

# Welcome Wunderman SA's new wunderkind CEO

 By Leigh Andrews 26 Jan 2017

The new year has kicked off with an exciting change at Wunderman, with former consultant Haydn Townsend appointed as group chief executive in SA. He shares how he'll use his cross-functional marketing skills to oversee operations at Wunderman-owned companies like Aqua, Applogix, Base Two and Cerebra.



Townsend.

Townsend has [more than 20 years of experience](#). It's an interesting mix, which stems from Townsend having always felt a sense of responsibility to help give back to the town he was born in, PE. He dubs it, "an amazing city that has a chronic brain-drain problem." So after graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology, along with a chartered marketer qualification from the Graduate School of Marketing and a postgraduate diploma in advertising from AAA School of Advertising, he joined a small agency in PE called Sky Graphics in a hybrid role including media and creative strategy. But after a few years he had to concede and relocate to Cape Town, where he moved across to the client side at Warner Lambert, Goodhope FM and inthebag.co.za, one of SA's first online retailers. All was well until the Nasdaq collapsed in the late 1990s, when Wooltru absorbed the business into Woolworths. That's when Townsend moved to JHB and joined the legendary Robyn Putter and inspirational Gary Leigh at Ogilvy JHB, where he moved through the ranks from planner to planning director to deputy MD over a five-year period. He eventually moved to the Jupiter Drawing Room and was part of the history-making 'perfect storm' where they won MTN, Absa and Sasol in three consecutive days. From there, he went on to Sail Sport & Entertainment as CEO, and most recently launched his own 'creative collaboration' agency, [Pangea Ultima](#) before joining Wunderman.

## Digital marketing: not just digital advertising

Of the new role, Townsend will expand the agency's regional footprint with a particular emphasis on growing clients' businesses through the strategic use of data and digital marketing. He says it's a common misconception that digital marketing and digital advertising is the same thing: "Advertising certainly is a part of it, but not the full picture. Most clients are on a journey of digital transformation. Only the brands that are born digital have fully realised the potential of digitising their business. Most legacy businesses are dealing with technology debt that is proving prohibitive." So, being a guiding light on this journey and then seeing the positive impact on customers' lives is what he's most looking forward to.

Further explaining how the Wunderman SA brand will benefit from his expertise, Townsend describes himself as a cross-functional marketer. He says he'll incorporate that into his group CEO responsibilities as follows: "Due to the high degree of specialisation in agencies, they tend to become one-dimensional. To become a true partner to the marketing departments service, this can be a significant draw back." To this end he has upskilled himself across most disciplines within the agency.

world: advertising, sponsorship, activation, digital and direct, as this full understanding is critical in a digital world that spans all the previously isolated areas. Townsend says this is invaluable in any full-service digital business.

Townsend adds that Wunderman, itself full-service digital, is globally driving the big data-inspired creative approach with massive success. Following that same journey, he says locally they'll be integrating the group offering much more seamlessly and bringing the Wunderman SA business and brand to bear in a much more powerful way. They also have a new building that's currently being fitted out and the Aqua, Base 2, Applogix and Cerebra brands will all be moving in together so as to start the brand migration and effect all the associated benefits of being "creatively driven, data inspired."

## Get ready for voice-controlled, specialised, real-time content

While the penetration of sim cards or other communication chips into our everyday life objects and marketing is not expected to become mainstream this year, Townsend says they will start appearing in pockets. That's one of the trends he most looking forward to from 2017. For example, Burberry has embedded chips into their bags that, when placed on a specialised in-store table, beam content to a screen, tell you how the bag has been made and other 'embedded' content. Effectively, this gives content marketing a whole new channel to play with: Real-time, specialised content where the **actual product becomes the vehicle**. Add the now-growing sophistication of voice-control to this and the possibilities are endless. "Apple watch dictation, Amazon Echo, Samsung Smart TV, Moto Hint and more, this is just the tip of the iceberg," says Townsend.

Exciting times. Listen to the recent Wunderman SA 'Brave Ideas' podcast embedded below for more on what it means to t Wunderman SA companies to 'come together':

You can also [click here](#) for more on Townsend and be sure to [follow him](#) and [Wunderman](#) on Twitter.

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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