

# Imran Patel, chief experience officer at VMLY&R

By  Emily Stander

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This week, we caught up with the dynamic and newly appointed chief experience officer at VMLY&R South Africa, Imran Patel.



Image supplied: Imran Patel, chief experience officer at VMLY&R

## ■ Tell us a bit more about what you do?

I'm the relatively new chief experience officer at VMLY&R South Africa, and that role entails me spearheading the expansion of our CX capabilities within the agency.

I lead the UX, UI, CX, research, development and technology practices, with a strong focus on internal and external growth.

## ■ What's really behind your selfie?

I helped one of my best buds (who passed away from Covid) with a surprise birthday party whilst I was on holiday back home in CT. I walked, and we drove around, with two dozen or so balloons, and this photo was taken whilst we were grabbing coffee. I took the balloons in with me to ensure they wouldn't be stolen from the car.

## ■ Growing up, what did you want to do?

I was determined to be a pilot. I was utterly obsessed with it. (Yes, I also watched *Top Gun* over 200 times).

I lived on my flight simulator games, I applied for the SAA commercial pilot intake, I got a few hours of flying lessons, and I even ended up studying aeronautical engineering for a while.

## ■ How did you end up doing what you do now?

Over and above the pilot obsession, I was also an absolute computer geek. I loved everything about PC's, and so my love of IT ran strong.

I was also quite fascinated by data, and then by why how people worked (which is how I ended up with my undergrad degree). So my career progressed from IT to marketing, to digital and data marketing to loyalty, to innovation management,

and now it's all converged into this wondrous expansive CX landscape, where I get to work on growth-generating projects for our clients that also render delightful and easier experiences for their customers and users.

🎯 ***Tell us a bit about some highlights of your career.***

I've had the privilege of working with some real industry Top Guns, and some Mavericks too (excuse the puns).

I'm proud of the awards my teams, my businesses and I have won, I'm proud of the impact I made at some of the organisations I worked for, I'm proud that I was able to grow businesses I owned, I'm proud of the apps I've built, one which literally saves lives and I'm grateful for the opportunities to work and learn.

🎯 ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

Now, I'm mostly just a husband and a dad. If ever I need to be brought down to earth, my kids and family will do that. So there's a lot of driving them around, and a LOT of hair styling and blow drying (I should really own a dry bar), and then there's the coffee and gym time with the guys.

And if there's any time left over, I'm watching football (I'm a Manchester United fan, so I'm experiencing painful hope).

🎯 ***What are you watching/reading/listening to right now?***

I just finished watching *The Boys* on Amazon Prime, *She-Hulk* on Disney+ and will probably start on the current season of *The Umbrella Academy* on Netflix (although my prime time is spent on Udemy at the moment).

I'm reading a lot of stuff for work right now, (including my old Research Methodology textbook) but I've also just sunk my teeth into *Ready Player Two* by Ernest Cline, and I committed to finishing some of the e-books that are incomplete.

My first reading passion is comic books, I've got loads of them on my iPad, but I'm just not getting around to it. I'm just going to blame Twitter for everything I'm not getting to.

🎯 ***What's your favourite gif?***

My first reaction was a Happy Birthday from The Hoff (it's a quirky thing we've got going on a family Whatsapp group), but my favourite one currently is a waking zombie gif. It's my "hello, it's been a minute" for my peeps that I haven't chatted to in a while.



■ ■ ***What are you hoping to achieve for the rest of the year?***

Lots. There's a lot to do.

Firstly, I'm going to enjoy every second of the summer heat that's on its way because I've finally emerged from my winter hibernation.

Then there's the launch of something new from VMLY&R (you'll hear more about it soon), there are capabilities to improve upon, client portfolios to enhance, teams to grow, new technology to explore, tremendously exciting projects to complete, soccer to watch, and as always, hair to blow dry.

## ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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