

M&C Saatchi Abel's Jason Harrison on its successful eight-year partnership with Heineken

By  Juanita Pienaar

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M&C Saatchi Abel recently announced that its client, Heineken, was crowned SA's top beer for the third year in a row at the recent [Sunday Times Top Brands Awards](#). M&C Saatchi Abel founding partner and group managing director Jason Harrison said Heineken winning, yet, again is a validation of a successful eight-year partnership.



M&C Saatchi Abel founding partner and group managing director, Jason Harrison. Image supplied.

We caught up with Harrison who lets us in on what the secret to a successful agency/client partnership is. He also elaborates on his career in advertising, and what excites him most about M&C Saatchi Abel and where it's heading.

■ ***Congrats on your achievement. How do you feel about it?***

Immensely proud. They say a client doesn't care how much you know until they know how much you care, and for the whole agency, we really do care about the success of Heineken – as it was one of our very first clients who gave us a chance when we first opened our doors. The fact that we have been able to do this three times in a row, as one team, is also a testament to our eight-year relationship.



M&C Saatchi Abel celebrates Heineken as top beer in SA hat-trick

M&C Saatchi Abel 3 Oct 2019



■ ***What is the secret to a successful agency/client partnership? Trust. You cannot achieve anything meaningful without it. When you truly trust each other, it allows you to respect each other's opinions, and build a relationship with openness and honesty. That is when the magic happens.***

▀ **What excites you most about the agency and where it's going?**

It's our 10th birthday, next year February, and I am amazed at how quickly time has flown and what we have managed to achieve together with our clients. So, I am looking forward to celebrating that with our people and our clients – with tequila of course! What excites me every day is the people I work with: my partners are phenomenal and inspire me daily, and the fresh and hot talent we are attracting into the agency is hugely exciting.

▀ **What do you love most about your career in advertising?**

The power of ideas: I have always had a fascination with an industry that can take something completely intangible and shape it into something so tangible and powerful. I really am happiest when I am closest to the thinking, work and genius people who make it.

The power of people: I've always been someone who wants to get the best out of people. As I tell new starters at the agency, my job is simple: "To help you be your best selves". I love knowing what I have put into people (that sometimes they only realise much later on) and how they then fly as a result. It's hugely rewarding for me. If I didn't get into advertising, I would have been a teacher.



Are you confusing success and achievement?

Jason Harrison, M&C Saatchi Abel 20 Jun 2017



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

The Street Store is a huge career highlight for me. It still continues to make a difference globally and we are closing in on the 1,000th store in December. It was a simple idea that started in the agency, with talented people, that we got behind and invested a great deal of our time and money into making happen because we believed in its power to make the world a better place.



The Street Store - supporting the homeless with dignity

12 Feb 2014



▀ **What are you most looking forward to/enjoying so far?**

We've done 10 years and now we are gearing the company up for the next 10. We have some pretty audacious plans and, globally, the M&C Saatchi network is going to be focussing on a single objective: making our companies the home to the creative entrepreneur. That is a wildly exciting vision (especially for a London Stock Exchange-listed company) and we believe it is where we will continue to be indispensable to our clients.

▀ **What's at the top of your to-do list (at work)?**

2020 budgets #sigh.

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

A must-read for anyone in advertising is *Creativity, Inc.* by Ed Catmull. It's the story of Pixar and overcoming the unseen forces that stand in the way of true inspiration. Also loving *Peaky Blinders* on Netflix at the moment. The podcast I enjoy listening to is *How I Built This* with Guy Raz. He always has great speakers, who have done some seriously awesome stuff.

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

I am actually the best trail runner in our #runsofanarchy running group, I am just holding myself back to make them feel better.

For news and updates click through to the M&C Saatchi [press office](#) and connect with Harrison on [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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