

Catherine Mavrocoleas, managing partner at IMA SA



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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This week we go behind the selfie of Catherine Mavrocoleas, managing partner at IMA SA.



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■ ***Could you briefly explain what your role entails?***

I am one of the managing partners at IMA SA and I am responsible for all things operations. This includes process, finance, project & production management, traffic management and HR.

■ ***What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?***

Behind the mask, I probably look a little tired... I am a wife and mom of two little girls. I am generally multi-tasking and juggling work, kids and life. I also try my very best to keep fit and sane. It's a balancing act!

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

I always wanted to own a hotel or guest house. I think it is still in my retirement plans one day!

■ ***How did you end up in the industry?***

I had no plan to work in advertising. I studied Hospitality Management and then found my way into the events industry, which I loved. This led me to join Ogilvy Action in Cape Town as project director, where I worked on Volkswagen, Douwe Egbert, Stimorol and BAT.

I eventually joined Stretch Experiential Marketing (now IMA SA) after meeting the team at a Stimorol activation at Plett Rage.

This is where I learned everything I needed to know in creating ideas that are both creative and deliver results. A decade later, I am still here, doing what I love and keeping the lights on.

■ ***When you founded IMA SA (originally Elevator), what did you hope to achieve?***

I joined the founder of Stretch in 2012 and our vision was always to create experiences that drove to action and results. But over and above that, we always wanted to make consumers smile and have a memorable experience with a brand.

Our offering has changed over the years, but we still pride ourselves on creating consumer experiences that are unforgettable (Be it in real life, virtually or online).

■ ***What has the journey been like?***

The journey has been an adventure, to say the least. Lots of hard work, stress and fun.

I have been privileged to work alongside amazing partners and people throughout the years. We have always fostered a culture of family values, collaboration, creativity and hard work. I have been through a merger, an acquisition, two rebrands and a pandemic, which have taught me invaluable lessons about myself and how to run a successful business that can weather a storm. (or two!)

■ ***What excites you most about your career?***

The lessons I have learnt and the relationships I have made. I have learnt the ins and outs of how an agency works, but more importantly about how different types of people function and how to get the best out of them. I am an operational specialist at heart, but in advertising, this does not mean only spreadsheets and finances. It's creativity, energy and pushing the status quo every day.

■ ***What has been the highlight of your career?***

I think the Smollan Acquisition was one of those moments when you feel you have built something that others can see the value in too.

Then, the rebrand to IMA last year was a huge global step, which I am immensely proud to be a part of and excited to develop more over the coming years

■ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

Haha, not busy?! I am usually spending time at home with family and friends. Or running on the mountain or visiting local wine farms.

■ ***What are you watching/reading/listening to at the moment?***

*I'm watching **Marvelous Mrs Maisel**, **The Morning Show** and **Ozark** and I'm either listening to **Armchair Expert**, a weekly podcast hosted by American actors **Dax Shepard** and **Monica Padman** or **Smartless** with **Jason Bateman**, **Sean Hayes** and **Will Arnett**. It's another podcast that connects and unites people from all walks of life to learn about shared experiences through thoughtful dialogue and organic hilarity*

What does 2022 have in store for you?

Calm is my word for the year, but this probably goes alongside consolidation after the Covid Storm. 2022 is a year of rebuilding for a lot of businesses, hiring in new talent for the new capabilities we are offering and getting all systems and processes aligned with the new ways of the world.

And for IMA, we are excited to be getting back to delivering great experiential work (in real life) for current and new clients.

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