

Native VML's new journey: The 3,000

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

15 Feb 2018

With the official announcement of the integration of Y&R and Native VML comes a number of changes in Native VML's management. Jason Xenopoulos is stepping into a global role as chief vision officer for VML globally and chief creative officer for VML, EMEA, Jarred Cinman will be taking over as CEO of VML South Africa.

It makes sense for Y&R and Native to be one business for VML, says Cinman. "We already service many of the same clients, so why do we need two teams, when you can have a single team with an integrated capacity. The legacy made sense once, but it does not any longer."

He adds that clients are happy as they have solved one of those irritating complexities. "We are now the agency we think has the broadest range of services in the market, from full advertising to customer experience design, media and consulting, sit in single teams, not a digital team or media team, and it is the idea and strategy that leads."

Xenopoulos's move to a global role on a global leadership team is also an integration of sorts, giving South Africa a chance to integrate with VML around the rest of the world. "That's very powerful for us, to think of ourselves, not of a team of 300, but a team of 3,000, is pretty amazing, given the experience in all these different markets, and the access to incredible data and case studies and talent," he says.



Jarred Cinman, chief creative officer for VML, EMEA will be taking over as CEO of VML South Africa.



Native VML's new journey: Conducting the orchestra

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In town communicating the news to clients and the industry with Cinman, was Beth Wade, VML Global CMO. She is excited about what is happening here this week. "This team has been part of the VML network going on six years now. It is a passionate and talented team and we are excited about where we are going next and how we are integrating move across our clients."

She says they want the vision of the local team to be experienced around the world. "With Jason taking on the chief vision role globally and then also CCO of EMEA we are able to take it and influence more outside of South Africa and with the talent that is here, it is a great benefit to our network."

Enriching consumers' lives

"VML around the world is building a single brand around the world so that we all feel like we are part of the same thing and I think when you're inside this network, that is actually how you feel," Cinman adds.

The challenge for a business like Native VML is not to try to create another big advertising agency, says Cinman, adding: "I don't think that the advertising business in its classic form has a really interesting future."

Advertising is a weird thing and for most of its history, it has been about creating the stuff people don't want to see or how to get people to engage with stuff that they don't actually want. Technology has allowed them to push that out of their lives, more and more.



It's not about advertising... It's about people

Jason Xenopoulos, The Loeries 17 Aug 2015



"What we are seeing, and the work that we see globally coming out of VML and some of the really great work done locally, is not really advertising work, it is something much deeper; it's experiential or an experience or a tool that brands are offering to consumers to enrich their lives," he explains.

Total experience

The word advertising is less and less relevant. "We do not want to do advertising, we want to help orchestrate all the consumer touchpoints, and provide a total experience that gives the brand an edge," he says.

He continues: "If we help our brands to mean something important to people that are engaging with them, then they have an advantage over their competitors. That's how we see our job."

In practical terms, this is integrating Y&R, a big above-the-line agency, into their business, and that covers the capability to do ATL executional work, something, he admits that perhaps VML has not been as strong at over the years. "This is not because we are trying to be the next Ogilvy or next FCB. We think we have to shoot up way beyond that to actually catch up with what the market needs."

Adspend is dropping and this industry is in a lot of trouble with margins and spend dropping. "Our belief is that this is because we are not adding value, not because clients do not have the money, but because they are spending it on other things."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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