

Ursula van Niekerk to lead Leagas Delaney Johannesburg

 By Jessica Tennant

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Ursula Van Niekerk recently joined Leagas Delaney as MD of its newly established Johannesburg office.



The independent and integrated creative agency, founded by Tim Delaney, with established offices in London, Hamburg, Milan, Shanghai and Los Angeles, was appointed as Investec's global brand agency in February this year and is in the process of hiring a team in South Africa to work on the account. The firm has worked with Investec in the UK for the past three years.

Moreover, Van Niekerk previously led the Investec account at Ireland Davenport, so she said the opportunity at Leagas Delaney was too good to turn down. "Their people are outstanding and the chance to work with Investec again was a huge draw. It's an exciting time for everyone concerned."

She joins from her role as GM of WPP-owned Wunderman Thompson, where she ran the Cape Town office, with responsibilities including new business, business planning and operations. Whilst there her remit also included leading the Pepsico, J&J and Diageo Nigeria accounts as well as developing the growth strategy for the Wunderman Thompson business across their advertising, digital, consulting and technology divisions.

■ ***Congrats on your new appointment. How do you feel about joining Leagas Delaney, heading up the newly established Johannesburg office and your new role?***

I'm incredibly excited about joining the Leagas Delaney team. Their impressive heritage is obviously a huge draw, as is their independence, but what really motivates me is the marriage of creative excellence and technology that sits at the heart of the business. It's a very different model to other agencies and that's something that I've already heard referenced a lot.

■ ***You're going to be responsible for the Investec account again. What did you enjoy most about working with Investec when at Ireland Davenport, and what are you most looking forward to with regard to working with Investec now?***

I enjoyed the people and the spirit with which they do things. So many people I worked with are still at Investec now. That says so much about the environment and the culture. Investec people are true brand ambassadors and they live and breathe the brand and are passionate about it and so proud to be a part of it.

■ ***What are some of your short-term goals at the agency or some of the objectives you're setting out to achieve in the next few months?***

The people! I am excited to bring onboard great talent but also nice human beings. People who inspire you and you want to surround yourself with every day that you go to the office.

■ ***You have an entrepreneurial background – tell us more about your career path to date.***

I have lived in a number of countries and have started a few ventures. I have, however, always returned to advertising. It's a passion, I guess. The feeling of being part of making really great creative work alongside people who inspire you is something really special.

■ ***And some career highlights.***

Funny that. Some of the best years of my career were spent working on Investec. Travelling to the Amazon to make an incredible ad for them was certainly a big highlight of my career.

■ ***What do you love most about your career, the creative industry and what you do?***

I love the eclectic bunch of people I get to engage with and learn from and have fun with. I love the conceptual thinking and working alongside the creatives. I always find myself spending lots of time with the teams I work with to come up with ideas together.

■ ***What impact do you hope to make or see in the industry?***

We talk a lot about the rate of change that's happening in the media landscape, we call it the 'digitally accelerated culture'. It's our view that the landscape is changing fast and the best ideas acknowledge and respond to it. And equally, so do the best agencies.

■ ***Any exciting plans in the pipeline you're allowed to mention?***

We're building our team and are close to announcing a number of key hires, so watch this space!

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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