

EXCLUSIVE: Pete Case: coming full circle with Ogilvy

By  Danette Breitenbach

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After leaving Ogilvy in 2019, after five years at the agency, Pete Case has returned as interim CEO of the Ogilvy South Africa Group. In this exclusive interview to Bizcommunity.com, Pete shares why he has returned to Ogilvy.



Pete Case, new interim CEO of Ogilvy

Pete Case founded Gloo, a digital marketing business, when digital marketing wasn't even a business yet. Fast forward to Gloo being part of Ogilvy, and Pete ranked number 1 as chief creative officer in South Africa and number 9 in the Global WARC report, with Ogilvy was ranked the Number 1 creative and effective agency. He has won over 1,000 industry design and marketing awards for effective and creative marketing, including four Grand Prix at Cannes, eight Loerie Grand Prix and two Emmy Awards.

Previously you were chief creative and innovation officer at Ogilvy. How is your new role different?

Previously my focus was on the end product that Ogilvy creates. It was a fast paced, exciting and rewarding role that entailed amongst others, modernising the work across the group by increasing the fusion of digital with more traditional thinking. My new appointment has more of a holistic view and role that allows me to apply my wider business experience and skills, especially the ones I have gained over the years when I started and grew my own advertising and design businesses.

I will also bring in my learnings from my most recent role, last year, when I assisted in the implementation of Ogilvy's latest strategy across various country offices in the global network. Ultimate success in our industry is about creating consistently impactful work - it creates growth for its clients and the agency's own people.

I feel very energised to work with the teams across Ogilvy, to achieve this goal for some of the greatest and most loved brands in South Africa.

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■ **When you left Ogilvy, you said it was the right time to leave (although you said: “there is never a right time to leave Ogilvy”). Why is this the right time to return?**

It was an extremely hard choice to leave in 2019 as I love the industry, but on a personal level I hadn’t taken a break since starting my first business back in 1990. After working in a series of different businesses since then and weekly commuting between cities for over a decade, I simply felt I deserved a break.

For those that know me, I’m not a ‘relax on the beach for a year type of person’ so my break consisted of a change of scenery where I enjoyed working again with start-ups and small businesses, looking at the wider picture of creating a healthy business.

I also spent time consulting with the worldwide Ogilvy network and was reenergised by the new strategy put in place by Andy Main and the new global leadership. So, when I was approached for this role, it felt like a great fit - a company I like, a global strategy that feels truly relevant, a lot of faces that I know and respect both locally and globally, alongside a remarkably interesting socio-economic time.

I’ve always found benefit from the reality that the world’s biggest and most exciting changes take place at times of adversity and that’s where I feel we are as an industry right now. Opportunity awaits those that shift and evolve with the times. It’s with this positive headspace that I enter the new role.

■ **You played an integral role in forming Ogilvy SA’s industry-leading position after joining the company in 2014. In 2022 what are the goals you are setting for yourself and the agency?**

At this stage all I can really share is that together as a leadership team, we are very ambitious. So watch this space!

Meantime the recent appointments of Samantha Presbury as PR managing director, Kabelo Moshapalo as CCO and Zoe Willems as head of strategy, alongside the promotions of Saf Sindhi as creative partner and Mel Carney to lead our experience offering – are all indications of the calibre of people that we’re building to lead a new era of Ogilvy South Africa.



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■ **During this time, and longer, you also worked as a creative business consultant investing and mentoring small businesses. What did you learn from this that you think is pertinent to a bigger business such as Ogilvy?**

As mentioned earlier, I rekindled a previous skillset and realised that a broader CEO role would be a challenge I’d be open to accept if it came along.

A common theme I’ve seen in the business mindset, is that when you’re a small business you wish you were big and when you’re big you wish you were smaller! I’ve sat on both sides of this fence many times and I intend to use every advantage

of that knowledge.

Meantime through my more recent work, I've really seen the strength of the Ogilvy network in practical terms. And I think this has previously been an underutilised tool here in SA. The strength of coupling locally relevant insights with the power of borderless creativity and technology from the globe.

“ *"I think it's increasingly relevant in the current turbulent times we find ourselves in to believe in one's own ambition and not follow the crowd. I've seen a tendency in the market to copy and undercut – which I feel is a fight to the bottom."* ”

■ ***In 2018 in a Bizcommunity opinion piece you said to keep brands relevant in this fast-changing world, your biggest focus areas will be to help simplify the process for clients and make sense of all the noise, to nurture 'future shaped' talent, to keep an investment and focus on agency culture inside an 'age of procurement' and to deliver highly potent and engaging creative, within faster timelines and often in real time: "At the speed of culture". Has this remained the same or has it changed?***

I don't think the industry has moved forward as much as it could or should have done since 2018. There are many reasons for this, but ultimately for me this means that the points I made remain relevant today for anyone in our industry.

What stands out as the most important for me, is the fight to attract, grow and nurture talent, as I believe our business success starts with having the best people. The strategy, mindset and approach all flow from there.

I think it's increasingly relevant in the current turbulent times we find ourselves in to believe in one's own ambition and not follow the crowd. I've seen a tendency in the market to copy and undercut – which I feel is a fight to the bottom. I believe that the clients we really want to attract and help, appreciate originality in the work they buy and will embrace lateral thinking when it comes to procurement.

A final point is ensuring an agency's ability to look beyond the creation of awareness. The concept of making consumers aware is only a quarter of the power of what we need to do for our clients if we want to be true growth partners for them. The most value is post this initial phase into consideration, engagement, interaction, and re-engagement.

I'm excited to show the market where we can further unlock this value at the intersections of deep specialism where content and platform experiences meet data, insights, performance media and retargeting.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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