

Koo Govender appointed new CEO: Publicis Groupe Africa

Koo Govender will join as the new chief executive officer: Publicis Groupe Africa on 1 February 2023, taking over from John Dixon who will stay on in the capacity of chairperson once Govender takes on the reins.



Image supplied. Koo Govender will join as the new chief executive officer: Publicis Groupe Africa on 1 February 2023

Her priority will be to drive impact for the agency's clients by helping them win in a platform world. She will be based in Johannesburg, reporting to Loris Nold, CEO APAC, Middle East and Africa.

"I couldn't be more thrilled with Govender joining us," says Nold.

"I have known her for more than a decade and she is truly an exceptional leader and a great person. I have been lucky to be involved in Africa for more than 15 years and I am convinced that Govender is exactly the progressive leader we need to take on such a strategically critical region for our clients and our talents," adds Nold.

Passion for Africa

"Govender brings a passion for Africa, and its talents as well as proven product expertise, across creativity, performance, e-commerce, data, content and technology. She adds true leadership and a great understanding of what clients want and need," says Nold.

She explains that in the past few years, the group has accelerated the development of its footprint, scale, capabilities and talents across Africa.

“But our ambition on the continent is bigger given the unique markets' dynamics, the great potential for our own client's business and the inspiration Africa needs to bring to the rest of Publicis Groupe,” she says.

“I am also very pleased that Dixon, my partner of many years will stay on as Chairman to not only ensure a smooth handover to Govender but also so that she and I will be able to continue to count on his vast experience across the continent,” adds Nold.

Employee-first experience

Govender will be responsible for all the operations of Publicis Groupe in South Africa and across the continent including creative, media, PR and influencer, production, commerce, data and technology.

“I am really excited to join the Publicis Groupe and continue to build the accomplishments of the team,” says Govender.

“Together with the leadership and management team, my vision is to empower and grow our people and deliver an employee-first experience, strengthen our capabilities and provide exceptional service and solutions to clients. I am really looking forward to working and learning from amazing and inspiring people locally and internationally,” she expands.

Inspiring leader

Govender is one the most accomplished and inspiring leaders in the region.

Her career started at the Multichoice Group where she spent 22 years, she then moved to VWV group where she was the first female CEO.

Currently she is the CEO of Dentsu South Africa, responsible for Cape Town and Johannesburg as well as specialist divisions and scaled services.

Koo is an accomplished executive and exceptionally well-rounded leader with strong experience in people leadership, client management and business operations in both start-up and growth organizations.

Passion for women empowerment

In addition, she is passionate about DEI and building high-performance, diverse teams that nurture and cultivate the next generation of leaders.

Her passion for women empowerment, mentorship and community upliftment was fulfilled by developing and launching the Mnet Cares brand focusing on breast cancer and literacy.

She also launched the Phakama Women's Academy which is targeted at marketing university students to equip and empower them for the corporate world. Currently, 150 students have graduated through the Phakama Women's academy thus far.

Industry boards and juries

Koo sits on selected Industry, NGO and Business boards as well as sat on the judging panel for the Cannes Lions Festival 2017, Loeries 2017, 2019 and 2022 awards, the AdFocus 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 Awards, 2022 Effie Awards as well the 2020, 2021 and 2022 Promax India, Asia, Australia and Africa Awards.

Most recently, Koo also is a counsellor for the MAC Charter in South Africa and was a judge for Miss SA 2022 top 30.

Next chapter

Dixon, current CEO of Publicis Groupe Africa adds: "I couldn't think of a better leader than Koo to take us to the next chapter across the continent.

"I have known and respected her as a competitor for many years and we are extremely lucky that she's agreed to join us and take on my current role.

"She will be inheriting one of the very best leadership teams in the business and I'm sure she will build on the success that they have achieved together over the last few years.

"I feel privileged to remain involved with both the people and the business that I have been so close to and I look forward to helping Govender and Publicis Groupe succeed for many more years."

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