

Joe Public United has global ambitions



By [Herman Manson](#): [@marklives](#)

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When [Gareth Leck](#) and [Pepe Marais](#) ([@PepeMarais](#)) first launched [Joe Public](#) with its 'take-away' advertising model (clients picked from a menu of services, each with its own price) they wanted it to change the face of advertising. While the agency evolved away from its original model, it's one that is still talked about today internationally.



The two business partners are still dreaming big: not only do they want to change the network agency model - they want to do so in the global arena.

Joe Public has just announced the launch of an international 'union' of agencies, with the South African operation and a new Joe Public agency in Holland being the founding members.

Joe Public

"Global union of member agencies"

growth

Joe Public South
Africa logo

The strategy, explains [Laurent Marty](#), strategic director at Joe Public, "is to form a global union of member agencies, unified on the basis of unencumbered, breakthrough creativity, innovation, and collaboration."



Joe Public
TAKE-AWAY ADVERTISING

As a union of independent, owner-managed agencies, Joe Public United aims to eventually expand to take on global advertising holding groups. The new Union will collaboratively pitch on multinational accounts.

Joe Public Amsterdam logo

All member agencies will trade under the Joe Public name in their respective territories. Each agency will be 100% owned by its founders and staff. Joe Public United will be a non-profit company that manages the union's marketing fund to which each agency contributes a percentage of total annual revenue. A general council and an annually rotating position as Union president will run Joe Public United.

Core to the strategy is to link up with entrepreneurs looking to launch their own agencies but wanting to tap into a global collaborative model. They would need to sign up to the Joe Public United values which are: people growth, creativity, freedom, independence, reward, merit, collaboration and social responsibility.

"What unites us are those beliefs"

"We believe that what unites us are those beliefs, rather than the same logo," notes Marty.

The idea for the Union took shape several years ago when, having [bought back their agency from Draftfcb in 2009](#), Leck, Marais and their team held a workshop on finding ways forward to grow the agency. To turn Joe Public into a global brand was their 'collective dream', says Marty.

But with the international centre of advertising being in Europe and the US, and with limited resources and a need to focus their energy on growing their SA operation, going global posed near insurmountable stumbling blocks. If you insist on applying a traditional business model, that is.

So the Joe Public team simply got rid of the barriers to global growth for their brand - ownership and management (they call it greed and control) - thus empowering others to grow the brand in other territories. The new motto has become 'to grow let go'.

Growth means growth

Growth from the new member agencies means growth for Joe Public United means growth (and revenue gains) for Joe Public in SA.

The new Union wants to open a new agency every year for the next five years. Currently exploratory discussions are underway in New Zealand and Shanghai.



L-R Xolisa Dyeshana, Laurent Marty, Gareth Leck, Antoine Houtsma, Pepe Marais, Maciek Mchalski and Jeroen van Eck.

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The new Amsterdam agency, led by creative partners Antoine Houtsma ([@antoinehoutsma](#)) and Bart Oostindie ([@BartOostindie](#)) and strategic planning partner Jeroen van Eck, has adopted the original Joe Public take-away model for the Dutch market.

The reason is that, in the Dutch agency market, clients tend to use specialised agencies so the model would be appropriate to those needs; it is also a way to differentiate Joe Public Amsterdam from other specialist agencies. The agency has already won OHRA, the second largest direct insurance company in the Netherlands, and the Bazaar, the biggest indoor market in Europe.

Benefits being discovered along the way

Leck says that the Amsterdam and SA agencies are already collaborating in numerous ways and that many of the benefits of being part of a union are being discovered along the way.

Leck and Marais have [transformed Joe Public SA](#) through its innovative new positioning, Growthⁿ (growth to the power of n), with n standing for a growth mind-set that sees every opportunity and sees every setback as an opportunity to grow. The agency goes through a process to identify the core purpose of that business and helps brands to define what they really stand for.

It's a process that has most famously transformed vehicle tracking company Tracker from a product company to a service company. The agency has just announced that it has [won the ATL account for Jet](#) - part of the Edcon group. The latest account win will take the SA agency staff to 90 and put the agency in the R50 million revenue band for 2012.

For more:

- Sharpening My Pencil (Pepe Marais's blog): [Joe Public Launches Global Anti-Holding Company Model](#)

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