

#BehindtheSelfie with... Catherine Black

This week, we find out what's really going on behind the selfie with Catherine Black, co-owner of Black Mountain.



Black, seeing life in full colour.

1. Where do you live, work and play?

Black: I do all three in Joburg, where I've lived for five years.

2. What's your claim to fame?

Black: I was Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz* in junior school. I've written a book. And I'm the co-owner of Black Mountain, a search-focused content generation agency that we started in 2012.

3. Describe your career so far.

Black: A happy series of coincidences! I fell into the search engine optimisation industry by accident – I started Quirk's SEO department in 2003 before moving to London to establish their operations there. After a few years at another London-based search agency, I moved to San Francisco for three years. There, I worked both on the agency side and then client side at a tech company called CNET. I moved back to Cape Town at the end of 2009 to write a book on social media for McGraw-Hill, and then decided to try my hand at freelance SEO consulting for six months. I'd never have predicted that nearly seven years later, I'm still "formally unemployed".

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Black: My two gorgeous boys aged two and four months respectively, our two labradors, early morning runs while the sun comes up, Emmarentia Dam, the Pipetrack below the Twelve Apostles, Cape beaches, San Francisco, Wimbledon, baking.

5. What do you love about your industry?

Black: I love that it's not as established as other industries, and so people still have the freedom to come up with new ways of doing things. Also, I see people across the board – even most of the big brands now – putting their faith in digital, so it's an exciting time.

6. What are a few pain points your industry can improve on?

Black: Specifically in SA, there's a tendency to be over-competitive. This is so the opposite of my experience in Silicon Valley, where it all felt really collaborative. All this when in actual fact the digital industry in South Africa is in such a growth stage still, so there's room for everyone.

7. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

Black: My day involves anything from pitch meetings, to interviewing someone about a piece I'm writing, to coming up with a digital content strategy for a client. The writing is what I love best, so days where I can simply sit and write are my best.

8. What are the tools of your trade?

Black: My laptop. My iPhone. Google.

9. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Black: Those who are focused on making their clients successful rather than chasing awards.

10. What are you working on right now?

Black: We're currently working with the Gautrain Management Agency, writing case studies on the Gautrain's construction,

which was a really impressive project. Then we have a few big pitches coming up, so some exciting things are afoot!

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Black: 'Content marketing' is definitely still a buzzword being thrown around within the search/copy space.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Black: Just as I'm falling asleep at night.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

Black: I'm really good at doing accents.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Black: Technophile! I absolutely love tech and how quickly it's progressing. It's a large part of what makes being alive in 2016 so exciting.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Black: Pictures of my sons, husband, dogs and cats, children's nursery rhyme apps, a running tracker app, a Zulu-to-English dictionary (I'm trying to learn!), a million work emails, Uber Eats.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Black: Find the people who inspire you, and then offer to buy them coffee while you see why and how they've got to where they are.

Simple as that. [Click here](#) for more on Black, [here](#) for a reminder of what makes Mountain tick, follow Black Mountain [on Twitter](#), and visit [their website](#).

**Interviewed by [Leigh Andrews](#).*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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