

Alastair Haarhoff, owner and CEO of Just Design

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Alastair Haarhoff's journey began after graduating from Stellenbosch University, where he initially studied finance. However, the creative bug bit him which led to the introduction to the world of creativity which ignited a passionate flame within him, forever altering the course of his professional life.



Alastair Haarhoff, owner and CEO of Just Design. Image supplied

Since then, Haarhoff has been an unwavering force at the helm of Just Design, driving the agency for over two decades, with its influence stretching from South Africa to the vibrant city of London.

Over the years, Haarhoff has had the privilege of collaborating with an impressive portfolio of global liquor and tobacco brands, leaving a noticeable mark on the industry. Additionally, his entrepreneurial spirit led him to co-found partner agencies, Epic Lion and Innovatr, further cementing his position as an inspiration in the creative landscape.

However, what truly sets Haarhoff apart is his relentless focus on the future. With an insatiable hunger for creativity and innovation, he strives to propel Just Design into becoming a global industry leader — a beacon that empowers clients to construct the prosperous brands of tomorrow.

■ ***Tell us what it is to be an African creative?***

Well, I think the first thing that we must remember is that as a nation, and more broadly a continent, we are brimming with amazing, well-respected talent. So being an African creative, in my opinion, means being part of this exciting movement where culture and talent intersect in incredibly unique ways. Our creativity is highly regarded, and I think that bodes well for the future.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

Not in the creative industry! I graduated with a BCom in Finance fully expecting to immerse myself in it. In fact, I wanted to focus on corporate finance or trading but after the first year of my internship I knew that it wasn't for me.

▣ ***How did you end up in the industry?***

My father was a creative and needed my help servicing clients in his agency. Before I knew it, I was a budding account executive, and the rest is history. I learn every day and wouldn't change any of it.

▣ ***Where do you find inspiration?***

That is a good question! To be completely honest, it comes and goes in waves but most of my inspiration comes from reading books and traveling. I love roaming through the duty-free sections of airports en route to new and exciting destinations. I'm also fortunate enough to work with an extremely talented and dynamic team that challenge me every day.

▣ ***Describe your career so far.***

It has been quite an experience! I've learnt countless lessons and been through my fair share of peaks and troughs. What has been wonderful though, has been getting to know some of the most interesting and inspirational people. They've helped me wake up every day loving my job and kept me feeling energised and passionate. There is obviously still plenty to achieve. There are offices to open and new markets to explore and the thought of that keeps me going.

▣ ***What has been the highlight of your career?***

I think opening our first offices in Johannesburg and London would be high up there. Launching Epic Lion and Innovatr were also milestones for me. And pitching alongside the top global agencies is proof that we are doing the right thing – thanks to the team that I am lucky enough to lead and work with.

▣ ***What are you currently streaming/reading/listening to?***

Well, I love reading so now I'm reading *Cathedral of the Wild* by Boyd Varty; *Stillness is Key* by Ryan Holiday; *Discipline is Destiny* by Ryan Holiday and *Surrounded by Idiots* by Thomas Erikson.

▣ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do?***

I am an outdoor fanatic, so I love being outdoors running in the mountains and spending time in nature. I've been known to play the odd game of golf and do some surfing, but my favourite thing is spending time with my family.

▣ ***What's next on your journey?***

In the short term, we are perfecting our "Idea to Shelf" philosophy with our local and global clients. In the longer term we are excited about spreading our collective of agencies across the globe.

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