

Aileen Lamb, New Media's new MD

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Aileen Lamb succeeds Bridget McCarney as MD of New Media, of which McCarney is now the CEO, both effective 2 April.

Lamb is taking the reins at such an exciting time in media. "Multimedia is exploding and there are so many new ways and opportunities to reach audiences," she explains.

"We have a massively talented workforce at New Media, and helping to move that talent into all these new spaces is beyond exciting for me. And to lead such a beautiful company; that's a hell of a thing. It's a dream role," she went on to say.



Aileen Lamb

Here, Lamb shares how she plans to take the agency forward, explains the power of storytelling, and tells of her perfume hobby...

■ When and why were you promoted to MD of New Media?

We believe it's important to have consistent succession planning, so after 10 years working alongside Bridget, who's been MD for 16 years now, I'm taking over her role on 2 April (I'm not starting on April Fool's Day!).

■ What does your new role entail, and how does it differ to your previous role as GM of New Media's Consumer Division?

Previously my role was to develop the food and retail hub within the Consumer Division of New Media. Now my mission is to grow the business as a whole, evolving it into a truly digital agency. We'll be focused on our specific areas of expertise and spheres of knowledge, which will grow not only our revenues, but our audiences and offerings as well.

■ Comment on the agency's growth strategy, and how you intend to drive it.

We're going forward with an aggressive growth strategy. We're already realigning the company into our core centres of knowledge rather than business units. Thanks to our consumer titles, we have some of the best editors in South African media, who have enormous expertise in their niches. Organising the company around this kind of specialist knowledge

allows related brands to tap into consumer-orientated teams who know before anyone else what's happening in their fields. I believe this hyperfocus will be a competitive advantage.

■ Why content marketing?

Because brands are realising that sharing stories with their customers is far more effective. We are experts in storytelling, it's our heartbeat. We're constantly telling brand stories in new ways, on new platforms, which is why we, thankfully, have such long relationships with our clients.

■ What has been your most noteworthy learning in the space?

The annual content plan of the past is gone. We've moved from months to moments—nothing is fixed or forever. So we're constantly innovating around how to deliver content, to whom, and when best to do it. Audience desires are constantly changing. We have to monitor how content is working in the moment and adapt it in real time. It's a new world—it's moments! That's tremendously exciting and enormously challenging. The old agency model doesn't work anymore; things are evolving too fast for it.

■ What have been some of your most exciting projects, and why?

One of our most exciting projects recently is producing daily content for the country's largest retailer, Woolworths, and distributing it across 24.com. We've pioneered that space, and now other brands are looking at daily native campaigns.

It was brave of Woolworths to lead that charge. It was a bold decision.

■ What do you love most about your career in media?

I grew up in sales and I've been in media for 18 years, launching brands in the UK and working in various disciplines. Back in 2000 I worked for a large UK media company in a purely digital role. It was a set of Scottish websites, and our entire revenue came from digital—and that was 17 years ago! It was a highly competitive environment—we were very brave—and I find that extremely stimulating. That's what I love: the steep learning curve and being brave about taking on the next challenge. Moving from advertising director to general manager of a division at New Media was a big stretch for me, and now moving to an MD role pushes me even further.

My history is leading people, making lots of money, looking after clients and growing people—they're my passions and what I love.

■ What trends do you predict for your industry in 2017?

- Firstly, the way brands are communicating is changing rapidly. Agencies are realising that content is most effective. We're well positioned as we've already begun. Two of our biggest clients have moved budgets from ATL to producing daily digital content.

- Secondly, I believe we'll see that print still has its place, but it needs a new refreshed content strategy. It must have massive utility and be niched. Taste magazine, for example, is having 95% sell-throughs.
- Customer insights are gold. Knowing your audiences inside out is vital if you're to have the competitive edge. Insights are going so far beyond the simple—and sometimes misleading—basic demographics.
- Video, especially on mobile, is where significant growth lies, 60% of the Eat Out audience for instance accesses the content on mobile, with video content engagement at an all time high. So we'll be focusing on a mobile immersive experience that's incredibly useful and relevant to our audiences.

■ What are your goals for this year? What's at the top of your to-do list?

The first promise I've made to New Media is to deliver a transformation strategy. We're not just transforming to be compliant; we're pushing transformation because it's the right and logical thing to do. Our storytelling needs to reflect life, and we tell better stories when we have diverse voices.

My goal is also to unlock opportunities for our people to develop, through specific and targeted training. I'm proud that New Media gives people space to grow, we have a truly special and unique culture. We have flexible working conditions to accommodate people's needs – we trust our workforce to get the job done.

Then there are some simple, practical things I'd like to introduce to make us more productive and agile. No agenda? Then no meeting. I would love more stand-up meetings as well. One of our major clients has introduced a policy of no meetings between 12 and 2, so staff has time to rest and refresh. That's something to consider.

■ What are you currently reading/listening to for work?

I've just reread *Thrive* by Arianna Huffington. Well, actually I've been listening to it in my car so I can make best use of my driving time. It's an exceptional book, and she's incredibly brave to speak in the way she does about bringing balance back into your life. It's so much more powerful than a self-help book, because it's a real story. The power of storytelling!

I'm about to start *The Lean Startup* by Eric Ries, which I bought for my husband, but I'm going to grab it soon for myself. It looks at a new approach to business that gets to the heart of what consumers really want. It's about reinventing, testing and adapting continually as a business – required reading!

■ Tell us something about yourself not generally known.

I've been fascinated by perfume since I was about five, inspired my late mum who wore the original Estée Lauder. I'm now something of a perfumer. I've learned enough to have created a group of notes that I adore together and I source perfumes from all over the world to find the perfect note combinations. My current favorite boutique is Olivine Atelier based in Seattle. It's a pricey passion, but I absolutely love it.

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ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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