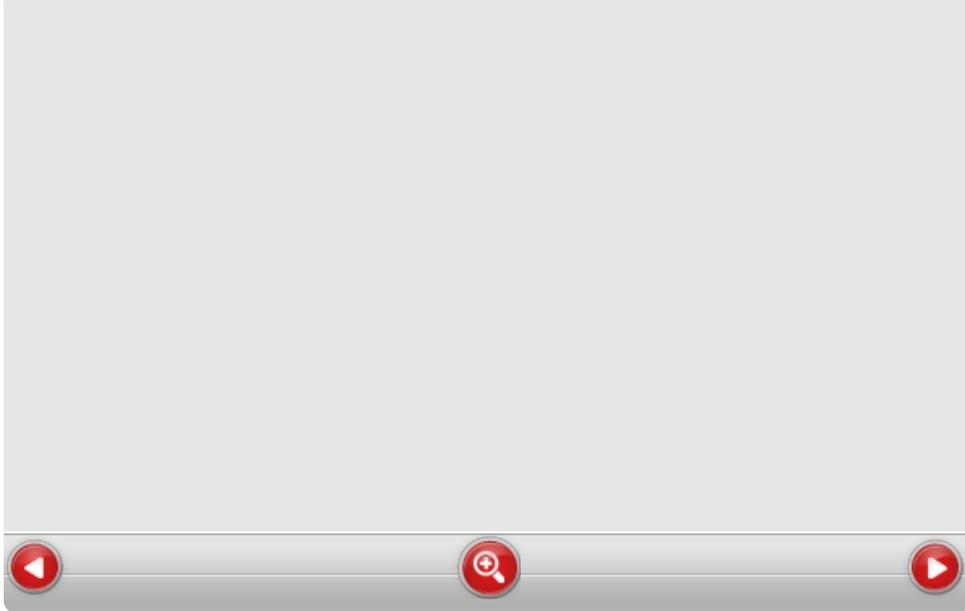


# FoxP2 mutates with Dentsu Aegis Network, home of the global creative network of the future

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Dentsu Aegis Network and FoxP2 have announced the finalisation of the acquisition.



Pepper, the first fully functional robot to accompany an astronaut in space.

Matsuko-roid, the world's first celebrity doppelganger android.

Spirited Away, the second highest grossing anime movie of all time.

All examples of creative innovation you wouldn't expect from an advertising and communications network.



But then Dentsu have never seen themselves as an advertising network. Dentsu is the global creative agency, part of the Dentsu Aegis Network, that embrace an ethos of “beyond advertising” to innovate brands with ideas that challenge convention and embrace technology that redefines what is possible.

And that’s exactly what attracted FoxP2 to the partnership that sees this Global Communications Network acquire a stake in arguably the most disruptive South African agency of the last decade.

Founded in 2005 by creative partners Andrew Whitehouse, Justin Gomes and MD Noel Cottrell, the agency fast acquired a reputation for doing things differently. “With no blue-chip founding clients or network backing like the other start-ups of the time, we were forged in the fire with no safety net. It gave us a true sense of who we were and an appreciation not to take anything for granted,” recalls Whitehouse. “To not take a salary for two years was tough when a number of our start up contemporaries were driving BMW’s off the bat, but it stood us in great stead for the long term. Without a large founding client forcing their culture on us, we were able to create our own.”

Continues Gomes, “I remember reading this quote over and over again to motivate myself to find a way to stay in the game in those formative years – “a successful entrepreneur is someone who is prepared to live like most people won’t, so they can eventually live like most people can’t.”

While the agency had yet to land a large client in its first two years, its creative achievements saw the agency putting “a fox in the henhouse,” to quote Finweek as the upstart start-up began garnering major attention in the industry, winning a Cannes lion within six months of opening doors and creating the country’s first campaign to register over a million YouTube views for Pronto Condoms.

With Cottrell planning to return to the States, Gomes and Whitehouse started talking to Charl Thom, then heading up Grey Cape Town, about joining what had by then affectionately become known as “the Foxhole”. During his time at Grey, Thom had forged a relationship with one of the country’s most talented creatives, Grant Jacobsen, who would six years later, play a pivotal role in launching the FoxP2 product into the Johannesburg market.

Thom joined FoxP2 on April Fool’s Day 2007 as MD and partner with a steely resolve to solidify the agency into a going concern. The pitch for Coronation Fund Managers followed shortly with FoxP2 pipping fellow Newcomer Agency of The Year Winners Ireland/Davenport. More established brands Captain Morgan and M-Web then followed with the agency creating enduring brand platforms that are still used today, like Coronation’s Trust Is Earned and MWeb’s Connect and You Can. Despite the big brand wins, FoxP2 never lost its edge continuing to make popular culture permeating campaigns such as the “Papa Wag Vir Jou” anti-drink driving campaign for the brandhouse Drive Dry Initiative. This saw FoxP2 winning a host of Agency of The Year awards, including the coveted Financial Mail Agency of The year, as well as topping the Loerie rankings tables.

In 2011, partner Andrew Whitehouse headed to New York to start the Bull Whitehouse with mentor Matthew Bull. Despite the agency’s struggling start, Whitehouse made the most of his time in the city immersing himself in the latest technology and innovation that would play a role on his return to FoxP2 three years later.

Says Thom, “Around this time, there was a growing demand for our product in Johannesburg and I immediately thought of approaching Grant as a partner to launch our Joburg office. A natural leader, Grant was fresh off the success of the FNB Steve campaign and a Cannes Gold for McDonalds. I knew it would be a great fit.” Jacobsen hit the ground running, winning the Liberty pitch within months of launching the Jhb office and immediately put a stake in the ground with the iconic Liberty “Sandton City” commercial. Under Jacobsen and Thom’s stewardship, the agency quickly grew into a big brand boutique with blue chip clients that include FNB, Stanlib, Hyundai, Budget Insurance and Mugg&Bean.

After his creative sabbatical in NY with artistic achievements that included exhibitions at the Moma Museum, Whitehouse returned to the FoxP2 fold in 2014 and immediately integrated his experience in innovation and technology into the FoxP2 creative culture. The launch of FoxP2 Design marked another significant FoxP2 milestone with its quality offering resonating with blue-chip brands, as well as being recognized at the world’s toughest award show, D&AD, with an elusive

pencil.

FoxP2's reputation for business focused creativity has continued to grow in the marketplace over the last decade, with the agency's Loerie Grand Prix winning work also converting at the Effectiveness Award Shows. The 2016 Gunn Report ranked FoxP2 second in South Africa, so when the same Gunn Report announced Dentsu as the highest ranking creative global network of the last decade, the Foxes knew they were speaking to the right partners to take their offering into the future.

Says Jacobsen, "Humility and respect are the building blocks of Japanese culture so it took us a year to really find out all of the Dentsu achievements. And so many of these achievements transcend advertising, which is what really excites us."

Commenting on the strengths of this partnership, Dawn Rowlands, CEO for Dentsu Aegis Network Sub Saharan Africa says, "Dentsu Aegis Network SSA is gaining momentum rapidly in the region, and our clients are looking to us for holistic services in many markets. Creative services only represent 15% of our revenue, currently making this environment an ideal space to grow our business." Rowlands continues, "It helps us set a high level of standard across the region and will help accelerate capability regionally. We expect high levels of collaboration across our local agency partners to deliver highly relevant work locally."

Koo Govender, CEO for Dentsu Aegis Network South Africa, commented, "I am really looking forward to the collaboration with FoxP2. There was definitely a gap in our market product offering for creative and design services. FoxP2 not only fills this gap with their award-winning creativity and accolades, but there is a magical chemistry amongst our teams. There are many synergies on how we could acquire and add value to more clients as a team. Together we will make huge strides in the industry."

Govender continues, "Both the DAN and the FoxP2 leadership is committed to Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa. From a structural point of view, it made more sense to have one Black Economic Empowerment ownership structure within the Dentsu Aegis Network SA group of companies, instead of having multiple different vehicles which all have the same purpose. We have therefore created one overarching Black Empowerment trust, of which beneficiaries are selected from the entire DAN group including all its entities which will include key black employees from FoxP2."

A partnership that sees FoxP2's ability to create iconic work that permeates popular culture integrate with the future-facing innovation and technology of the world's fastest growing creative network is an exciting prospect for FoxP2's and Dentsu Aegis Networks clients and team alike.

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