

Devashnie Singh, chief people officer at Grey SA

By  Emily Stander

2 Aug 2021

Devashnie Singh, the chief people officer (CPO) at Grey SA, is passionate about creating spaces where individuals can thrive.



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For Singh, the future will have profound changes that specifically have an impact on women's lives - from technology to working patterns, and the skills most valued by employees. "I am looking forward to being part of this change and championing it, not just for the benefit of women, but for all employees," she said.

We spoke with her to find out more about women in advertising, her role as CPO, and share some advice...

■ ***Tell us a bit more about your role as chief people officer (CPO)?***

As CPO, I am responsible for developing and executing our overall people strategy and ensuring both regional and global compliance/execution. My role supports the strategic direction of the agency's overall business plan with a key focus on succession planning, talent management, organisational and performance management, learning and development, and rewards and recognition.

■ ***What do you love most about your work?***

This is a very easy question for me to answer, people, working with people is what I enjoy most. I have a front-row seat to

an individual's career journey – getting involved with coaching and mentoring employees/line management is a passion of mine. There is nothing more rewarding than to see the talent we hire make magic with their greatest gift – creativity!

■ ***What, in your opinion, is the best way to keep up in the ever-changing advertising space?***

The advertising industry is constantly changing and adapting to new ways of thinking and working. What is working today, might not be working tomorrow.

Understanding clients' needs and ensuring they are provided with the best possible talent is challenging. This is probably one of the few industries where your cultural background and outlook on life is as important as experience and talent – you can add talent by just being uniquely you. Covid-19 also posed a complete 360-degree change when it comes to managing the workforce.

■ ***What changes would you like to see for women in the advertising industry?***

A deliberate investment to help female colleagues advance their careers is required. Most people, not only women, require a career path that is flexible and supportive of work-life integration to support overall health and performance. With tailored benefits to keep their career trajectories on track, they can reach leadership positions.

Gender parity is important, and the implementation of organisation policies that reflect this will ultimately drive equal pay across genders. Women's Leadership Development programmes that incorporate the ability for them to work within the right networks/creative circles, leveraging the power of choice, is critical to any forward-thinking organisation.

■ ***How have you tried to make the advertising industry a better space for women to enter?***

As an HR professional, I value people, their authenticity, strategic thinking, and expertise. Individuality is important and our working environment allows for people to be themselves, differences are nurtured and respected. A key deliverable in our talent management process is for female employees to take the lead in shaping conversations about their careers. They get to create a leadership development strategy that is personalised and unique to them.

■ ***What is the best advice anyone has ever given you?***

As women, we have superpowers: our ability to show empathy, be nurturing, and be passionate. Use these superpowers to set an example and be your authentic self. Sit at the table - and if there isn't a seat for you, create one.

■ ***And what advice would you give to young women trying to enter the industry?***

Passion and curiosity should never be underestimated – it allows you to grow and to find your place in the world. Don't get comfortable, always push to learn, stay interesting and challenging and use your passion to maintain respect, and let it be an extension of your own personal brand.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games
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