

# Illé Potgieter settles into her role as MD at M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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We catch up with Illé Potgieter who stepped up from business partner to M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town's managing director in April.



## ■ ***Congrats on your appointment. How did you feel about it?***

Thank you! It's been equally thrilling and exciting! It is an important responsibility and I have had some incredible mentors over the last seven years at the company who have helped prepare me for this next role as part of a very clear succession plan within the company.

## ■ ***What does the role entail?***

At its core, my mandate is to deliver our purpose, which is to create beautifully simple solutions for an increasingly complex world.

Brands are trying to navigate this complexity and my job is making sure we use *Brutal Simplicity of Thought* in everything we do. From how we deal with our clients, to how we use creativity to solve problems, to making sure our people are enabled and empowered to do what they love.

## ■ ***As the new managing director for M&C Saatchi Abel Cape Town, what approach have you taken?***

Covid has taught us many things and looking back on it, I have learned so much about myself and the people I work with. What stood out for me was the care and passion during a period of tremendous uncertainty and sometimes grief. I have been so thankful for our people and what they have done.

Now it is about finding the right balance in terms of the pace at which we create and how we connect with each other to find the best working model for a better normal.

At its core you can say that I am heavily influenced by the need for more empathy and compassion over this time.



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### ■ ***How did the appointment come about?***

A key strategy in our company, driven by our founding partners, is a clear succession plan to bring diverse, youthful and fresh thinkers into leadership positions.

If I look at our MANCO leadership teams in both Cape Town and Johannesburg we are all young, dynamic leaders who work as one company. It's a hugely empowering and liberating model where we share learning and talent all the time across the campuses.

It comes down to our belief in Diversity of Thought, so transitioning into the managing director role as a woman, is hugely liberating.

### ■ ***What do you love most about your career, the industry and what you do?***

No two days are the same which is what I love about my job. Some days are filled with getting immersed in a client's world to help them solve a problem while others are filled with analysing and forecasting business financials.

A good day includes mentoring my teams and to see them achieve success for our clients or successfully selling a big new creative idea to a client.

I genuinely believe that creativity can solve any problem!

### ■ ***You're also a mom, what advice do you have for other moms out there finding it hard to balance work and family?***

When I became a mom, it forced me to make a clear distinction between home life and work life and to keep them separate. During lockdown, this was particularly hard as the lines were so blurred. But keeping them separate means that when I am at work, I focus 110% on work and when I am home, I focus 110% on my family (and some 'me-time' in between with a run or quality time with friends). I also find the word 'balance' a bit dangerous as you will rarely feel like you have the perfect balance. Some days you win and some days you don't. And that's okay.

### ■ ***What is your biggest motivation in life?***

Over the last couple of years, I have learned of so many women in business and life who are achieving incredible things. Their stories really inspire me. And to see women genuinely rooting for other women. Being a typical A-type personality, I am a little obsessed with things being perfect and the best and hold myself to the highest standard. Delivering on my own expectations naturally drives me. And being able to give my daughter the best possible future

### ■ ***What can we expect to see from M&C Saatchi Abel in the coming months?***

The world is more complex and consumers more fragmented than ever before so the need for simplicity, clear intent and focus on everything we do is crucial. This has led to some really exciting and fresh work across all our clients.

We're also working on a big project that will see us launch a new brand in the South African market, something I am personally involved in and very excited about.

This year we also celebrate a 10-year partnership with both our Takealot.com and Mweb clients. A special milestone we're very proud of.

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