

Ryan McManus on orchestrating experiences for connected brands

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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There are a number of South African stars in the VML stable. Most notably, with Tony Granger set to retire, a senior level shake-up means Jason Xenopoulos is now North America CCO, and CEO of VMLY&R New York. He previously served as CCO for the EMEA region. This means Kalpesh Patankar is now regional CCO for Middle East and North Africa, with Ryan McManus taking on the reins as regional chief creative officer for VML SA. Here, McManus lets us in on how he's set to steer the group as we head into 2019.



Ryan McManus, regional chief creative officer for VML SA.

The year 2018 has already been a year of big change for the group, with the integration of Native VML, Y&R, Labstore and Native Media into VML.

And it's been an especially auspicious year for Ryan McManus. Not only did he turn 40, but he was also appointed as regional CCO for VML SA.



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I caught up with McManus recently for a chat on senior moves in the VML agency group, with a particular focus on SA and McManus' new responsibilities...

■ ***Exciting times at the moment – talk us through the short-term results of the senior moves in VML?***

Jarred Cinman and I were recently in the US as part of a meet-up on setting the compass for where the VML group is going, where the network is going, for VML and Y&R collectively, what our ambitions are, what our goals are and how we're going to achieve them and come together to form a way forward.



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27 Sep 2018



It was about the global leadership in new positions and roles in the different regions getting together to discuss that and how we will interact with each other to improve our product and roles. We put plans in motion, which are already starting to take shape.

■ ***Intriguing. With Tony Granger set to retire, could you share some of your favourite memories of his work and impact on VML?***

Tony is a legend in the industry, not just in the network. It's a huge inspiration to have a South African sitting in that global role, out of New York. That's inspiring to look at from afar.



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On the meetings and times I've shared with Tony, his love of concept and love of ideas is amazing. Many people become jaded or cynical as they rise higher up in the industry and get involved in the business side. He really loved and appreciated ideas.

So it's amazing to see someone stay true to the craft of ideas at that level.

■ ***Definitely. Talking about different levels, let's focus on your new role as regional CCO for SA...***

In SA and Africa and the Middle East, we are trying to work out ways to work much tighter together, SA is a unique market and in the way we put VML and Y&R together, this market is a little ahead in terms of merging companies. It's nice to have that behind us and not still have to work all of that out now, so we can focus on the work and our clients

instead.

“ Putting companies together is not as simple as just putting people in the room and hoping it all works out. ”

So it's nice that we've got through that and everyone knows their skillset, their strengths and weaknesses – so we can really start focusing on the creative product in SA as well as a regional level. I'll be meeting more regularly with the global leadership team to improve our strategic, creative and executional product across the board.

We talk a lot about creating connected brands, and that's really what we aim to do.

VML South Africa launches new positioning - 'Creating Connected Brands'

VML South Africa 13 Mar 2018



In doing that, we want to connect people as well, to connect more deeply to our clients as partners, and connect their brands to an audience.

“ With the fragmented media world that we live in now, creating connected brands really works because every touchpoint with your consumer defines your brand. We've realised that orchestration is the new specialisation. ”

We don't think of a brand as a single monolithic entity anymore. A brand is a network of touchpoints... Experiences, events, adverts, products, digital, stores, and more. We aim to orchestrate ideas across this 'network' in a way that elevates every single touchpoint.



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I want to be able to orchestrate ideas and stories, whether it's films and entertainment or products and services or apps – whatever it is, to orchestrate great experiences to create these connected brands. And to do that across the region, and eventually with the global teams.

The connected brand approach works so well for our clients in having a single strategic and creative partner that can think, execute, and orchestrate their needs, while deeply understanding their business problems. This really makes the work relevant and effective.



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We're on a mission to create great work, connections and relationships across the globe that really deliver against our clients' needs, in each and every market.

Sounds like the VML growth trajectory is fired to go far. Keep up with VML through the latest updates in their [press office](#), as well as their [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#) updates.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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