

Mpange Chapeshamano makes an Avatar comeback

 By Jessica Tennant

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Politics aside, integrated marketing agency [Avatar](#) has done a management reshuffle with co-founder Zibusiso Mkhwanazi stepping down as CEO to take on a bigger role as group CEO of Avatar Investment Holdings and the Avatar360 Group, which owns the agency's Johannesburg and Cape Town offices.

Five years in and the full-service agency is looking to grow across the continent through marketing-related acquisitions and investments. To successfully navigate this transition Mpange Chapeshamano was appointed as MD of Avatar Johannesburg, effective 1 February 2017.

Commenting on this new appointment, Mkhwanazi says “Chapeshamano is a powerhouse. He ran Africa Red for Ogilvy and has become a major heavyweight. Prior to that he was with Avatar for a short time, and made a huge impact, so we are so glad to welcome him back to head up our Johannesburg operation.”

Here, Chapeshamano shares more about his career in marketing that he describes as, er, “the next best thing you can do with your clothes on”, and how he plans to bring big agency experience to a business that’s on “a beautiful growth trajectory” (not behind a desk)...

■ What does your new role entail?

- Driving a culture of ruthless curiosity within the business
- Being an architect of choice for our clients businesses
- Driving growth of the business and the people
- Ensuring operational, creative and strategic excellence
- And putting Avatar on the ‘creative sphere’



Mpange Chapeshamano

■ What is the size of your team?

Avatar has a team of 60 people in total spanning creative, content, social, strategy, account management and production. We also have an office in Cape Town with Mthunzi Plaatjie as MD.

■ Comment on the agency’s growth strategy.

Relationships are key. I always say it is easier to solve a problem with a friend or to even sell an idea to a friend. Our growth is going to come from forging solid relationships with our existing clients, looking for more friends and showcasing more of our work to the public. We are also focusing on our existing clients and mining business from them as it is easier to get business from existing clients as opposed to new ones.

■ What are some of the opportunities and challenges currently facing the agency?

It is about the next chapter for Avatar. The last five years have been great from a business perspective. Now it is the next phase of our business. Managing growth, ensuring that the same culture is maintained and great work as we navigate this ever-growing brand.

■ What has been your most noteworthy learning in the space so far?

When you position your brand carefully, pursue your purpose ruthlessly, all is possible. Avatar is a challenger brand and the business has overcome lots of challenges by going against the norm. More importantly, being consistent and growing exponential year on year.

■ What do you love most about marketing as a career?

You are always learning something new. One minute you are working on a nation brand, next a financial services provider, the following day a car manufacturer and so on... One never gets bored. And honestly speaking, it is the next best thing you can do with your clothes on (hides).

■ What trends do you predict for your industry in 2017?

I am excited about **the gamification of everything** and what that means for the marketing space. Though it may not be the big thing for 2017, it is currently making inroads. Aside from that, I think clients are waking up to the fact that an idea can come from anywhere, anyone and at any time. So whoever comes up with a great idea is a winner, and that winner might just be a consumer.

■ What are your goals for this year?

Grow as an individual. Grow the business and make a difference one brief at a time.

■ What's at the top of your to-do list?

Continue driving a culture of nothing but great work within the agency.

■ What inspires you?

Great ideas, people and being out there where consumers exist. The desk is a dangerous place from which to look at the world.

■ What are you currently reading/listening to for work?

I always check a quote or two in *Smoke and Mirrors* by [Tony Koenderman](#) to drive me. Otherwise, I am reading *Dancing the Death Drill* by Fred Khumalo.

■ Tell us something about yourself not generally known.

Umm, I still want to be an architect.



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