

Pippa Misplon joins Retroviral as MD

 By Jessica Tennant

26 Apr 2021

Pippa Misplon joins Retroviral as managing director from Ogilvy South Africa where she was previously the business director for the PR & Influence Division.



Pippa Misplon

She has experience leading major PR and digital communications campaigns for clients across multiple markets and categories, and has worked on a number of leading brands such as SABMiller, Unilever, Audi South Africa, Tiger Brands, British Airways, Ster-Kinekor, Avis Budget Group, Philips Africa, Pfizer, Huawei Africa, Netstar, Bidvest, Kimberly Clarke, SC Johnson, GAME, Colgate Palmolive, FedEx and Simba.

"I am excited to join the creative, entrepreneurial minded, forward-thinking Retroviral team. The team really understands how to deliver creative innovation through hard hitting strategic insights and storytelling, backed by data. This role

presented itself at a time where I was looking for a new challenge and opportunity. I am honoured to have been asked to lead the team into the hugely exciting next stage of its growth.”

Here, she goes on to tell us that she feels honoured to have been asked to lead the Retroviral team as the agency moves into its next decade and phase of growth. “The agency has achieved phenomenal success over the last 10+ years and I'm really excited to drive this success further with our desire to be seen as the best challenger agency for South Africa's boldest brands.”

■ ***Pippa, what does your role as MD entail exactly?***

My primary objective right now is to support the team delivering the best work for our clients in the most efficient manner whilst at the same time implementing some changes that will allow us to scale the business. This means looking at team structures and processes, cost structures and operating models but at the same time allowing Mike [Sharman] and the team the freedom to be creative and bold!

■ ***Starting out at the agency, will you be working remotely and if so, how do you plan to get to know and build rapport with your colleagues and clients under these conditions?***

We are very cognisant of the ongoing risks associated with Covid-19 so the health and well-being of our team is our first priority. We are currently on a rotational schedule aiming to be in the office two to three days a week and working from home the rest. This allows us to limit numbers in the office but at the same time ensure that the team connects during critical brainstorm and creative sessions.

Client engagements, however, have been 100% virtual which of course has its challenges. At this stage, ensuring regular connections through "cameras on" client engagements and phone calls is really the only way we can engage with clients right now but I am really looking forward to connecting with them all in person, one day, soon, I hope!

■ ***How do you plan to navigate the agency through these unusual times?***

We are fortunate that we are a small team so having meaningful connections with each member of the team is possible through our daily 'standups' and internal status meetings. This ensures we don't lose the essence of the agency culture and spirit as we continue to work on a semi-remote basis.

Our current strategy is focused on ensuring we continue to deliver outstanding work for our current clients. This means that for the foreseeable future we are focused on strengthening our client relationships (virtually) and providing innovative ideas that deliver results vs chasing down new business leads. We want to nurture our current clients to ensure that we all see our way through this pandemic together, as a partnership.

■ ***What excites you most about the agency, approaching its 11th year?***

Retroviral is a mid-sized agency that acts like a startup challenger agency with tenacity and bold ideas. I am excited to work with the team to grow and develop the agency structure so we can scale but at the same time maintain our spirit as a challenger agency delivering cut-through creative for our clients.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to or enjoying thus far?***

I am blown away by the sheer creativity and passion of the team. It is so exciting to see that even though working remotely has its challenges the team are still inspired and energised to create brilliant work.

■ ***Tell us more about your background/experience and how this has equipped you for the role.***

I have been in client service most of my career ensuring the agency teams tell brand stories to consumers through engaging and meaningful content, whether through broadcast, print, or digital – earned or owned.

I didn't study traditional advertising but a BA through UCT so I almost "fell" into the industry when I was hired as a copywriter straight out of university for a magazine publisher. Since then, I haven't looked back.

I've been so fortunate to work alongside some industry giants over the years who have taught me valuable lessons, including Luca Gallerelli, Joanna Oosthuizen and Dustin Chick most recently during my tenure with Ogilvy. These lessons and the years of experience working in multiple agencies and brands have given me the confidence now to take the next step leading the Retroviral team into their next decade.

■ ***What do you love most about your career?***

I really enjoy working with clients delivering great creative content that is meaningful and effective. But this can only really be done when the agency and client truly become partners, and this isn't as easy as it sounds! I love it when you meet a client and it all just clicks and together you create magic.

■ ***What's at the top of your to-do list?***

Right now, meeting all our clients and suppliers to build these new connections. I miss the days where you could meet your clients in person over lunch and really get to know them. Zoom calls just aren't the same.

■ ***What are you currently reading/watching/listening to?***

No Rules Rules: Netflix and the Culture of Reinvention by Erin Meyer and Reed Hastings.

■ ***Tell us something about yourself not generally known?***

I was brought up in Mauritius so I'm an island girl at heart! I only returned to South Africa for high school so my formative years were spent running along sandy white beaches and water skiing after school!

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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