

'Wunderwomen' Kagiso Musi and Astrid Ascar

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Wunderman South Africa recently appointed Kagiso Musi (effective May) and Astrid Ascar (effective March) as MD and chief strategic officer respectively.



Kagiso Musi and Astrid Ascar.

Musi joined Wunderman as chief client officer just over a year ago. She has since completed an MBA and is now stepping into a new role for the agency, which will involve managing the business across operations, finance, talent and its entire service offering. As such, she will oversee both the Wunderman business – previously Aqua Online, Base 2 and Wunderman Marketing – and its bespoke integrated agency, WPP Fluid, which was launched off the back of its Telkom win in June last year.



Wunderman SSA appoints Kagiso Musi

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Ascar also holds an MBA and will be responsible for leading the strategic direction of the business. She hopes to bring a business impact mindset to how clients are serviced, to help them embrace digital transformation and build customer experiences that build loyalty and drive retention, and in so doing, expand the perception of what the agency is capable of.



Wunderman SA welcomes Astrid Ascar to the family

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Here, Musi explains what this promotion means to her, while Ascar explains her career shift from working as an independent contractor to a permanent employee...

■ **How do you feel about your appointment?**

Musi: It's exciting and encouraging that the Wunderman leadership recognises my value and has extended my responsibilities within the group. I originally joined as the chief client officer of Wunderman and MD of Fluid.

Ascar: Being appointed as chief strategy officer at Wunderman SA comes at a time in my career that makes perfect sense. I've witnessed the evolution of media from traditional to digital, and the subsequent shifts in business models, marketing, PR and communication approaches, and of course, the arrival of totally new roles and jobs in our landscape as a result of the shifts.

My career began in broadcast, servicing audience needs and balancing that with delivering on clients' advertising and marketing requirements, then I moved into a chapter in my career when I was the client, and some twelve years ago I stepped out of the corporate environment as an independent consultant, working both for and alongside clients and agencies, so in a way up until now I have been 'on the outside of the agency world looking in'.

I've watched the agency landscape shifting, and I think some are finding the transition quite challenging.

“ For Wunderman SA though, the picture is very clear; they know exactly what they have to do to help their clients achieve business sustainability, and what changes that require in erstwhile agency approaches. ”

It's a mindset and strategic vision I can fit into very naturally, and my role offers me an opportunity to work alongside like-minded colleagues to meet the current challenges facing agencies around the world. I thrive on challenges, and I believe I can really make a contribution in redefining how we do things where that redefinition may be needed.

■ **What does the role entail; what do you expect your working day to look like?**

Musi: My role is primarily around going in and down into the business, responsible for the performance of the company operationally and strategically. That involves our talent management strategy, the financial health of the business and our overall offering to clients.

Ascar: For now I can paint a very abstract expressionist Jackson Pollock-like picture of all kinds of activities that range from working with digital transformation teams to defining user journeys, and rolling out the appropriate UX, UI, wireframes, design, copy and reporting blueprints, to a commercial model discussion, to writing copy, to crafting an integrated marketing strategy, to interviewing prospective staff, to interrogating a media plan to ensure it aligns with a strategy, to designing training material, and, not to be overlooked, giving my two cents' worth on office space requirements!

■ **What excites you most about this agency and where it's going?**

Musi: Wunderman offers a slightly different growth trajectory, not only for me but for brands. We all know the effect of digitisation on the world, and so the subject of digital transformation as a core of the business is an exciting one for me. I'm also looking forward to charting the balance between the digital future and the ongoing power of traditional above the line.

Ascar: Wunderman SA offers clients global and local capabilities. It is forward-thinking and well-positioned to help clients

navigate their future business landscapes. But more importantly, it has incredibly talented, generous and insightful people working across the business. Every ingredient is in place; we just need to get the mixture right...

■ ***What do you love most about your career?***

Musi: That I get to live a different day, every single day. At the moment, I love that I'm literally in the thick of all things digital: technology-driven solutions, innovative thinking, data-driven results and work that is aligned to the principles of customer experience. I get to work with some incredible minds, diverse ideas and people who really love what they do.

Ascar: What I love most about my career is that I truly can say I have never felt like I have had to 'go to work' one day in my life. For me, everything about media and marketing and figuring out what makes a business tick and how to help it tick better is a way of life, not a job.

■ ***Nice! Musi, what's at the top of your to-do list?***

Musi: Of the many, very important number ones, the primary task is to work with the rest of the leadership team, our people and clients to migrate thinking from digital marketing to large-scale digital transformation, while still continuing to get the basics of our service offering right.

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

Musi: It's been a whirlwind. I've been reading for my MBA and incidentally, my topic is very much aligned to what I want to deliver in my role. My thesis is on the effect of social media on authentic leadership. I'm watching a whole lot of series where I don't have to apply my mind, and I'm jamming to old school Sade. I have about 11 books waiting for me to delve into and I can't wait!

Ascar: In my line of work, I 'read' websites for a living. But seriously, most of my current reading is about digital transformation and customer experience management; I've read the good, the bad and the ugly about the topic. I surf across at least three or four news channels every morning for an hour and every evening for about two hours, and in between that I consume all kinds of business media, both news and information content.

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

Musi: Well then that would be telling...

Ascar: If I had to 'do it all again' I'd be a vet and live in a rickety house on an island surrounded by animals and fostering as many children as the law would allow.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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