

Sue Napier appointed MD of advertising for Wunderman Thompson

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Wunderman Thompson, formerly Wunderman SA, has appointed Sue Napier as managing director of the advertising division of the Wunderman Thompson Group in South Africa. This national role includes the management and overseeing of the 200 team members across the Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban offices.



Sue Napier

Haydn Townsend, Group CEO of the agency, approached Napier to further establish Wunderman Thompson as a formidable, creative brand and communications advertising agency, that is focused and driven to deliver novel business solutions for its clients.

Although a journalist by qualification, Napier recognised her calling to work in advertising more than 20 years ago. Commenting on her professional ambition and how Wunderman Thompson plays a role in this, Napier shared, “I am living my dream. I’m excited about working for a global agency and look forward to being exposed to the thinking and the talented people who work within it. I truly believe Wunderman Thompson is the agency of the future. Fulfilling a national role and looking after multiple regional offices is the next step in my career. It makes my heart beat faster; in a good way!”

Napier’s career in advertising started in 2000 at TBWA Hunt Lascaris, Johannesburg. She managed blue-chip brands including MTN, Standard Bank, Pernod Ricard and Tiger Brands. Five years later, she, along with two partners, launched a boutique Johannesburg-based agency, Ireland/Davenport. Over eleven years, the agency grew from just the three founding partners to a staff complement of 130 people, servicing global and

national brands including amongst others, BMW, Investec, South African Tourism, National Geographic, Avis, Plascon and Vodacom.

By 2016, Napier was appointed marketing director of MR Price based in Durban, which afforded her an opportunity to gain experience on the client-side. However, her deep passion for advertising and the opportunity to join an agency she had so long admired from afar, saw Napier join The Hardy Boys as Managing Director in 2017.

Townsend acknowledges that Napier has a solid work ethic, is highly ambitious and genuinely passionate about delivering exceptional work. Still, she is also incredibly kind and empathic and manages people through collaboration, fairness and mutual respect. He added, “She has a wealth of through-the-line experience in managing brands, both operationally and strategically, as well as in the management of integration of multi-disciplined agencies and expertise. We’re thrilled to have her join our team.”

Culture, Napier believes, is the life-blood of an agency. She is an advocate for fostering healthy internal agency cultures to encourage better performance and collaboration. Apart from driving and fuelling the creative culture and narrative within Wunderman Thompson and its reputation in this regard, she is passionate about developing and nurturing talent in the industry, especially when it comes to up-and-coming female talent. “I am deeply passionate about the development and upliftment of other women in the industry and try to provide them with the support they need to flourish in this field, which still tends to be male-dominated in South Africa,” she expressed.

Napier's greatest gifts and proudest achievements to date are her two daughters. As a mother of girls, she feels strongly that she has to show them that they can be anything they want to be and that the future is indeed female.

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