

UM named Global Media Agency of the Year by *Campaign* magazine

Media agency UM had its origin in 1999 with McCann Worldgroup South Africa before it was swooped up with the launch of Mediabrands South Africa two decades later. Now, UM celebrates being crowned the Global Media Agency of the Year by *Campaign* magazine.



Kevin Ndinguri, UMSouth Africa's managing director

UM South Africa's managing director Kevin Ndinguri says that the global accolade is a testament to UM's resilience and indicative of how its future proof proposition is built to deliver now and into the future for the agency's partners. "Similar to many agencies throughout the pandemic, we've had our fair share of turbulence to navigate, but our team, with the backing of Mediabrands has done exceptionally well."

Over the past 18 months, UM has quietly enjoyed some very significant account wins and internal agency growth. Management has also been working hard behind the scenes to structure an agency that is ready to step onto centre stage. Mediabrands' managing director Brad Smale says that UM's approach to future proofing its business and that of its clients is one of the many reasons this agency stands out in the industry.

"We like to think of ourselves as a global business that really knows its local markets. We also understand that we are in this business for the long haul and that we cannot operate and continue in the future as we have in the past. We cannot forget what made brands and advertising great right in the very beginning and that is compelling brand stories, which comes from solid and sustainable brand building.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the agency has focused on strengthening its proprietary media tools and technologies and consolidating its focus in the industry. This, together with UM's merging into the Mediabrands structure, has provided the runway needed for Ndinguri and his team to do the great work that has contributed to wins like *Campaign's* EMEA Network Agency of the Year in 2019 and in 2021 *Campaign* Global Media Agency of the Year.

Ndinguri adds, "Future proof has been a complete shift in our mindset at UM and the way we work with clients through applying a more consultative approach to communication and media. The essence of future proof is that transformative media can be both a business and brand growth driver. By transformative we mean better use of real time data signals and technology, turning insight into action at speed, to deliver a competitive advantage for our clients.

This is achieved through a core set of proprietary tools and technology that optimises client's media spend against business goals. This is further enhanced by crafting fluid plans designed to win over diverse sets of "high value audiences" - individuals at scale that have the highest business and brand growth opportunity.

By embracing a data-led approach, UM has shown an impressive growth from 15 people, two years ago, to 45 staff that have helped the agency win several blue-chip business accounts including Investec, Multichoice, Mattel, Energizer and Emirates.

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