

Moving people. Moving business.

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Moving people is what we do all day, every day. Moving their perceptions, feelings, memories and habits, to ensure we move the dial on our clients' businesses, says Dawn Rowlands, CEO of [DAN](#) sub-Saharan Africa



Moving people has also moved the dial in our own business quite significantly, particularly in the last two years. Many new people have “moved-in”... so much so that about 40% of all the people who work at Dentsu are new.

This means that systems and processes wobble and our values are tested. It brings to mind the lyrics of a U2 song: “You can reach, but you can’t grab it. You can’t hold it, control it, you can’t bag it”.

Are we experiencing cultural erosion?

Maybe. Or maybe we are moving to a new place. Morphing into a new organism? A “One Dentsu” organism. All around us, the industry talk is “adapt or die”. We need to move, shift and morph less than many of our competitors, but still, to do this effectively we need a guide and map of the unknown. I guess the map’s not available (we’re pioneers, anyway), but a smart and strong guide would help. By July, we’ll have a sub-Saharan Africa Talent Director joining us, with loads of experience and knowledge of the region.

Guide: tick.

So what will this new “One Dentsu” look like?

As alluded in my story about [creating an inspiring future](#), “One Dentsu” will build on our one P&L operating model, which has been in place since 2012. This model has allowed us to source the best talent from all our companies to solve challenges for clients. The challenges have grown and become more complex and now we need multi-skilled people who understand the whole communications industry to drive our client leadership teams. People who understand that we are an ideas-led, tech-enabled and data-driven business that can truly innovate the way brands are built in Africa. Investing in our people to move them forward will become our key area of focus for the next 12 months, so that they can provide ideas-led, tech-enabled and data-driven solutions. (Do keep an eye on our Super Suits programme and the roll-out from July regionally.)

Moving our people to move our business

This will become critical in the next phase of our growth. People will need to shift their approach to clients, from client service or client management to being a solutions partner that is ideas-led, tech-enabled and data-driven (I'm repeating myself because it's worth repeating). A solutions partner that can bring in talent from our five lines of business (namely creative, commerce and consumer experience, media and performance, CRM and sport/entertainment) under one P&L. Our people will need to think about solutions that go beyond what we do. They will need to find partners who can execute efficiently or will be required to work with a client's own internal agency, who have skills gaps. Our values will be the most critical part of culture, when working with diverse groups of people to move business.

Our work spaces will need to be as flexible, agile and as collaborative as the chewing gum U2 referred to in the aforementioned song. Our ability to become stickier to our clients, people and partners will ensure we move business by moving people.

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