

New leadership team banging the BBDO drum



By Leigh Andrews

26 May 2016

Find out how things will change and how they'll stay the same in this exclusive chat with the newly appointed group CEO and MD of BBDO South Africa as they take up the drumsticks.

BBDO SA recently [announced the promotion](#) of Net#work BBDO's managing director Boniswa Pezisa to group CEO. Stepping into her shoes as MD is deputy managing director Gau Narayanan.



Left to right: Keith Shipley (BBDO executive chairman) with Boniswa Pezisa (group CEO) and Gau Narayanan (Net#work MD).

We chatted to Pezisa and Narayan to find out what they'll bring to the BBDO table under their new guises this month...

Pezisa, who's been with the agency for two decades and counting, is responsible for Net#work's recent surge of success that includes 27 awards in both effectiveness and creativity in local and global awards over the past 18 months. She's also a respected industry icon, also known for serving as deputy chairperson of the Association for Communication & Advertising, sitting on the Advertising Standards Consumer Complaints' Committee of the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa and is past chairperson of the Loerie Awards as well as a founding director of The Dreamfields Project. Little wonder as she describes herself as a "servant leader who is values- and culture-driven; a social activist and nurturer who would entertain the queen and peasants equally with the same passion and love," as well as a fixer and tough negotiator who understands the importance of both the iron- and velvet-glove approach.

Strong female footing

As group CEO, Pezisa says she'll put these skills to use in meeting her responsibility for the BBDO Group in South Africa, encompassing its strategy and growth amongst other key business areas. And while it's wonderful to see a top-level black female promotion, not enough is being done in the local creative industry to shatter the global '3%' problem.

Pezisa points out that the advertising and communications industry has changed drastically in the past few years, and not necessarily for good. For example, she says: “Across all sectors, including government, South Africa has gone backwards, the strides made in the late 1990s and early 2000s feel like they have been lost, partly because of the lack of emphasis on the subject.” She adds that the SA marketing/communication/advertising industry in particular has been dealt with a few blows due to top female executives leaving the industry and new challenges brought to the industry by another wave of globalisation. As a ‘cutting-edge’ industry, Pezisa feels, “We have been very slow in embracing technology in order to make women’s positions much more palatable, more so at the top-end by enabling them to leverage technology in order to juggle their multiple duties.”

That said, she remains a perpetual optimist fuelled by passion for the South African and how advertising and brands can bridge South Africa’s literacy problem when leveraged correctly. With that in mind, Pezisa says BBDO’s new leadership team intends to build from the foundation they’ve been solidifying over the past two years.

Narayan adds: “We have some exciting innovations that we’ll be launching soon that will be testament to this. We have brought in people from very different backgrounds who will help us produce work that is future-facing and will start to answer the demands of our clients who want agencies to be good, fast, cost-effective, and on-brand.”

The big idea: Strategic consumer insight

This includes strategic alliances that will allow the agency to add value to clients by bringing deep consumer insight that will empower their marketing, while also “unleashing relevant and resonant meaning” through the work they produce.

Known as “the GauTrain” or Energizer bunny of the agency for his relentless energy, enthusiasm and speed, Narayanan is focused on doing the right thing rather than the easy thing. He’s also an optimist for whom the glass is always half-full and has a strategic medium-/long-term focus that’s so people-centric and based on developing talent that he says, “Seeing them realise their potential is the most satisfying thing in our business.”

As the new MD, Narayanan has one priority then: to prepare and equip the agency to be future-ready and prepared for the challenges that modern communications will bring. He explains: “Our vision is to be inspired by and embrace the rich creativity of Africa and to develop world-class work that puts Africa on the map. Operationally, this is based on putting in systems and processes that allows the group to create and produce the kind of work they need to be making today and tomorrow, while collaborating with best-in-class partners to ensure they have the people to make the work happen and ensuring the agency’s cultural DNA remains as is. We are creatively led, big idea-focussed, with a carrot rather than a stick mentality. This allows us to produce big, integrated work with multiple partners that drives salience and fame at scale for our clients’ brand and business while developing the capability in digital, social, content and analytics that will allow us to produce big, integrated ideas.”

Sounds like they’re banging out just the right beat to lead the group into the future.

[Click here](#) for more on BBDO and follow their [Twitter feed](#) for the latest updates.

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.
• #Loeries2020: Behavioural economics as creativity, but not as we know it... - 24 Nov 2020
• #D2020: Ignite your inner activist - representation through illustration - 27 Feb 2020

- #D2020: How Sho Madjozi brought traditional Tsonga *xibelani* into 2020 - 27 Feb 2020
- #D2020: Silver jubilee shines with Department of Audacious Projects launch - 26 Feb 2020
- #BehindtheSelfie with... Qingqile 'WingWing' Mdlulwa, COO at The Whole Idea - 26 Feb 2020

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>