

Odette van der Haar transitions from association to agency

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Here, Odette van der Haar, incoming CEO of J. Walter Thompson Johannesburg (JWT), tells us why she made the decision to leave the ACA SA (Association for Communication and Advertising) and what she aspires to achieve in serving the industry from an agency perspective...



Odette van der Haar appointed CEO J. Walter Thompson Johannesburg

JWT 4 May 2018



■ *How do you feel about leaving the ACA and being appointed CEO of J. Walter Thompson Johannesburg?*

It is a bittersweet time. Whilst I am sad to be leaving the ACA, I am really excited to be joining and leading an agency that I have always had the utmost respect for. What a privilege to have the opportunity to do what I love and still get to serve the industry that I'm so passionate about in a different way. I am looking forward to working alongside some of the best brains in the business and delivering solutions that contribute meaningfully and tangibly to the agency and clients' businesses.

■ *What will your new role entail, and how do you expect it to differ from that at the ACA (association vs agency)?*

At the ACA, I was responsible for self-regulation of the industry – in other words, ensuring the sustainability, growth, transformation and talent generation via the AAA School of Advertising. At JWT, sustaining and growing the agency will be very much a part of my job, as will making sure the work produced by the agency resonates well with its clients, the intended target audiences, our peers in the industry and that it grows the bottom line.

■ *Why the move?*

It's time. I've been at the ACA for more than 10 years and for a long time now I've been talking about the changing landscape and how agency models need to change and adapt to the new landscape in order to not only survive but thrive. JWT represents that transformation, with its capabilities in e-commerce, experience design, social, multi-screen campaigns, performance marketing and a lot, lot more. Joining the agency affords me the opportunity to "be the change that I wish to see". I will have the opportunity to develop what I've been preaching.



Odette van der Haar resigns from the ACA

4 May 2018



■ *What do you love most about your career and communication/advertising in particular?*

I love that work doesn't feel like work. I get paid to do what I love and work alongside people I admire and respect.

“ *There's a camaraderie in the profession that is unlike any industry. The business of advertising and communications is a combination of art and science – it marries my left and right brain capabilities, it's dynamic, never dull, meaningful and far-reaching.* ”

I love that when the work is done right, it connects people to brands and brands to people... it builds communities and makes a meaningful contribution to business success. It's the best career in the world!

■ **Tell us a bit about your experience in the industry; any highlights you're particularly proud of.**

My career in marketing has seen many highlights. I'm most proud of launching a first-of-its-kind at the time CRM, loyalty programme when I worked at Mutual & Federal which lead to me being headhunted by Siemens, and at Siemens, I had the privilege of working in collaboration with all the business units to provide solutions to the 20% of Siemens global clients present in SA that contributed 80% of global revenues. At Sentech, I launched the first wireless technology in South Africa, however, the best years of my career to date, have been at the ACA where I was able to make a very important and meaningful contribution to the industry I am passionate about.

Being part of the team that saw the MAC Charter promulgated under section 9 of the BBBEE Act and in so doing, seeing our transformation goals written into law is something I will never forget. Rebranding, positioning and building the Apex awards into a world-class awards programme that delivers more than just trophies with 72 bursaries having been raised by the programme during the last seven years is another highlight. These bursaries changed the lives of the awarded students and having made a difference in the lives of young talent – future captains of our industry is what I am most proud of.

■ **What are you most looking forward to?**

I am most looking forward to being back in the field again. I look forward to working with clients to build great brands, working with the awesome team at JWT to create iconic, award-winning work that delivers business results, and I'm looking forward to taking the agency to even greater success.

■ **What's at the top of your to-do list?**

On the top of my to-do list is developing mutually beneficial relationships with the agency's clients and the team I will be working alongside.

■ **What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?**

Honestly, at the moment I'm reading a textbook on digital and e-marketing in preparation for an upcoming exam (part of a marketing and communications degree I am completing). I am so in love with the film *Black Panther* and I'm reading some *Black Panther* comic books for entertainment.

■ **Tell us something about yourself not generally known.**

I was a South African champion drum majorette when I was in high school. Lol!

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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