

EXCLUSIVE: M&C Saatchi Abel announces three key leadership appointments

M&C Saatchi Abel has appointed Keke Mahlelebe, Mohlalifi Lentsoane and Illé Potgieter into three key leadership roles across its Cape Town and Johannesburg offices.

M&C Saatchi Abel has announced promotions of three dynamic talents that have been crucial to the agency's growth, with their new roles designed to further enhance the creative company's bold ambitions and bolster the long-term relationships it shares with its clients.



L to R Keke Mahlelebe, Mohlalifi Lentsoane and Illé Potgieter

Effective 1 April 2021, Keke Mahlelebe moves from strategy partner to head of strategy for M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town; Mohlalifi Lentsoane moves from creative director to joint executive creative director for M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg alongside James Cloete and Illé Potgieter steps up from business partner to managing director of M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town.

“Our Partner Model is about having the right depth of talent and tenure to ensure we can continue to bring diverse, talented and fresh thinkers into leadership positions and importantly, provide clients with access to senior management on a day-to-day basis. We deeply believe in the philosophy of Diversity of Thought as a powerful orientation, and we work with talented individuals for many years to help unlock their potential and fast track them & their skills in preparation for this new challenge. Illé and Keke are huge talents and the Cape Town office is in very capable hands,” says Jason Harrison, co-founder and group managing director of M&C Saatchi Abel

Speaking about Lentsoane, Neo Mashigo, group chief creative officer at M&C Saatchi, says: “In Johannesburg, Mo joins James as joint executive creative director because his considered approach to solving the most complicated problems with the power of creativity has been crucial to our successes across clients. He is a gifted creative and with this promotion he will have a broader canvas to continue his positive influence.”

Potgieter says shared values have underpinned her growth in the agency. “I’ve been part of this family for seven years and witnessed immense growth. Often when an agency undergoes so much growth, so quickly, it loses its DNA. This is what I love about M&C Saatchi Abel – our foundational values remain, and with them our DNA remains intact and, in fact, underpins everything we do.

“This is important to me, as values matter immensely. I am excited about the opportunity to lead the Cape Town business and do what I love: grow and mentor diverse talent so that we deliver meaningful work,” she says.

Mahlelebe says he is excited to bring authentic and resonant work to more South Africans. “Historically, strategists were obsessed with trying to be more locally relevant to ‘the market’. Our focus and certainly the fuel in my tank, is to be a whole lot more resonant to more South African people. Resonance is not what you think, but how you feel. As part of a fresh injection of leadership, I could not be more excited to unlock more Brutal Simplicity of Thought to influence how consumers feel,” he says.

“This, along with the diversely skilled team I will oversee in Cape Town as we work on a portfolio of iconic brands, means the future of M&C Saatchi Abel is bright and I am honoured to be on the front line of this hot, fast-moving family of Partners and friends.”

Lentsoane says his animating force is a commitment to creativity. “Creativity is more than just creating something beautiful,” he says. “Creativity is about problem-solving to find surprising, exciting, relevant and compelling solutions that resonate with people. I am incredibly excited to be part of the senior leadership team in this fast-growing, dynamic creative agency.”

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