

Gareth McPherson takes on dual role as Publicis Machine CCO, MD

 By Jessica Tennant 28 Mar 2019

Publicis Machine recently appointed Gareth McPherson as agency MD, this in addition to his appointment as chief creative officer.



Gareth McPherson

McPherson has been an integral part of the agency since its acquisition by Publicis in 2012, effectively having led the agency creatively since its inception.

“ Our agency has always been built on creativity. It isn't something we pull out of the workflowchart at Stage 4 to add some colour to a client presentation. ”

“At Publicis Machine, we employ creative thinking at every level, solving brand problems with unique solutions that work, and with an intent of them working well,” he says.

Here, he tells us that it's the people – the team and their partners – that excite him most about where the agency is going and his instrumental part in 'leading the change'...

■ How do you feel about your appointment from group executive director into a dual role as MD and CCO?

Excited for the challenge. Having led the agency from a creative point of view, it felt like a natural evolution to move toward having discussions with clients around solving their business challenges, while still leading product creativity within Publicis Machine. As one of the founding members of the business, it felt like this was the natural next step.

■ What do you love most about working at Publicis Machine/what excites you most about the agency and where it's going?

Definitely the people I work with, the incredible talent within the agency and our agency partners. Our strong agency culture we have built over the last six years has really been a defining factor in our success. Our agency wouldn't be on the radar if not for the passionate and driven people on our team.

I'm excited to be part of this constantly evolving industry, and to be instrumental in leading the changes within the agency. I believe it's our ability to constantly adapt that has led to our evolving into a true brand experience agency. We solve brand problems with unique solutions that really work, and that makes us unique as an agency.

▣ **What do you love most about your career in general and the creative industry in particular?**

I really enjoy getting to know the workings of multiple industries, what makes them tick. We partner with blue-chip clients across various disciplines and offerings, and you really do have to be curious and have a real thirst for learning to really understand each brand.

Coming up with creative solutions to their business challenges in a fresh creative way, means that no day is ever the same. With the way the world is moving, technology has disrupted almost every facet of business and as it continues to evolve, the constant 'new' approach to things becomes ever more exciting. Technology is challenging how we think and also how we best use it to further success.

▣ **Tell us a bit about your experience and what you hope to achieve in your new position(s).**

I came from a big brand creative thinking background and joined a bunch of young, forward-thinking guys to form Machine back in 2012. Embracing a born-from-digital approach we grew the agency quite quickly and we were acquired by Publicis in 2012 to form Publicis Machine. Looking back on this journey, from where we are to now, I can clearly see how being creatively-minded has been the momentum behind our success. Placing this at the core of everything we do will continue to be the future of successes.



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▣ **Any career highlights you're particularly proud of?**

There have been a number of highlights, from creative awards at festivals such as Cannes, Loeries, O Show, D&AD... to winning Breakthrough Agency of the Year, the agency touted as the one-to-watch... growing our client partner base through a number of key pitched wins... But I'd have to say it's the partnerships we've formed over the past few years, with clients who have chosen to do business with us that stand out as real career highlights. Our business is bedded in the people we partner with, and these relationships have really extended to strong friendships based on trust and delivery.



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🔸 **Speaking of people, you've made several strategic hires to bolster the agency's ability to provide creative solutions.**

Yes, from the outset we've bolstered the team with a number of key hires. Sarah Browning-de Villiers has joined us from Associated Media in the role of chief content officer; Amanda Alves now heads up digital; Bernadette Marais is our PR strategist and Ruddy Gatere our strategist here in Cape Town. Moagi Bodibe remains the agency's chief strategy officer in Johannesburg and Marc Horne in Cape Town. Brendan Hoffmann runs the studio and delivers the high standard of creative in the role of group creative director along with PJ Eales in the role of creative director.



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

Checking in with my teams, and connecting with our clients, whether it's hopping onto a telecon or meeting for a catch-up at the local coffee shop. I also spend a fair amount of time trawling social media to stay ahead of trends. As an agency, ingraining our clients' brands into popular culture is pivotal to our strategy, and as a leader, it's crucial that I know where pop culture and trends are going.



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🔸 **What are you currently reading/watching/listening to for work?**

I read and watch quite a bit of content, from blogs and podcasts to *Netflix* and documentaries. My taste is pretty broad. I'm addicted to getting my daily fix of [Highsnobiety](#) (a great blog that started off in streetwear and now comments on trend-based lifestyle stuff). I also trawl a lot on an old favourite, [Vice](#).

🔸 **Tell us something about yourself not generally known?**

I buy Lego and pretend it's for my kids. Ha!

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