

Linda Sangaret - CMO of Brand South Africa

 By Louise Marsland

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Brand South Africa's new chief marketing officer, Linda Sangaret, has a host of international experience with South African Tourism, in business and as a diplomat, that she hopes to put to good use in building the brand reputation of South Africa abroad, as well as locally, among South Africans.

She spent a decade as SA Tourism country manager in France, five years as global communications and marketing manager at Societe Generale Investment Bank in France and served South Africa as a diplomat in Paris in the late-1990s.



Q: What is at the top of your to-do list?

A: Planning for the next fiscal. To take Brand South Africa to another level; to make it relevant to South African citizens so that they understand what we do and their role in the whole mix.

Q: What is your main business challenge?

A: To get South Africans to buy into the brand, to be patriotic about things in South Africa, to be committed to South Africa, and to defend South Africa - to be good ambassadors both locally and internationally. We do have a certain pessimism in our country. It is, I think, linked to our history - not being fed good news, also because we were under embargo the world was closed to us... and we imagined every other place was better than here. The more we travel, the more we recognise our own country as a world class destination. We do count on the international scene. Research we conducted recently shows that the world is quite positive about South Africa, but that within our country, South Africans are less hopeful and less positive.

Q: How do you want to see South Africa regarded, globally?

A: I want to put South Africa on the map and keep it there, have us continue to be recognised as the leading economy on the African continent; the leading tourism destination; a safe, secure, investment destination. Part of that vision is to have a nation of people who are proud and patriotic about SA. We have so much to be proud of. I want to contribute to increasing investment, tourism numbers to our country and balance our vision from outside the country (more positive), with the (more negative) vision inside the country. We are seen to be a country that is really effective in many areas. People love to visit South Africa - we have a 90% satisfaction rating from visitors.

Q: Most important attribute needed to do your job?

A: I am inspired by our country and our people. I have worked for South Africa and promoted South Africa pretty much all my career. I need to set the example first and foremost and take the positive messaging out there. I am able to do that. I am a creative person and have a good ability to negotiate.

Q: What do you love most about South Africa?

A: South African people. I love how no matter what happens, we remain dynamic, so creative, the population is so young, we never lose hope. We have a recipe for a dynamic future, despite the challenges. And there is a certain energy in South Africa that you don't find anywhere else in the world.

Q: How will you make an impact?

A: Through being open minded, contributing my outside view as well, reminding people that we are admired. I can make an impact as I have worked with international and diverse teams over years. I think that it is about human interaction and getting people's buy in.

Q: What inspires you in your life?

A: It has to be the ability of every day, ordinary people to rise above seemingly impossible challenges. I am also inspired by family. I have this ambition to leave a better world for our children. And our journey as a nation through our difficult history.

Q: What are you currently reading for work?

A: Business plans, strategies, board packs!

Q: Tell us something about yourself not generally known?

A: I am a very passionate clothing designer and I do my own sewing and I paint silk.

Q: At the top of my 'bucket list' is...

A: I don't have a bucket list. I wake up every morning and I'm grateful for another day. Every single day is an achievement in itself.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

Louise Burgers (previously Marsland) is Founder/Content Director: SOURCE Content Marketing Agency. Louise is a Writer, Publisher, Editor, Content Strategist, Content/Media Trainer. She has written about consumer trends, brands, branding, media, marketing and the advertising communications industry in SA and across Africa, for over 20 years, notably, as previous Africa Editor: Bizcommunity.com; Editor: Bizcommunity Media/Marketing SA; Editor-in-Chief: AdVantage magazine; Editor: Marketing Mx magazine; Editor: Progressive Retailing magazine; Editor: BusinessBrief magazine; Editor: FMOG Files newsletter. Web: www.sourceagency.co.za.

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