

Katherine Freemantle, managing partner for IMA SA



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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This week we go behind the selfie of Katherine Freemantle, managing partner for IMA SA, who was recently awarded the PepsiCo account in South Africa for activations, including customer experience, events and sampling.



Katherine Freemantle, managing partner for IMA SA

■ *Could you briefly explain what your role entails?*

Put simply, my role has a dual focus. One being the satisfaction and growth of our clients and their brands, both existing and prospective. And the other focussed on partnerships, marketing, strategy and the culture of our agency.

I work closely with the teams working on pitches and spend a lot of time with clients to ascertain what it is that we need to collaboratively solve with them. I pinpoint opportunities and synergies for us to bring in our partners at Smollan and Student Village as well as other entities within our network.

My co-partner and I collaborate in ensuring we have the right resource working on the jobs and that our margins make sense. I am passionate about working on the business growth and sustainability strategy as well as our IMA culture and plan to spend more time on this in 2022.



IMA wins PepsiCo SSA account

15 Mar 2022



■ *What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?*

Literally, usually a smile, sometimes a small yawn after a week of late nights.

Figuratively, I am a stickler for quality, excellence and providing the best that we possibly can, which often means that I will expect a lot from those around me. What some don't know is that behind that I am a total softie and always there to help and make a plan to get us there.

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

As a little girl, I wanted to be a teacher. I always loved the thought of working with children. It figures that the development of people and a great place to work is a part of my job that I love now.

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

I did my post grad marketing internship with the team at Kirstenbosch Concerts, which exposed me to an amazing team who was so open to input and ideas (I was proud to have made some suggestions then that still to this day changed the concerts line-up).

This internship sparked an interest in marketing, selling and exciting people with experiences which then lead to a sequence of jobs in the events and then more traditional agency world and I was hooked on building brands, creating experiences, creating work that delivers results and sometimes hopefully enriching and making a difference to people's lives.

■ ***When you founded IMA SA (originally Elevator), what did you hope to achieve?***

I was (and still am) so excited about the rebrand from Elevator Agency to IMA SA for a few reasons. It has been a great opportunity to become part of an amazing global brand (who acted and spoke just like us) and thereby gain a direct line to global insights, trends, mentorship opportunities for our team and of course, client connections.

It also meant an opportunity to recreate ourselves within the South African market. Elevator Agency (previously Stretch Marketing) had an amazing reputation for our experiential offering, but was lesser known for the TTL strategic and creative work that we had been doing for a few years already. The rebrand to IMA SA has allowed us to start to become more known for this aspect of our offering, while always being grounded by stand out Experiential.

■ ***What has the journey been like?***

It has been busy! As co-managing partners we have laughed a few times at how typically over-efficient and ambitious we were in early 2021 when we decided to rebrand, relocate and renovate the business all in the same two months. And that after a busy few years involving an acquisition, change in leadership and a global pandemic.

It has however been really great since those hectic first few months of the rebrand, where we have started to be able to focus on the business and its growth and the culture and its people.

■ ***What excites you most about your career?***

I truly love that my career is so focussed around people, development and growth, strategy and creatively solving problems. These are all things that energise me daily. Looking forward, it's exciting to think that these three aspects can show up in different ways and that I will be able to continue building the skills surrounding them.

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

I have had so many different highlights and not surprising, most of them involve the people I have worked with and who have worked on my team. Being a part of the development and growth and observing the subsequent success of various members of my teams has been such a rewarding and amazing aspect of my career to date.

Another big highlight was being a part of working on the Loerie-winning Slave Calendar, working alongside my good friend and then ECD as well as a great team.

And more recently it really has been a career highlight to rebrand and launch a new company along with my co-managing partner, Catherine Mavrocoleas. It has been a journey and so much has been learnt throughout the process, invaluable lessons for many years to come.

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

I live close to the sea, so when the Summer days allow for an early wake up (with light) I love to brave a sea dip before work, if I can keep my mind off the whales (deep phobia).

My favourite thing is socialising with the wonderful humans in my life – husband, family, friends. I attribute my love and hunger for visiting new places and keeping up to date with what is happening on the culinary and pop culture front to my Joburg roots and Cape Town adulthood.

I am also a huge live music fan (younger days bordering on groupie), so I am very much looking forward to this aspect returning in the not too distant future.

■ **What are you watching/reading/listening to at the moment?**

I'm watching *Severance* and *The Office* (for the 100th time). I'm currently reading *The Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle (second time reading because it's that good) and *Crossroads* by Jonathan Franzen and I'm listening to *The High Low* by Dolly Alderton and Pandora Sykes and mostly my 90s and Noughties playlist on Spotify – feeling very nostalgic at the moment

■ **What does 2022 have in store for you?**

Growth, balance, simple joy, intentional working and intentional living

2022 will be a year of growth and clarity for IMA SA. We have spent time looking at what the agency needs to be more sustainable, profitable and appealing, using what we have learnt over the last two years to unpack what we need to build and introduce and what we need to let go of. It is going to be an exciting and busy year and we are ready for it (and already in it!)

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