

The Jupiter Drawing Room (Johannesburg) closes, forms Black Powder

The Jupiter Drawing Room (Johannesburg) has founded a 100% black-owned agency, named Black Powder (as in gunpowder). The Johannesburg-based agency has already racked up an impressive list of clients in its initial months of operation.



Sizwe Kumalo and Gugu Madlala © [Media Update](#).

Shareholders Gugu Madlala, CEO, and Sizwe Kumalo, executive director, both previously in senior management roles at The Jupiter Drawing Room (Johannesburg), lead the business.

Explaining the formation of Black Powder, founder and chairman of the Jupiter Drawing Room & Partners, Graham Warsop, said, “Last year, The Jupiter Drawing Room (Johannesburg) took a significant hit after a mandatory procurement-led RFP process by client Absa/Barclays, which saw the client leaving the agency. Before this we had already been looking at how we could operate as a fully transformed agency, so it made sense at that time to make a radical move.”

“We could have divested additional shares in the Jupiter (Jhb) agency to move to 51% black ownership, but we decided instead to look at how we could create a new 100% black-owned agency. Gugu and Sizwe were already playing senior management roles in Jupiter (Jhb), so we worked with them on how to take this vision forward.

“The country is hungry for businesses to show real transformational change. Jupiter (Jhb) is proud to have launched a

100% black-owned agency with Gugu and Sizwe; Black Powder is an agency that will not be afraid to challenge the status quo. We are impressed by Gugu and Sizwe's entrepreneurial flair, which is vital for an independent agency. They have values we admire and characters we like. We will continue do all we can to help them succeed," concludes Warsop.

The agreement saw Jupiter (Jhb) contribute to the client base for Black Powder and make a substantial cash investment into the business. With the establishment of Black Powder, Jupiter (Jhb) will cease to operate in the Johannesburg marketplace.

Contracted clients in play

Black Powder has already lined up work with contracted clients, including The South African Reserve Bank, Tiger Brands, AMKA Brands, Denel Aeronautics, ABInBev and Chinese multinational technology business ZTE.

The structure of Black Powder is flexible and nimble, a move away from the traditional agency structures which rely on large teams and ungainly processes to operate. The agency's core focus is on the development of the core/big-creative platform, strategy or commercial approach. By focusing on this along with business development, project management and account management, the agency is able to engage the speciality competencies of collaborative partners as and when needed for channel-specific execution.

"Clients want integrated and channel-agnostic ideas and solutions, so there is a great opportunity for new business models to be explored. We have bought together a highly competent team of commercially minded people. The team is a blend of young brilliance and experienced capacity. This grounds our flexibility and nimbleness in best practice. We're an agency of people who believe in efficiency, powerful creative strategic work and an appreciation of our clients' commercial challenges and requirements," explained Madlala.

An industry ripe for transformation

"I think it's a great time for our industry. The black consumer has never been more important and agencies with an ability to deliver impactful work to that consumer will win the next decade. True transformation is really gaining speed as a result and we are intent on setting the pace. Our vision is to grow Black Powder into an agency network that is world class, yet proudly South African.

"Black Powder is but a small step in the right direction for an industry ripe for transformation. Hopefully the relative success of Black Powder for its clients will give the industry confidence in the sustainability of black ownership and the related benefits," concludes Madlala.

The newly structured Black Powder agency has been operational for several months, and has been holding off announcements pending completion of formal shareholder agreements.

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