

The ultimate challenger brand

 By Leigh Andrews

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Lowe and Partners SA kicked off the year with a (KO) knock-out punch: Out with the old and in with a new name and global brand identity, featuring the agency's new 'challenger' mentality...

Lowe and Partners SA, named the country's best performing agency and Grand Prix winner at the 2015 ACA APEX Awards and top small agency at the Loeries the same year, is no longer 'the Lowe you used to know'. It's set to reap even more rewards than before following its official renaming on 25 January 2016 to MullenLowe South Africa thanks to a global rebrand. That's a huge undertaking. I attended the official Lowe and Partners SA launch in Cape Town and pinned down Katinka Pretorius, managing the brand transition as MD of MullenLowe South Africa, for more on what these changes actually mean for the agency.

But first, a brief history lesson...

An agency by any other name

The agency actually entered the advertising market in 1998 as Lowe Bull Calvert Pace and immediately got traction when it won Grand Prix at Loeries plus a Black Eagle for *Cape Times*. From 2004 to 2012 more rewards were ripe for the picking with another Loeries Grand Prix in 2012 (Dulux), a Yellow pencil (Flora), Campaign of the Year by Financial mail (Dulux) and Agency of the year. When it rebranded as Lowe + Partners South Africa in 2012, the agency kept its focus on producing results for its clients' brands.

Then, in May 2015, global creative network Lowe and Partners merged with IPG agency network Mullen in the US. Thus the MullenLowe Group was formed; a creatively led global agency network with a strong entrepreneurial heritage and challenger mentality. Just a few months later, in January 2016, all Lowe agencies were renamed 'MullenLowe' across 90 offices in over 65 markets globally.



The MullenLowe SA management team: MullenLowe SA MD Katinka Pretorius, MullenLowe SA OIL MD Sarah Dexter, MullenLowe COO Kirk Gainsford

As a result, Lowe and Partners SA is now called MullenLowe South Africa, with its offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town restructured to form a single, streamlined offering that benefits clients due to a more direct, open relationship as a whole.

Quite a mouthful, but with the reorganisation and several exciting new business wins in place, Pretorius explains the group is well poised for a prosperous year. Here's how she's managing the change...

1. One of my favourite aspects of the launch event was learning about the challenger octopus. What does he stand for and how did the new branding come about?

Pretorius: Challenger Octopus is a different kind of beast. He punches above his weight and so do we. As he brings many things together with his tentacles, we bring multi-disciplined talent together to create the best ideas by working in a hyperbundled way. The new 'Challenger Octopus' marque was developed out of MullenLowe Brazil and hints at the global brand's willingness to take risks; designed to be bold to reflect our new positioning in the marketplace.

See the explanatory video embedded below:

2. Still ticks the boxes for me. In what way has the rebrand as MullenLowe led to changes for the agency?

Pretorius: It's reinforced our challenger-mentality unapologetically. It has also given us an exciting, fresh name in the industry.

3. How will things stay the same?

Pretorius: Whilst our hyperbundled way of working is positioned as a new method to tackle a client's business problem, we have always been working in a way where a business challenge is approached in a channel-agnostic way. Our Organ Donor Foundation's [GetMeTo21 campaign](#) Grand Prix win is evidence of that. While it was a triumph for the agency, it was just as close to each South African's heart as it was to ours.

We will always continue to cherish our great relationship with our clients and to give them fresh, interesting work to push their brands forward. As part of a global creative boutique, we have access to global resources when we need it, and act quickly and decisively.

4. Give us a snapshot of the advertising in SA in 2016 – good and bad.

Pretorius: With the budgets tighter and the times tougher, many clients are looking to the rest of **Africa** as the growth opportunity. Agencies who are late in their plans to have access and to understand the complexities of each unique country will miss out. **Transformation** remains a burning issue and a key challenge. Clients are engaging small, black-owned agencies to create insightful campaigns, which has led to many opportunities for black entrepreneurs in the advertising industry. The **obsession with digital** is coming to an end and whilst many agencies and clients have been advocates of integration of channels, **hyper bundling** is the new way of working. Where integration involves the pulling together of many complex campaign elements into one idea, hyper bundling starts with the idea and the right channels to best deliver that idea. It's simpler and more impactful.

Sounds like only good things to come. For more, connect with MullenLowe SA on their [website](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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