

Astika Chetram, co-founder and MD of Imajinnation Marketing

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Astika Chetram is the co-founder and MD of a small marketing agency called Imajinnation Marketing with extensive experience in the automotive industry.



Astika Chetram

“After having studied Public Relations Management in Durban, I have been working in the automotive industry since 2002, starting my experience with Toyota South Africa, and later with Fiat Chrysler South Africa, followed by Mahindra South Africa before exploring my own business, offering marketing services to other brands.”

Here, she tells us what’s really behind her mask and why she gave up left corporate after two decades to venture into marketing...

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

Behind this mask is a woman who has finally found her niche and is content with where I am in my life.

■ ***Astika, as MD of Imajinnation Marketing, tell us more about your role and what it is you do exactly on a day-to-day basis.***

As MD of a small company, my role is strategic and operational. Most of my days are spent creating strategies, content plans or presentations. I am very involved in my clients' business and I spend a lot of my time trying to take their business to the next level.

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

It's funny. I went through about six or seven different careers during my childhood from a botanist or anthropologist to lawyer, FBI agent or a writer. I didn't really think too seriously about it until I was in matric and fell into marketing purely because I had to choose something! Who would have known, it would be my passion?

■ ***What did you study, where did you expect your career to take you and how does this measure up to your current reality?***

I studied Public Relations Management and I expected to be a very glamorous events manager. I've worked in many different marketing roles and event management is my least favourite marketing function. My reality is much more fulfilling than the "glamour" I was expecting in marketing as a student. I create real solutions, offer real value and I'm exposed to various industries, cultures and challenges.

■ ***You gave up corporate after two decades. Tell us more about this.***

I was brought up with the belief that you start with a company and stay there forever. I wasn't a risk-taker by nature, when you come from humble beginnings, risks are a luxury. I found myself wanting more flexibility, I wanted to be able to add real value to business challenges but never really finding the right opportunity to do so in corporate. After joining a company that just wasn't a cultural fit, I decided to take some time off to "find" myself. It was then that my partner and I started Imajinnation Marketing and the rest is history, as they say!

■ ***You have extensive experience in the automotive industry. When and why did you decide to venture into other industries?***

I've always wanted to explore different industries but as many people in automotive will attest, once you're in automotive, it's tough to change industries. Most of my business is still in automotive but being able to work with clients in different industries is refreshing and inspiring. I love to challenge myself and learn new things. As a service provider, I get to learn a lot about many industries and their nuances in a short period of time.

■ ***Career highlights to date?***

I will never forget my first big vehicle launch for the Toyota Yaris. It was such a fun campaign to work on. I was still so young and every part of it was just so exciting.

Aside from that, I've published a couple of children's books, which I absolutely loved doing, and even got asked for my autograph – definitely another highlight.

■ ***How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work?***

Well, I had started working from home in October 2019 so being homebound wasn't really an issue. Balancing home-schooling three kids and maintaining a business, while running a home...now that was a challenge. I salute all teachers!

■ ***What do you love most about the marketing industry and digital and social media marketing more specifically?***

I love that this industry has such a strategic role to play in any business. I'm intrigued at how much the roles and landscape have changed in the past few years. It's exciting to be able to do something different each day and learn something new with every new project. The digital marketing landscape has something new and interesting to offer at every turn. It keeps me on my toes and drives me to be a better, more flexible marketer!

■ ***What's your typical workday routine?***

I believe in balance and I'll usually start my day with the school run. Once I'm back home, it's into emails, presentations and client meetings until the late afternoon. I try to be completely focused on work during work hours so I can be completely available to my family in my downtime. Once the kids are in bed, I usually catch up on reporting and presentations for a bit.

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

I spend quality time with my family. I love binge-watching series or watching movies to totally chill out. I'm a recreational baker, and I write children's books as a hobby as well. We're still keeping socialising to a minimum so I do miss entertaining friends and family at home. I can't wait to be able to do that again.

■ ***What are you reading/listening to/watching at the moment?***

I wish I could say I'm reading. I just don't have the attention span to read lately. I've been watching a lot of HGTV, series and I absolutely love horror and Superhero movies when I totally want to relax.

■ ***What's the first thing you plan to do when things go back to normal?***

See friends, and travel! I love to travel and I want to see the rest of the places on my bucket list.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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