

Tanja Lategan leads the way for women in digital leadership

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Thursday, 17 August marked Tanja Lategan's first day on the job as new MD of Creative Spark.

Creative Spark was acquired by the M&C Saatchi Abel in 2015 and has proven itself as a serious competitor in the digital space, says Lategan. "Working with big brands like Philips, Kimberly-Clark, EOH, Gautrain, Medscheme and Danone, they can offer everything from website and app development to digital marketing and transformation." With clients in South Africa, across the continent and within the M&C Saatchi network, these long-standing relationships are testament to the great work they have been delivering over the last seven years, she adds.



Tanja Lategan



Tanja Lategan appointed as Creative Spark's new MD

14 Aug 2017

As it so happens to be Women's Month, I interviewed her to find out what it took to crack the so-called glass ceiling as a woman in leadership in the digital space and how she'd encourage other women to do the same.

■ **What does your new role entail?**

Driving the next phase of growth for Creative Spark after its acquisition, as well as focusing on ramping up the company's integrated marketing offering.

■ **How do you plan to do this?**

By ensuring that Creative Spark not only acts as a service provider, but is in a position to partner with their clients as digital experts to solve actual business needs. Digital has become more than just a medium, and must be used to enable and add value to the strategic communication solutions offered by the larger M&C Saatchi Abel Group.

■ **What did it take to crack the so-called glass ceiling as a woman in leadership in the digital space?**

Hard work, perseverance and some sacrifices. The digital leadership space in South Africa is still very much dominated by men. As a woman, you need to work harder to prove yourself and get taken seriously on this level. The only way to gain the respect and trust of your team and colleagues is to get your hands dirty and prove your worth through your actions. A proven track record is hard to ignore.

▣ **How would you encourage other women to do the same?**

Realise your self-worth and be confident in your abilities. You are your biggest critic. I read that statistically women generally outperform men at school and university level, so it's not a woman's aptitude that holds her back in the workplace, but rather the confidence you have in your abilities and the guts to seize the opportunities when they arise.

▣ **Why digital?**

Digital is an exciting, fast-paced industry to work in, and it is also exhilarating to see how rapidly it's transforming our everyday lives, from how we consume content to entertainment to our social interactions.

It is also extremely rewarding to help clients solve business issues using a medium that is so diverse and allows for endless opportunities to improve communications, inspire creativity and increase ROI.

▣ **What has been your most noteworthy learning in the space so far?**

'Adapt or die' and 'there is no box'. Thinking outside of the box is so important that the box is close to becoming extinct. If I think about how different the industry was 10 years ago, and consider how tech companies have disrupted the space over and over again (for example, the impact Google had on the advertising industry, or that Facebook had on the media and marketing industry) you realise that you can never be complacent and must remain nimble and ready to adapt. Be curious and never stop learning, or you will be left behind in the blink of an eye.

▣ **What trends do you predict for your industry in 2018?**

The traditional advertising industry landscape is changing and ad agencies need to evolve with it. We are seeing management consultants moving into the space with some strategic acquisitions. Even though they have recognised the important role that creativity has to play in the marketing and communications space, they may however still underestimate the culture that is required to nurture creative talent.

Having said this, these big players rely more on data and understand the role of digital. It will be important for traditional agencies to also incorporate digital in a more meaningful way, and allow for a more insights-driven approach to support their world-class creative talent and remain competitive.

▣ **What are you currently reading/listening to for work?**

Lean in, by Sheryl Sandberg, COO at Facebook, about 'women, work, and the will to lead'. I would recommend it to all women who are serious about their careers.

▣ **What is your message for Women's Month?**

Society has a lot of expectations for women and becoming an MD of a company is usually not one of them. Don't be forced into a 'gender-specific' role because it is expected of you. Do what feels right for you. And finally, don't underestimate yourself. You can do everything that a man can do, better yet, you can do it in heels!

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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