

# Wunderman Thompson appoints Sufia Parkar as diversity, equity and inclusion director for EMEA



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Wunderman Thompson has appointed Sufia Parkar as EMEA diversity, equity and inclusion director. Parkar will be partnering directly with the chief people officer EMEA as well as the global chief DE&I officer, to lead and continue building the IE&D framework for the EMEA region.



Wunderman Thompson has appointed Sufia Parkar as EMEA inclusion equity and diversity director

Parkar will be reporting to Ewen Sturgeon, CEO of Wunderman Thompson EMEA & APAC, and day-to-day operations to Ezinne Okoro, global chief inclusion, equity & diversity officer. She'll sit on the EMEA Exco. She joins from a position at McCann Worldgroup where she was global associate director of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Parkar shares more with us...

■ ***Congrats on your appointment at Wunderman Thompson as diversity, equity and inclusion director for EMEA. How do you feel about it?***

I'm really excited to partner with amazing leaders here at WT. I've worked really hard over the last 20 years to get to where I am and I feel so blessed to be working now with innovative industry leaders shaping our future. However, I also know that this isn't the case for many of my peers who've worked equally hard.

“ There are still too many people who are struggling to be given the opportunities that they will shine and thrive in. ”

As part of my role, I'm really excited to help find, develop and nurture talent that will really make us be who we want to be: A place where we can bring our whole selves to the workplace every day.

■ ***Could you elaborate on what this role entails?***

I'll be working directly with Ezinne Okoro, our global chief inclusion, equity & diversity officer and be representing our team

at our EMEA Exco. We are striving hard to create an inclusive culture that produces equitable outcomes. As part of my role, I'll help create and develop an IE&D strategy that reflects the environment we want for our people and the growth we want for our clients and communities globally. I'll also be auditing and making recommendations on our current policies to ensure they are producing the outcomes we want.

This will include making sure we have the right tools, techniques and training that is tailored for our local markets. It's important to stress here, we aren't universalising, we are localising. What works in one area may not work in another, but we can inspire and learn from each other, all the while deepening a WT culture of inclusivity and equitable outcomes.



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Evan-Lee Courie 20 Jan 2021



### ■ ***How and when did this come about? When do you take up this position?***

I started on 1 November 2021. I made life-long friendships at McCann and I have so many valued mentors who helped me to get to where I am today. I've received many offers over the years, but they weren't aligned with my journey. I saw an opportunity to continue to progress and challenge myself as well as make a positive change at WT. It was a tough decision, but I'm really excited to be here. I've been welcomed so warmly here, I already feel like part of the family!

### ■ ***What excites you most about joining Wunderman Thompson?***

Change isn't just something we can wish into being. We have algorithms of conditioned responses that can be deeply ingrained. I can see WT is helping create a culture that breaks these algorithms that hold us back.

“ WT wants positive disruption that'll help us unlock our creativity and talent. ”

We have an abundance of skills and experience here, people ready and capable. I'm excited also to be working in an organisation that aligns with my values. I know WT's aspiration is for all of us to have the energy and ability to be truly ourselves, unfiltered. That ambition and the real support we have throughout senior leadership as well as grassroots buy-in is what will help us achieve where we want to be.

### ■ ***You have years of experience in learning and development, employee culture and engagement. What unique approach will you bring to Wunderman Thompson?***

My experience has taught me how to approach learning and development based on something we already know. We know we are not machines, so we know that production line 'one-size fits all' approaches to learning don't work. We should listen and truly hear our colleagues on how they want to develop. This holds true whether it is for their learning needs, access to progression or how they want to belong to WT. I look forward to connecting with colleagues hearing their experiences and sharing mine.

### ■ ***What do you love most about your career? What is your proudest moment?***

I have many moments, each hard-won. I undertook my post-graduate qualifications with three children even younger than they are now. I've won client businesses and developed unique training programmes that empowered and upskilled colleagues across all levels. I've also launched a whole new business unit that solely focussed on connecting mainstream brands with their diverse consumer bases.

But what stands most out in my career is when I reached a point where I knew I wanted to do something more meaningful to me and help amplify under-represented voices and groups. This realisation was the catalyst of creating my own roadmap

into the world of IE&D. I've loved and appreciated every moment of this journey as I look back ... and look ahead to many more!

### ■ ***What is your biggest motivation in life?***

As part of my faith, I want to be the best person I can be every day. There is no end-point. I want to continue to work on myself and part of that is helping others be their best selves too. I love my children, and I hope that I can be that inspiration to them that shows that it is possible to succeed through hard work, living fully and being true to ourselves. I also want to help make that statement true for them because I know 30 years ago that may not have been. I'm in a position now where I can help continue to drive that change, it's a blessing, but also a responsibility that I feel deeply.

### ■ ***What advice do you have for organisations when it comes to managing diversity and inclusion in the workplace?***

First things first. This isn't an 'add-on' or a regulatory burden. It isn't even something that is done as an addendum to a corporate report. Organisations should understand that we do it because it is intrinsically good in itself and that needs a cultural change.

“ *When we have people with diverse experiences, diverse perspectives and diverse backgrounds, it inspires us to learn from one another.* ”

It goes without saying that this helps the bottom line if people are still on-the-fence. If we view IE&D with an open mind, it's easy to see why. Would we rather have people bring half of themselves to an organisation, or feel like they can contribute wholly? Do we want people to feel alienated or connected? All of this improves outcomes no matter the metric used.

### ■ ***Covid-19 has certainly changed our lives forever. What approach should business leaders take going forward in this global crisis?***

Covid-19 accelerated changes that would have taken decades to happen in a few months. Remote working has helped work/life balance in a myriad of ways. It's helped people with families, it's helped reduce commuting costs, it's helped equalise and democratise discussions. Status symbols and chains of authority matter little if we are all 3 inches by 3 on a Zoom window. Discussions are won on merit, not on status. We have to recognise that and appreciate conversations are not top-down, not even two-way, but many-to-many.

“ *In this new environment, organisations with ethical values, inclusive cultures and welcoming workplaces are the ones that will succeed.* ”

The change is already here, we want to be in a place where we are part of it.

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