

Lou Boxall-Davies



By Louise Marsland

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Lou Boxall-Davies has been appointed as chief strategy officer (CSO) of Havas Village South Africa. She will be responsible for strategy for Havas brands in South Africa, as well as work on creating meaningful solutions for brands to succeed in markets across Africa. Boxall-Davies brings with her experience in management consulting, the research industry as well as in brand, marketing and integrated communication for the motor, telecoms, hospitality and FMCG industries. Some of the projects she'll be working on at Havas include Durex and the positioning of a global dairy brand in key African markets. This is over-and-above the work for current Havas clients, including Total South Africa, PPS and Reckitt Benckiser.

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

A: Hit the ground running. Get to know the Havas Village clients, their business and brands. Gain the trust of the clients. It is always difficult for clients to adjust to a new CSO. Build and inspire an integrated strategy team that is able to support the Havas Village as it services local and international clients in South Africa and the rest of Africa.

Q: What is your main business challenge?

A: In today's fast-paced, changing and increasingly digital world, clients need more strategic direction and support than ever before. But the reality is that clients' budgets are already stretched and strategy is not always valued enough to receive a sufficiently large part of the budget.

Q: Unpack your role as Chief Strategy Officer in the context of the Havas business.

A: The Havas Village is a group of companies all housed under the same roof, working together to solve clients' marketing, sponsorship, PR, Social, Digital and advertising challenges. The role of the CSO is to develop and apply an integrated Village methodology (each business has its own tools, but we are working on a single Village toolset to drive better solutions for our clients).

Another important role of the CSO is to help the Village creative teams to do great work by providing smart, relevant and workable insights and strategic support. The image of the lone strategist toiling away, with little interaction with creatives is not how strategy works at Havas. Ideally, strategy is a partner to each of the businesses but particularly, the creative teams. Finally, the CSO is responsible for helping to win new business.

Q: Most important attribute needed to do your job?

A: Curiosity. Resilience. A good sense of humour.

Q: What do you love most about what you do?

A: The variety. Every day brings a new challenge and a new problem to solve. Working with creatives is a big part of what I

love about my job.

Q: The biggest trend to note in your industry?

A: Blurring of the lines between content and advertising. When is something content and when is something an ad? Who owns the big idea? And who produces the content/advertising? And how do we set objectives and measure success in an omnichannel world? This blurring trend requires integration of strategy across various communication disciplines.

Q: How will you make an impact?

A: I have over eight years' experience in management and strategy consulting, almost 20 years in advertising, marketing and communication, on the client and agency side. During this time I have worked on many brands across a variety categories and industries. I plan to bring this knowledge and experience to Havas and our clients. I am able to multi-task. My ability to wear different hats, from strategy to client service and sometimes even creative (but don't tell my ECD) will help me to make a difference and be effective in my role as CSO.

Q: How does a business like Havas succeed strategically in Africa?

A: For Havas to succeed we need to know what is happening in the markets in which our clients operate. We need to be there. Not just rely on research reports. In fact, I am writing this from Lagos, while working with our client, the Irish Dairy Board and TNS, on a research study into the Nigerian market. Understanding how to leverage the Havas network and how to contribute to the network will help Havas succeed. In particular, we need to leverage and share information, assets and resources. It is also about applying learnings from one brand's success in a particular market and apply them to other brands and categories.

Q: What inspires you?

A: Meeting interesting people and understanding what makes them tick inspires me. I talk to everyone, the air hostess on a flight to Lagos, strangers in restaurants and bars, (that's not as dodgy as it sounds) and the person who washes my car at the car wash. They each have an interesting story to tell.

Q: What are you currently reading for work?

A: Simon Sinek's '*Leaders Eat Last*'; '*Rise of Millennial Parents, Parenting Yesterday and Today*' by James M. Pederson.

Q: Tell us something about yourself not generally known?

A: I used to work as a cashier at Woolworths on Saturday mornings. It gave me a real insight into retail and people. And, I earned pocket money too.

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

A: Going to St Helena, a small island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. The only way to currently reach the island is via boat.

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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