

Damon Stapleton on stepping up in new position, selecting creatives of the future

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

25 Jul 2019

Former ECD of TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris, Damon Stapleton made his move to New Zealand eight years ago but he's stayed at the top of our radar with his excellent award-winning work and insightful industry commentary on his blog, Damon's Brain. Here's more on his impressive recent promotion and his advice to anyone looking to make a similar career leap across the ocean.



Damon Stapleton, now regional chief creative officer for DDB Australia and New Zealand.

One of our favourite regular contributors for his views on the advertising industry as a whole, Damon Stapleton has just been promoted to the position of regional chief creative officer for Doyle Dane Bernbach (DDB) in Australia and New Zealand (AUNZ).

It's an impressive agency, having most recently been awarded an Effie Award for most effective agency in New Zealand, as well as *Campaign* Asia-Pacific's title of NZ Digital Agency of the Year, Social Media Agency of the Year and Creative Agency of the Year for 2018.

But then Stapleton himself is highly impressive, having won over 500 international awards in his career so far – among them Cannes Grands Prix, Grand Clios, an ADC Black Cube and the most effective ad in the world by Warc 100, as well as SA's first and only black D&AD Pencil for *The Zimbabwean* Trillion Dollar Campaign.

And in the five years, Damon has been at DDB New Zealand, DDB has won 10 Agency of the year titles across multiple shows.

His work talks for itself to such an extent that Tara McKenty, creative director for Google APAC and this year's Loeries Google digital communication jury president, confirms that *The Zimbabwean* Trillion Dollar campaign actually made her "move countries at the time, to work for the South African ECD who worked on it – Damon Stapleton"...



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Recently promoted to regional chief creative officer for DDB in New Zealand and Australia, Stapleton was also ECD at Saatchi and Saatchi Australia, and locally served as group ECD of TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris and global ECD of Standard Bank.

Here, Stapleton talks us through the importance of learning and taking on new challenges and experiences, as well as fostering opportunities for the agency's rising stars...

■ ***Congrats on the promotion! Talk us through the jump in responsibility from CCO to regional chief creative officer Australia/New Zealand.***

I will now oversee three agencies in Auckland, Sydney and Melbourne, which will be a change.



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My main responsibilities will be raising the level of creativity, finding talent and winning new business.

■ ***Sounds right up your alley. Expanding on that, [Campaign Brief](#) says you'll "work with the creative leadership teams on both sides of the Tasman to recruit the region's best talent to the network, in addition to fostering opportunities for the agency's rising stars." Why is it so important to have a hand in selecting the creatives of the future?***

I think we sometimes forget this is a talent business. And talent is a real thing. Give me the best tennis racquet in the world and I am not beating Federer.

The bulls#it that anybody can have an idea – that may be true. But can anybody do it under pressure, day after day? Can they do it in a couple of hours? Can they do something fresh? The answer is ‘no’.



What do you want creativity to do?

Damon Stapleton 22 Aug 2018



Agencies need to remember their assets are not the photocopier and the coffee machine, it's the people. That's why it's important. Actually, that's why it's essential.

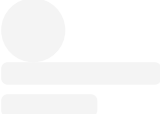
■ **Hear, hear! What are you most looking forward to from the new role?**


Learning new stuff. Having new challenges and experiences. And getting a large amount of air points!

■ **Nice. How does the Australia/New Zealand creative scene differ to what you remember from your SA days?**


I think it would be unfair for me to compare markets, especially one that I am sure has changed in the eight years since I have been there.

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[View this post on Instagram](#)



Hunt Lascaris Old School in Auckland. Jenny Glover and a man with a very fetching hat.

A post shared by [Damon Stapleton](#) (@dbs81270) on Mar 1, 2019 at 8:06pm PST

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What I will say is if there is one thing that is always true, it is that no matter the budget, the scale or the challenge, creativity and ideas are always what matters the most in any market. It is something that makes South Africa special.

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You don't have the scale, so the ideas have to be great.

■ ***We know you're largely behind the scenes, but there's no denying you've won over 500 international awards and your Damon's Brain posts have global readership. Any interesting 'fan' moments where people recognise you on the street/at international award shows?***

I think if you think you are famous because of advertising, you might be a wanker.

Having said that, I have had someone shout out my name in a lobby in Vegas, saying he loved my blog. And I do get people talking to me like we have known each other for years. That can be weird!

■ ***Clearly you're in high regard. Let's share some advice in this article then: What would you tell SA creatives looking to make the leap across the ocean?***

Believe in yourself. Hustle. Fake it until you make it. Hustle.



Judging D&AD: The hustle and strive

Damon Stapleton 3 May 2017



Laugh. Don't take it too seriously. Work as hard as you can.

Simple as that. Send Stapleton your notes of congratulations over [email](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#), leave a comment on his [blog](#) and keep an eye out for his [regular thought leadership](#) on site!

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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