

Edelman enters Africa through Baird's Renaissance

PR firm, Edelman, has announced its entry into the African market, with its acquisition of South African-based communications consultancy Baird's Renaissance, which will be renamed Edelman South Africa.



Francois Baird

The acquisition is expected to close in about one month's time and is subject to regulatory clearance. The award-winning South African firm has been an Edelman affiliate for more than 20 years.

Francois Baird, founder and chairman of the agency, will be chair of Edelman Africa. Baird will report to David Brain, president and CEO of Edelman Asia Pacific Middle East and Africa (APACMEA), and be based in Washington, DC and Johannesburg. Baird will serve as chair for the board of Edelman South Africa and as co-chairman of Baird's CMC, an international communications management consultancy.

"Africa is the next great growth frontier for our clients and South Africa is the biggest economy on the continent," said Matthew J Harrington, global chief operating officer, Edelman. "The acquisition represents the culmination of a long-standing successful partnership. It will be a platform to build new relationships with African companies and strengthen the support of existing clients in this growing region. This acquisition provides the group with the capability to support clients throughout the continent."

Commenting on the announcement, Baird said, "Now, we can proudly look forward to taking our place in the world as Africans, able to bring Africa to the world. After 20 productive years as an Edelman affiliate, I am proud that my team and I will now be part of the Edelman family. There is enormous opportunity to leverage the strength of the entire network, intellectual capital and talent to benefit this dynamic continent and to deploy our Africa expertise and network to the benefit of its clients."

African reach broadened

Tod Donhauser, currently executive vice president and head of the technology policy group in Washington, DC, will relocate to Johannesburg to become managing director, Edelman South Africa. He will report to Robert Holdheim, CEO, South Asia, Middle East and Africa (SAMEA). Peter Mageza, now deputy chairman of the board at Baird's CMC, will become vice chairman of Edelman South Africa.

With 20 full-time staff and 10 consultants, Baird's Renaissance has more than 20 years of experience in Africa, having delivered results in 29 of the continent's 55 countries. The agency's client roster spans the government, financial, telecommunications, health, tourism, energy and mining sectors.

"I am delighted that Baird and his team will soon be fully-fledged members of the group and that our clients will now receive a seamless service in South Africa and across the continent," said Brain. "Trade, investment and even cultural flows increasingly link Africa with the Middle East and South Asia. Moreover, a hub operation in South Africa gives us a foothold from which to expand our offering across the continent."

Edelman South Africa, the firm's 67th global office, will be a Level 1 black economic empowerment company. For more, go to www.edelman.com.

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