

Karena Crerar, new Edelman Africa CEO



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

24 May 2022

With Jordan Rittenberry having served as the CEO of Edelman Africa and now moving to lead the Edelman Bay Area Hub, Edelman has appointed Karena Crerar as CEO, Edelman Africa.



Karena Crerar, new Edelman Africa CEO

We find out more from Karena Crerar on the new appointment...

■ ***Congratulations on your new appointment, how are you feeling about it?***

I am humbled by Edelman's show of faith in entrusting me with this position. It's an honour to be a part of the number one consultancy in the world: a creative, innovative, and impactful business which I believe is pioneering value-based PR models for our clients around the world. I am eager to work with our many teams across Africa, and within our global network, to diversify our service offering and advance creative solutions for our clients.

■ ***Last time we spoke, you'd been appointed MD of Edelman South Africa. What was that experience like?***

Taking the helm of any business during the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic presented a unique set of challenges. It required building trust and rapport with remote-working teams without traditional face-to-face interaction, while navigating perpetual changes to the workplace environment.



#Newsmaker: Karena Crerar takes on the role of MD of Edelman South Africa

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At Edelman South Africa, this meant finding sustainable solutions to maximise our output to clients while ensuring the health and safety of our teams. We therefore placed focus on better utilising the resources and partnerships available across Edelman's EMEA network to ease this transition and create additional value for our clients in Africa.

■ ***What are the biggest lessons as MD of Edelman South Africa have you learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic?***

Over the course of the pandemic, we have seen an evolution in communications plans which are now more closely entwined with overall business strategies, whereby we have had to explore creative and innovative ways to connect our clients with their audiences on a human level. The pandemic has also forced companies to reevaluate their purpose and role in society. Edelman has helped many of our clients on this journey to make a sustainable, positive impact in their communities through their PR campaigns.

Significantly, the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of compassionate leadership in ensuring our team's overall wellbeing as they too traverse a multitude of factors brought on by Covid-19 in their personal lives. It has shown us that the traditional work model is archaic because technological advances offer new ways to work together while we are apart. At Edelman, we have adopted a hybrid work model which offers our teams flexibility while ensuring our clients receive the same quality services we are renowned for.

■ ***What will your new role entail?***

My role would be to oversee our clients' programmes across more than 40 countries on the continent. I will be working more closely with all our regional teams to stimulate further collaboration and support the many startups, blue-chip brands, and multinational corporations we have partnered with. By doing so, we hope to create real cross-continent delivery for our clients across Africa.

■ ***What are you excited most about the new role?***

Across the continent, organisations big and small are seeking support in developing, and thereafter reaching, their sustainability and social responsibility goals. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) is rightfully becoming a fundamental practice for businesses in Africa.

With Edelman having two decades of knowledge in this area, I look forward to leveraging this resource in helping our clients toward sustainable growth, which has a net impact on the environment and the society where they operate.

■ ***What approach will you be taking going forward?***

Edelman Africa's ability to reach audiences across Africa has recently resulted in both its South Africa and Kenya teams being honoured at the Sabre awards across a variety of categories, including being nominated as the PRovoke Media 2022 African Consultancy of the Year.



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Core to this success has been the unique collaboration across our corporate, brand, creative, and digital practices in achieving integrated programmes of impact, with trust at the centre. My focus going forward will be in building trust for our clients with their stakeholders, exposing them to an unmatched network of partners across Africa and to a global network of practice and sector experts.

■ ***What advice do you have for businesses as we navigate into a post-pandemic world?***

Many businesses remain in a recovery phase as we continue to traverse the pandemic. While long-term aspirations should remain in sight, businesses should focus on short-term goals linked to immediate priorities in recovering their operations and thereafter ensuring sustainable growth.

Effective public relations still remain an important growth factor, and businesses need to consider merging their communications strategies with their overall operational goals. Building trust is more important than ever before.

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