care of, and nothing but sheer grit to make it work. Jacki McEwen-Powell did exactly that - with a borrowed computer, a telephone line, and a newborn baby on her lap, she started her PR career and built Eclipse Communications from scratch.



■ ***As founding partner & strategist of Eclipse Communications, could you briefly explain what your role entails?***

I founded Eclipse Communications 22 years ago. Our first ten years of operation were focused on growing our client base and building a reputation for exceptional client service - primarily in publicity. The second ten years were focused on maintaining this reputation of excellence while growing our national footprint and expanding our service offering to include the full communications suite with organic and paid digital, design, eventing and more, in-house.

The last two years have seen us grow our African and global footprint, with an owned office in Mauritius, and partnerships in Kenya, Nigeria, Namibia and Israel - and as the African representative of the SERMO global network of independent communications agencies.

My role has been guiding the growth of Eclipse Communications, primarily through new business development, strategy, and client service - with a focus on my passion areas of consumer, lifestyle and entertainment.

■ ***What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?***

Literally, I am wearing a smile. There's no denying that 2020 was an extremely challenging year for everybody. But I have been incredibly blessed. A personal highlight was marrying my life and business partner after 14 years, and as a company, we celebrated being awarded both the PRISA PRISM Best Large PR Consultancy Award, and the AdFocus PR Agency of the Year Award. Figuratively, it's determination. I'm determined, as part of an incredible leadership team, to continue to guide the growth of Eclipse Communications, its people and its clients.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

I was always fascinated by words. Folklore has it that my first spoken words were “look at the curtains.” Growing up I wanted to be either an English professor or a journalist.

■ ***How did you end up working in Public Relations?***

During school holidays I accompanied my mother to her job as the office administrator for a leading Cape Town PR agency. It's there, folding press releases for BP into envelopes, that my love for the industry was born, and the rest, as they say - is herstory.

■ ***What excites you most about your career?***

There are so many things that I love about communications, and my career in it. But the thing that excites me most is that it's a field that embraces and rewards fresh thinking. That makes it the ideal career for young talent to really excel in as they bring newness to the table. Seeing the next, and next, and next (am I giving my age away yet?) generations of talent coming up through the ranks and having given so many of them a platform from which to grow successful careers has been a very exciting and fulfilling journey.

■ ***Eclipse Communications has been winning awards year after year. What's the winning recipe?***

We are an agency renowned for being first to the table with break-through creative concepts. I believe this is because we are a team of diverse, channel-agnostic people and because we encourage and celebrate fresh ideas and thinking.

■ ***Where are you based during lock-down?***

When lock-down first hit, I was in Mauritius on a business trip with a colleague. It was touch and go, with every indication we may be stuck there. Luckily we were assigned seats on the last flight out and thereafter I've been working from home in Cape Town. Our agency has for many years subscribed to flexible work-times and a work-from-home culture (freedom and responsibility), so the reinforcement of our existing culture and operating system was fairly painless.

■ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

Mental and physical health has never been more important. I enjoy daily gym sessions on Zoom, regular long walks with my husband, Steve, daily meditation, regular red light therapy sessions and, as always, enjoy a good book. We socialise with close friends intermittently - usually over a good meal out.

■ ***What's the one thing about you that not many people know, but should?***

I'm an introvert. That's a pretty difficult place to be in an industry as reliant on human interaction as ours is. I'm far more comfortable behind the scenes, and as an individual contributor. Ironically lock-down has done wonders for my stress levels.

■ ***What's your favourite meme/gif of all time?***

I love memes. I'm not sure I have a favourite. But the one I seem to use a lot is the Rihanna Crown GIF - because I am surrounded by incredibly talented people. Family, friends, and an exceptional team at Eclipse. I constantly want to celebrate their thinking.

[via GIPHY](#)

■ ***Do you have a theme song for 2021?***

It would probably have to be “Golden” by Harry Styles. Not only do I truly believe that 2021 will be a golden year, but because it’s an undeniably happy tune, that doesn’t shy away from themes of love, loss and loneliness - all of which will undoubtedly still mark the year ahead.

■ ***Are you watching any series? Reading any books at the moment?***

Absolutely! Netflix is a long-standing client of ours and dominates my evening viewing pleasure. Everybody in the world needs to watch *David Attenborough: A Life on Our Planet* and *The Social Dilemma*. Both will make you take stock of the

way we live. Other favourites include *The Crown*, *La Casa de Papel*, *The Queen's Gambit*, *Narcos*, *Godless*, *Peaky Blinders*, *Suburra*, *Fauda*... The list is endless. DM me for recommendations!

I also love to read and do so every single night, no matter what time I go to bed. Right now I am reading and loving *Miss Benson's Beetle* by Rachel Joyce. Recent books I've also really enjoyed include *American Dirt*, *The Crooked Branch* and *The Absolutist*.

📊 **What is the first thing you plan to do - if and when the lockdown lifts?**

Hotfoot it to the UK to meet the new addition to our family - my beautiful niece. Then off to Mauritius. We planned to get married there last year. Instead, we had a beautiful intimate ceremony at Lanzerac, but so many of our friends and family were not able to join us, so a group vacation to mark the occasion is on the cards.

📊 **What's next for you?**

Steve and I are invested in a number of businesses, including a celebrity-led beverage brand, a red light therapy studio, and a social upliftment app, all of which will be receiving love and attention this coming year, in addition to continuing our growth journey with Eclipse Communications.

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