

Helen Ludwig, chief strategy officer at Wonder



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Industry heavyweights Gareth McPherson (ex-Virgin Active chief marketing officer and both managing director and chief creative officer at Publicis Machine for close to eight years) and Helen Ludwig (local ad industry strategy leader and former managing director at Saatchi & Saatchi) joined forces as CEO and chief strategy officer respectively at Wonder, the country's newest CX-specific agency.



Helen Ludwig, chief strategy officer at Wonder

■ *Could you briefly explain what your role entails?*

I'm co-founder of Wonder, a customer experience agency. I'm a strategist who loves understanding people and loves coming up with ideas, so I develop blueprints for purpose-driven businesses to better connect with their customers.

■ *What's really behind your mask - literally and figuratively speaking?*

A false appearance of calm. Like the duck who appears to be floating peacefully but is pedalling furiously underwater. Jokes aside, I would say curiosity. Belief in possibility. A genuine desire to make a positive difference.

■ *Growing up, what did you want to be?*

Almost everything at different times. From president to marine biologist to fighter pilot to doctor to artist. Part of why I love, what I do now, is that I get to work across so many different categories.

■ *How did you end up working in digital marketing?*

My job has always been to stay connected to what's changing and emerging in markets and marketing, from broad trends to popular culture to channel innovation. So I've naturally kept pace with the evolution of marketing into being digitally-led, and have sought out projects, roles and partnerships in the space.

■ *What excites you most about your career?*

Getting under the hood of different industries. Understanding what makes people tick. Coming up with transformative ideas that make a real difference. And probably most importantly, working with amazing people: business builders, creative

thinkers, optimists and pragmatists.

🎲 ***What has been the highlight of your career?***

I feel like I'm living it at the moment with Wonder, building a purpose-driven business with remarkable people and inspiring clients. But outside of that, I'd say my time with Saatchi & Saatchi at the Publicis Groupe where we had the most incredible run of pitch wins. And before that, my years at the iconic Jupiter Drawing Room in Cape Town as head of strategy. We won Agency of the Year and Agency of the Decade at our high point and it was an amazing team to be a part of.

🎲 ***Where are you based during lockdown?***

Anywhere there's Wi Fi! But mainly that means my office at home right now with a view of the mountains. We're a national agency, but I live in Cape Town.

🎲 ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

I'm doing my integral coach practitioner training so that keeps me pretty busy. Outside of that, we like to get out into nature as a family...it's a great Covid-friendly way to connect with friends and to dispel some of the cabin fever. I also have a regular yoga and meditation practice. And my 5 year old always has a list of suggested activities if we have any gaps to fill!

🎲 ***What's the one thing about you that not many people know, but should?***

I have a terrible sense of direction. I also tend to forget this and take charge and get my friends lost in strange places.

🎲 ***What's your favourite meme/gif of all time?***

I don't have one in particular. I love the meme-inspired comments that spin out of funny ones and appear on other posts. South Africans have a wonderful sense of humour...the most recent example is 'Daddy look I'm a snoek' and the comments that it inspires on other posts e.g. on Kim Kardashian swimming underwater.



🎲 ***Do you have a theme song for 2021?***

More of an anchor song than a theme song... 'The Power is Here Now' by Alexia Chellun. It's a beautiful, grounding, reassuring anthem that makes me feel like it's all going to be OK.

■ **Are you watching any series? Reading any books at the moment?**

I've just finished *Call My Agent*. I was late to the party but loved every episode. Bookwise, I'm busy with Nancy Kline's *The Promise That Changes Everything* (coaching-related) and am about to dive into *Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell (a novel).

■ **What's next for you?**

Nothing. Seriously, I am very happy right where I am...building a business, loving a family and growing my coaching wings. I'd like to see all these aspects continue to expand into something beautiful.

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