

Connected creativity and radical collaboration underpin an exciting new chapter for M&C Saatchi Group South Africa

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An expanded partnership leading the creative group of companies brings new skills and perspectives, amplifying strategic and data smarts, diversity and inclusion, operational agility and creative excellence.



Jacques Burger, chief executive officer, and Neo Mashigo, chief creative officer at M&C Saatchi Group South Africa

M&C Saatchi Group South Africa has announced the appointment of long-time partner and Group co-founder Jacques Burger to Group chief executive officer, with Mike Abel assuming the role of executive chairman. With the South Africa Group experiencing significant growth over the last two years, an expanded leadership team for the Group has also been appointed. The move also allows Abel, part of the global Exco of M&C Saatchi Plc, to focus more on his global portfolio, which includes driving the group's overall creative product and continually engaging with the South African team on key initiatives and high-level projects.

"Over the last 12 years we have focused our energy on building an agency group founded on strong values, deep smarts and meaningful client partnerships. With an expanding Group, this move gives us even more ability to unlock powerful and connected creative solutions for the challenges our clients face," says Abel.

"Indeed," says incoming CEO Burger, "this is a new chapter of radical collaboration across our Group and the multiple disciplines and solutions they each bring. The ability to connect these opportunities while constantly and relentlessly applying our trademark approach of 'brutal simplicity of thought' is a powerful proposition. It is most certainly where the future of communication lies and will deliver greater value to our clients."

With this focus on connected creativity and radical collaboration, the expanded Group leadership is orientated around six pillars:

1. **Creativity** – unlocking the power of creativity and creative solutions to every part of the business, not only the advertising solve, to drive greater brand impact and effectiveness continues to be the focus of chief creative officer Neo Mashigo.

2. **Data fluency** – accelerating data fuelled solutions across the Group, including a partnership with Fluency (the Group's UK-based data consultancy), to help clients more precisely define where growth will come from, and unlocking this growth across the marketing and communication levers. To this end, Black & White managing partner Diana Springer will also assume the role of chief data and intelligence officer leading the data offering for the Group.
3. **Strategy** – building on the Group's longstanding strategic credentials with an evolutionary strategic approach that sees a much broader mix of marketing and communication solutions coming together to drive more precise positionings. The result will be stronger equity and faster conversion rates for clients. This will be led by co-founder Robert Grace, who moves from head of strategy to chief strategy officer.
4. **Diversity** – further accelerating success to deliver relevant and resonant solutions through unlocking diversity of thought. Key to this is a continued group-wide focus on diversity in terms of talent and ways of working with the appointment of head of strategy (Johannesburg), Makosha Maja-Rasethaba to chief diversity officer, leading diversity and inclusion at a Group level beyond her current remit on the M&C Saatchi Abel board.
5. **Agility and innovation** – building tighter collaborations across group-wide disciplines matched with operational excellence to enable increased agility and the ability for our group companies to move at speed of culture and change will be led by Jason Harrison, who assumes the role of chief operating officer from being Group managing director.
6. **Commercial excellence** – Graham Mears as chief financial officer continues to ensure that the Group's strategic growth plans are underpinned by astuteness, simplicity and shared value for innovative start-ups and key acquisitions. In addition, he will also lead the ESG mandate for the Group.

"You get succession planning, and then you get this level of planning," quips Abel, as he reflects on a 25-year friendship and business relationship with Jacques. "This move opens up an exciting new chapter in the executive and operational leadership of our Group to see it deliver more connected, creative solutions for our clients. It also enables me to apply sharper focus on our priorities locally and internationally."

"Jacques is a formidable leader with impeccable credentials and an incredible track record. He was the highly successful managing director of Ogilvy Cape Group, was CEO of the Campaign Palace, Australia and returned to South Africa in 2010 to start M&C Saatchi Abel, Johannesburg and to co-lead the SA group with me and a few trusted friends and business partners," says Abel.

The M&C Saatchi Group South Africa leadership team is structured as follows:

- Mike Abel: executive chairman
- Jacques Burger: chief executive officer
- Neo Mashigo: chief creative officer
- Jason Harrison: Chief Operating Officer
- Robert Grace: chief strategy officer
- Makosha Maja-Rasethaba: chief diversity officer
- Diana Springer: chief data and intelligence officer
- Graham Mears: chief financial officer

Just 12 years old with 350+ diverse team members, the M&C Saatchi Group SA comprises six distinct creative companies, M&C Saatchi Abel (integrated advertising solutions), Razor (reputation & PR), Connect (media & touchpoint), Levergy (passion-point marketing), Dalmatian (through-the line-advertising) and Black & White (marketing consultancy). Powered by a unique partner model, the new leadership structure will bring about radical collaboration across individual best-in-breed specialists within the Group. M&C Saatchi Group South Africa is also one of only two finalists in the *Financial Mail* AdFocus Awards 2022 in the category of Agency Group of the Year.

Concludes chief creative officer Neo Mashigo: "We speak a lot about wanting to be the most admired creative company and marketing group on the African continent, and we are further gearing ourselves to do this with our new structure and relationships in our agency and with our clients. We're excited about what this means for our Group as an increasingly data fluent and diverse team of specialists with creativity at our core."

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M&C Saatchi Abel

M&CSAATCHI ABEL

It is at the heart of everything we do. From creative thinking to creative work. From how we are structured to the systems we use. Brutal Simplicity runs through the culture of every single one of our offices, all around the world.

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