

Mick & Nick founders join M&C Saatchi Abel Joburg



By Herman Manson: @marklives

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EXCLUSIVE: The three founders of acclaimed below-the-line agency Mick & Nick, owned by the Lowe Bull Group, have left the agency [they helped found](#) to join M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg. Nick Liatos and Mick Shepard, along with Mick & Nick's former MD Michelle de Gouveia, started with [M&C Saatchi Abel](#) today, Monday, 1 November 2010.

M&CSAATCHI ABEL

The trio launched Mick & Nick in January 2007 with backing by the Lowe Bull Group. Mick & Nick focused on below-the-line promotions and clients included SAB, Nike, Look & Listen and Ster-Kinekor.

Looking since launch

Jacques Burger, CE of M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg, says the agency (which has been operating for less than a month) had been looking for creative partners since it launched, and the names of Liatos and Shepard had been bandied about in the industry as potential candidates. He describes initial discussions as "a meeting of minds".

It was the right opportunity at the right time and a deal was soon struck.

Liatos and Shepard join the group as creative partners, which implies a shareholding. Burger would not be drawn on details but did suggest that equity was part of the deal. De Gouveia joins as head of operations for the Johannesburg office.

Liatos and Shepard bring great creative talent and experience to M&C Saatchi Abel, says Burger, as well as a strategic understanding of brands and business. The creative expectation goes beyond pretty work to shifting behaviour, according to Burger, who believes his new partners will deliver on this promise.

Already services eight clients

M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg will have a staff compliment of 10 in the next week or so, adds Burger, and already services eight clients. It won the Oracle Airtime Sales business last week.



Jacques Burger, CE of M&C Saatchi Abel Johannesburg.

According to Burger, the Joburg and Cape Town offices of M&C Saatchi Abel operate on a collaborative basis and as a single business with a single bottom line, meaning flexibility in the managing of accounts and workloads. Clients can expect a group backing, rather than that of a single office.

Wayne Naidoo, CEO of the Lowe Bull Group, says [Mick & Nick](#) will disappear as a brand and its client base will be integrated into the main brand agency. Most of the staff have already departed but those who want to stay will be redeployed within the Lowe Bull Group. The group owned a 74% stake in Mick & Nick.

According to Naidoo, Lowe Bull had been looking at changing its arrangement with and the structure of Mick & Nick for some time, as cannibalisation between the brand agency and the BTL agency had become a factor. After more than three years, he says, it had become clear that the original relationship model wasn't working as Lowe Bull had originally hoped.

Par for the course

Naidoo describes the split as 'fairly amicable' but admits it is disappointing to see "great people leave" the agency but he

reiterates that this is par for the course for agency life.

The arrival of Liatos, Shepard and De Gouveia will certainly be seen as a vote of confidence in the future of M&C Saatchi Abel, which is expecting its billings to reach R250 million by January 2011.

For more, go to www.mcsaatchiabel.co.za.

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