

#BehindtheSelfie with... Desiree Gullan

 By Leigh Andrews

3 Jul 2019

This #CSIMonth, we go behind the selfie with Desiree Gullan, co-founder and executive creative director of G&G Digital.



Gullan captions this: "Wake up with the birds. Do the hard stuff first. Give your best. Go for regular walks."

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in Joburg, just a kilometre from our office in 1 Hamlin Street Highlands North — a beautiful Cape Dutch office building that we have recently renovated. When I'm not at the office or at home, I'm at Melrose Arch, where I train at the gym (yoga and spinning), eat out and drink coffee.

1. What's your claim to fame?

Unfortunately, I'm not famous for anything. I am, however, infamous for being a sometimes too-honest creative director who doesn't mince my words.

2. Describe your career so far.

I studied literature, psychology, advertising and photography, and worked for many of the top ad agencies before starting G&G Digital over a decade ago. We started our business as a through-the-line agency before focusing on digital 8 years ago.



The evolution of branding through the digital agency

Desiree Gullan 24 Apr 2019



G&G is one of the fastest-growing independent digital agencies in South Africa. We love what we do, have a power team who do, too and have clients who respect and appreciate our passion and work.

3. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Grande cappuccinos, walking with my Great Dane, stretching out on the yoga mat, reading and writing. I wake up at 4am every morning to enjoy some me-time, during which I write my personal projects before the work day starts.

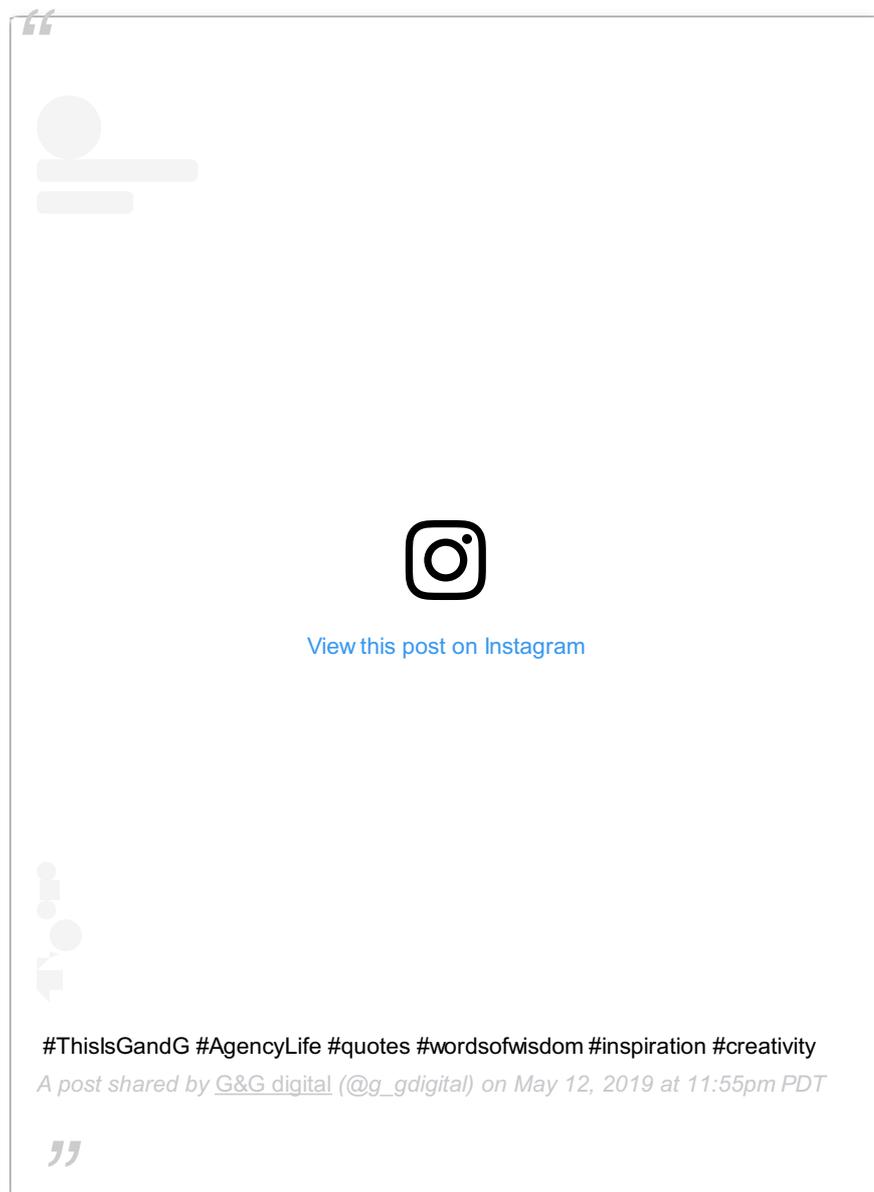
4. What do you love about your industry?

I love that every day is completely unique, every brief is a new challenge and a creative opportunity with a chance to surprise, delight and exceed our clients' expectations.

I love seeing smart strategy become creative concepts and ultimately come to life in the relevant channels. It is extremely satisfying seeing all the hard work help our clients' achieve their brand and business objectives.

5. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Work starts at 7:30am when I get to the office with my grande cappuccino in hand. I'm pulled into meeting after meeting and creative review after review. Eventually I gasp for air at about noon, when I wolf down some food.



After that, I'm usually wrestled to the ground by various people needing input on briefs, copy, concepts, designs,

proposals and presentations. I make sure to devote time mentoring my creative team.

As ours is an industry that thrives when young, passionate people are empowered to thrive, I feel it is my responsibility to share my knowledge and experience to nurture talent.

It is so rewarding to see my team grow, flourish and master their skills, so they can go on to thrive in their lives.

6. What are the tools of your trade?

Skills can be taught, passion cannot. At G&G we hire for passion. Also, good communication skills are key. It ignites confidence all round — internally and with our clients.

I always favour someone who reads a lot over someone who does not. A good reader is usually a good thinker, writer, communicator and all-round star.

“



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Americans read fewer books each year. Last year, a survey by the National Endowment for the Arts found that only 43% of U.S. adults read literature not required for work or school. Apparently these statistics don't apply to the busiest and most successful people. Warren Buffet reads 500 pages a day Mark Cuban reads 3 hours a day Bill Gates reads 50 books a year Elon Musk learnt to build a rocket by reading. So how do they manage? 1. Make books easily accessible—go to the library, download books on your #kindle 2. Set a time (30 minutes to 3 hours) and make sure its free of interruptions 3. Make books easily accessible 4. Read before bed 5. Give it three chapters, if the book's not working, move on. 6. Be selective about what you read—make it count. #bookworm #books ##bookshelf #kindle #ReadToLead #writing #author #writingtips #writer #writersofinstagram #writerscommunity #writerslife #writers #publishing

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#readersareleaders

A post shared by [desireegullan \(@desireegullan\)](#) on Jun 27, 2019 at 7:57am PDT

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7. Who is getting it right in your industry?

The people and agencies that have the courage to chart their own course. It is highly competitive and there are many digital agencies offering similar services. The agencies that get it right are those that stand for something and are excellent at it.

“



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Most people spend an average of 2 hours on Facebook everyday with more than 6 million business pages battling for a newsfeed feature or campaign like. Let us help your brand breakthrough the clutter!

_____ #GG_Digital

#AgencyLife #ThursdayMotivation #BrandAwareness #GigitalMarketing
#Socialmedia

A post shared by [G&G digital \(@g_gdigital\)](#) on Jun 13, 2019 at 12:19am PDT

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At G&G, we're good at building relationships and loyalty with our clients' customers via content that adds value to their lives. We are digital first, channel agnostic and will work with the relevant medium to best meet the objective.

8. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

Clients that don't see their agencies as strategic partners are only letting themselves and their brands down.

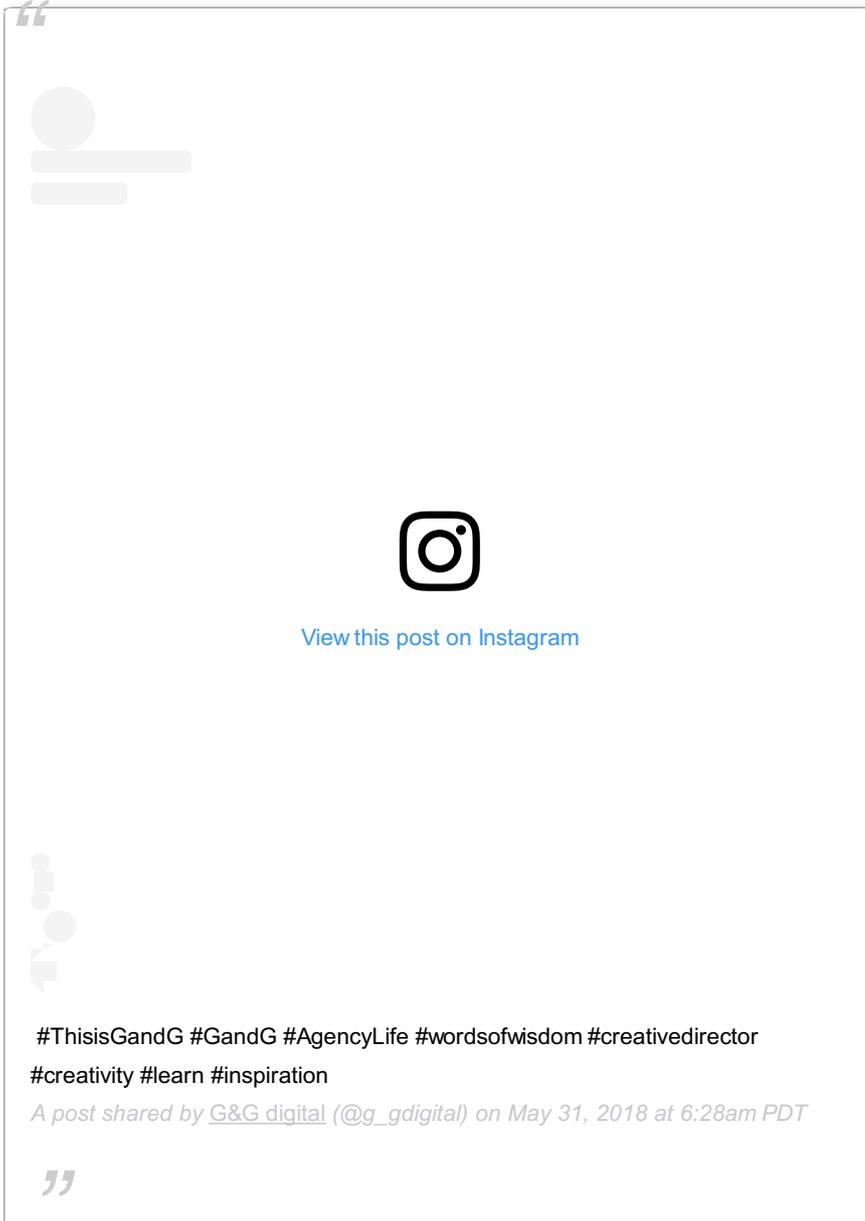


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Desiree Gullan, G&G Digital 27 Mar 2019



When a client appreciates their agency and thinks of them as a partner who can add value, there is a relationship built on trust. And those types of relationships are usually enduring.



When a client sees an agency as a set of costs on a spreadsheet, there is no relationship and very little space for the agency to add real value.

9. What are you working on right now?

At G&G we're working on a breakthrough communication solution that builds loyalty, engagement and relationships with our clients and their customers over the long-term.

“ We believe that consumers are bombarded with too much-generalised marketing messaging and have turned off. Brands – whether B2B or B2C – need tailored and personalised communications that build loyalty and value for the life-cycle of the brand/consumer relationship. ”

It is very exciting, as we are seeing massive success for our clients. It is personally rewarding to see G&G setting the bar in the industry.

10. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Industry buzzwords:

- **Engagement** – Used to be a click or a like, at G&G its needs to be much more than that – it's loyalty.
- **360** – Borrowed from Mathematics and used to describe a spray-and-pray approach.
- **Digital transformation** – If you're still using this, then you may as well go back to bed.
- **Emojis** – Not really words, but that's my point. Rather leave them for the exclusive use of pre-schoolers.
- **Social** – Used to be thought of as separate to digital. Newsflash, if you're digital, you are social.

Personal buzzwords and phrases:

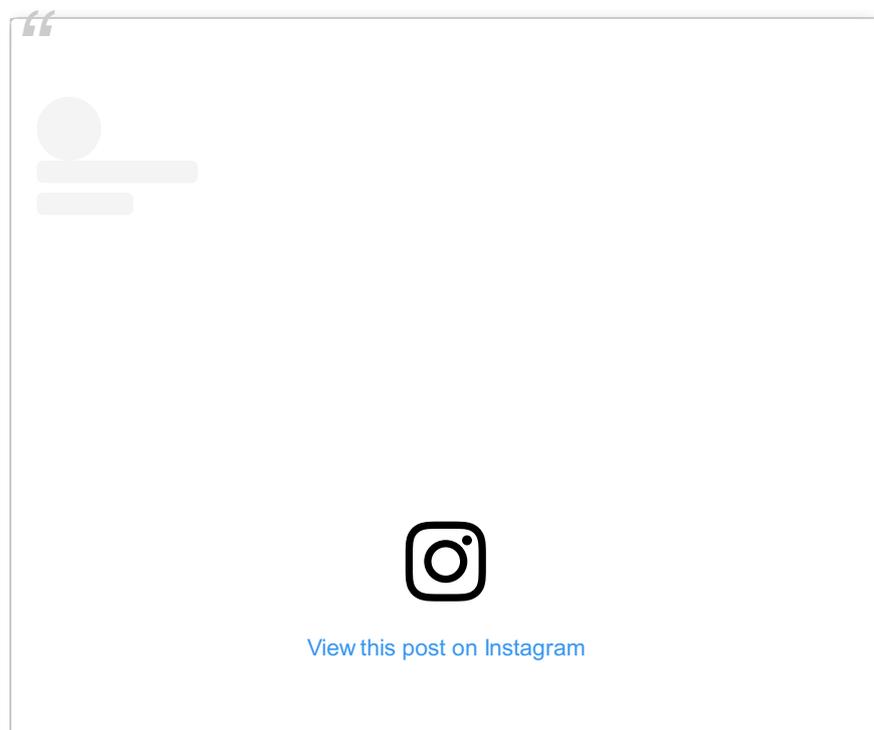
- **Breakthrough** – My favourite cliché. I use it to check if work we produce is of a high enough quality to make an impact. Ask anyone in my creative team how many times they have been asked, "Is it breakthrough?"
- **You can do better** – I use this when my highly talented creative team have not pushed themselves enough to produce breakthrough work.
Yuk – *When I have no more words for just how vanilla work is.*
- **Yikes** – *Use when I want to show surprise. I use this way too often!*

11. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

- *When I'm brainstorming with my team, I draw out their best ideas and together we produce amazing work.*
- *When I'm reading or looking at magazines. Reading stimulates my creativity and helps me look at things differently and from many angles.*

12. What's your secret talent/party trick?

I have just finished writing my first novel. I love waking up with the birds (around 4am) and writing, for myself and for the sheer pleasure of it.





The big edit has begun, using mandatory pink #pen. □□□□□□□□ #writing
 #author #writingtips #writer #writersofinstagram #writerscommunity #writerslife
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 #enjoythejourney

A post shared by [desireegullan](#) (@desireegullan) on May 15, 2019 at 10:08am PDT



It will be published soon. watch this space.

13. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Both. I believe technology is one of the greatest enablers of humankind's development.

It has enhanced our lives in so many ways, such as the internet of everything, the sharing economy, social media, streaming content, AI, and, and, and, but I am also afraid of the unforeseen side-effects.

“ *In the 1950s, marketers published messages like: ‘Don't be foolish, take your doctor's advice: Smoke a fresh cigarette’. The worst part, consumers bought into it, believing that ‘doctors recommend’ the world's deadliest consumer product. Will we be exasperated by similar findings of our addiction to our devices in the future?* ”

On another point, did you know that every time you do a Google search it results in CO₂ emissions? One study from 2015 suggests internet activity creates as much CO₂ emissions as the global aviation industry. Yikes!

14. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Pictures of my daughter. More pictures of my daughter.



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#girlpower

A post shared by [desireegullan](#) (@desireegullan) on Apr 28, 2018 at 9:26am PDT

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And a few videos of my daughter.

15. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

When you get your first job, you will realise how little you know, no matter the duration of your studies and learnerships.



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Desiree Gullan 8 Jan 2018



Be hungry for experience and put your hand up to work on anything and everything. Don't take feedback personally, you learn the most from your mistakes. And most importantly, give more than you take.

Simple as that. Follow Gullan on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#); and visit the [Gullan & Gullan press office](#), as well as their [LinkedIn profile](#) and [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) feeds for the latest updates.

*Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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