

# Ad network expands into Botswana

Since July 2006, Saatchi & Saatchi has rapidly grown its reach across the African continent, with the addition of offices in Reunion, Madagascar, Mayotte and now, this month, Botswana to its Africa Network. The network includes 13 agencies situated in sub-Saharan Africa with key hubs in Nigeria, Kenya and SA.

The other agencies are situated in Uganda, Tanzania, Ghana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mauritius and the DRC.

Saatchi & Saatchi CEO and head of the Africa Network Gail Curtis says the most serious issue facing networks in Africa today is being able to provide the levels of competency that multi-national clients expect: "In the past, there has been an argument for picking the most reputable agency in a region regardless of whom its aligned to, but this is rapidly changing.

## Pan-regional

"Revered multi-national clients like Orange and Guinness demand a much more committed and integrated pan-regional resource for their business. The days of being able to have dots on the map in Africa are gone."

Over the past five years Saatchi & Saatchi has driven major change in its Africa Network and has ruthlessly applied its most important criteria: Engage only people who match your passion for the Saatchi & Saatchi brand, it's culture and the expectations people have of the end product.

Saatchi & Saatchi Africa Network director Eric Frank says agencies are brands in their own right and clients buy into the agency brand, its vision, values, strategic tools, creative philosophy and ways of working: "It is a package. If the agency brand and all it stands for is poorly or inconsistently represented in a region, then the brand has a serious weakness from which it's pretty difficult to recover.

## Ideas that transcend

"Having been appointed as Orange's lead agency on the continent we specifically look towards partnering with agencies who share our belief in ideas that transcend the advertising parameter and create really meaningful relationships with people.

"Our expansion over the last 18 months is specifically geared towards creating a network that truly delivers the vision, values and performance that clients expect from Saatchi & Saatchi world wide. No matter where they operate or choose to go to."

When the opportunity arose to pitch for the Orange business in Botswana in December 2006, Saatchi & Saatchi selected a

small independent agency called The Dialogue Group to be their partner. The decision was based upon identifying a team with talent, hunger and a likeminded spirit and willingness to break the mould of traditional communication channels and to truly communicate with people in a relevant and lasting manner.

In one day a team from Dialogue and a few other network teams generated ideas that helped Dialogue win the business against some heavyweight local teams, the likes of which included, O&M, TBWA, McCann and FCB. In early January 2007 Dialogue Saatchi & Saatchi Botswana was established.

"Sadly, many agencies in Africa still consider an international alignment a free meal ticket to international business, but as Africa becomes more and more competitive, this attitude must change," Frank concludes.

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