

Mastering strategic growth in 2017 with Publicis Machine's Moagi Bodibe

 By Leigh Andrews

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Publicis Machine's recently appointed [chief strategy officer](#) Moagi Bodibe recommends stopping to pause for thought and ensure your game plan is watertight to get ahead in the coming months.

Sharing the highlights package of his career so far, Bodibe explains that he started off as an economics journalism trainee with Times Media, then known as Johnnic Communications. Next stop was a move to Media24, where he became deputy editor of the world-famous *Drum* magazine. Then, Bodibe switched lanes and worked at strategical branding and marketing consultancy Yellowwood across a diverse range of industries and categories, before moving over to the client side and working in the dynamic telecommunications sector for Vodacom in a number of roles. Finally, he dipped a toe into the advertising space, where he has enjoyed being exposed to a number of different African markets.

"So far it's been a rather exciting journey and joining the Publicis Machine team takes it to another level," says Bodibe, who feels it's still only the beginning...

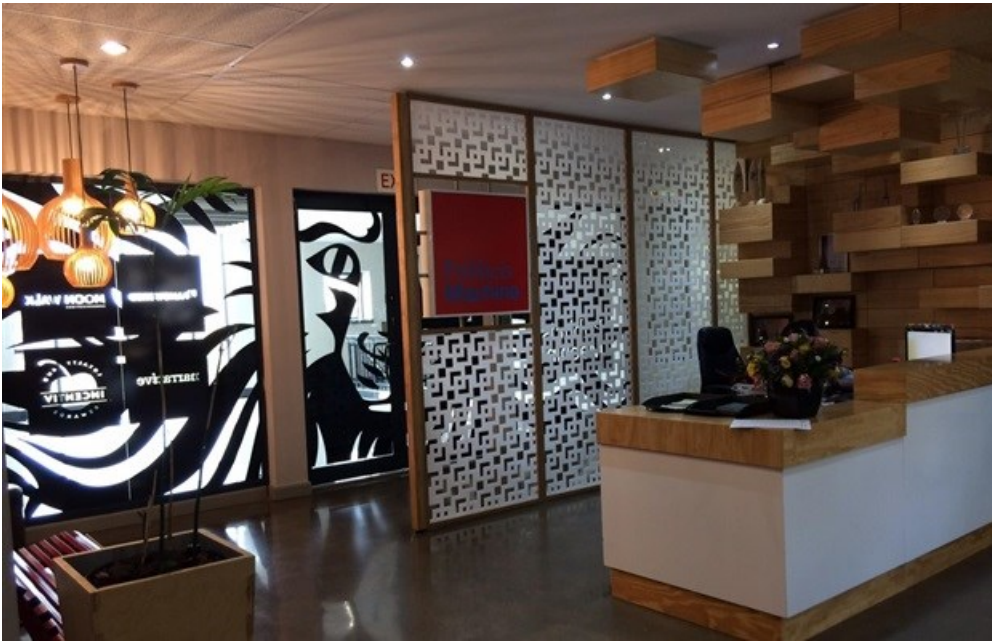
What does it say of your experience and personality to be dubbed a 'leading strategic mind' with the job title of chief strategic officer?



Publicis Machine's chief strategy officer, Moagi Bodibe.

I remember having to choose which university I would attend and settling on Rhodes because they offered a great foundational education in journalism. Very early on, I already knew I didn't want to go 'narrow'. I wanted an open-ended degree that would offer me a measure of freedom for specialising in a number of areas. After a three-year stint in journalism, a mentor of mine introduced me to [Andy Rice](#), probably South Africa's best-known branding and advertising expert. This formally marked the beginning of my marketing experience.

I worked under a number of great marketing minds such as Kay Nash, Ivan Moroke and many other smart people, on many amazing brands. There were a number of basic things I did over and over; things which have now become second nature to me, before being given more meaningful tasks. I remember driving back from a client presentation one day with my boss, who told me they wanted more from me. I was told that I had earned my right to make myself heard. I had to step it up because I was told I was capable of so much more. That was a big moment for me, realising that I needed to **push harder to get further**.



Pubicis Machine's reception area.

So the title of chief strategic officer may sound fancy, but the real challenge is really to deliver on every project every single day. It's to win, inch by inch, always looking out for ways to do things 'simpler, better, faster', to borrow from a classic South African marketing slogan.

■ ***Explain why strategic brand thinking and behind-the-scenes co-ordination is key to creating a successful campaign?***

Planning is everything. It takes time but its results can have a far more enduring effect than the initial time taken to plan. **It takes many heads, hands and tools to make things happen.** There's a need to focus on the real client challenge, often needing to work through a number of assumptions, convincing each other (agency colleagues, client agency partners and clients themselves) of the strategies and creative ideas worth rallying behind. Behind the perceived glamour of working in marketing you'll often find what you could call a '**marketing Codesa**' taking place: plenty of discussion, debate, and lobbying towards a communication consensus.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to from the new role?***

I look forward to working with an amazing bunch of people. The management team is ambitious and hard-working and I can't wait to add value where I can and to help the agency achieve its growth, reaching even greater heights. Firstly, I'm looking to building trust with our clients by delivering a strategy product that reflects business ambition. I intend to work very closely with the creative teams, which are led by our group ECD [Gareth McPherson](#), to ensure that we consistently serve the creatives with clear strategies that form the foundation for solid creative thinking, more of the time.



Publicis Machine's work area.

Secondly, I'm looking forward to identifying opportunities for the strategy team to support some of our other specialist companies within the group.

■ ***Why does Publicis Machine feel there's such a strong need for the rest of the industry to stop, take a minute and think before taking action?***

Brand building is a very considered exercise. Change is happening fast, and clients need partners who can help them make sense of the change. Surface-level solutions won't help brands grow in a way that leads to long-term value creation. Successful brands are built when we create worthwhile profits over the long term.

Planning is really about understanding the context facing the brand, articulating a clear way forward and deciding on purposeful actions. And lastly, it's about giving the plan a chance to succeed and not changing at every 'missed' opportunity.

That's an important message for all of us feeling caught up in the frenetic pace of business. Follow [Bodibe](#) and [Publicis Machine](#) on Twitter and in their [press office](#) for their latest updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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