

M&C Saatchi and M&N Brands part to grow independently

 By Jessica Tennant

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Zibusiso Mkhwanazi, founder of M&N brands, Avatar's holding company and Jerry Mpufane, chairman of M&C Saatchi Group confirmed in a statement that the two companies will amicably part and go their separate ways.

According to the statement:

“ M&N Brands has embarked on a path to build a Pan-African network, thus realising a long-held dream. M&C Saatchi Group already operates a very successful African network of its own, servicing clients in more than 20 markets on the continent... Both companies emphasise that they part as friends, and that there may be further opportunities to collaborate in the future. ”

I interviewed Mkhwanazi to find out more...

■ Why are you parting ways with the M&C Saatchi Group?

Our vision is to create an agency network for Africans by Africans, and it is rolling out quickly. So, the decision to focus on M&N Brands' African ambitions does mean a parting of ways.

Obviously, we hope to collaborate with a number of agencies, including M&C Saatchi Abel when opportunities arise. Veli and I have a huge amount of admiration and respect for Mike, Jerry and the team and we all remain great friends. It is a positive move because it allows us to open and acquire agencies on the rest of the continent.



Zibusiso Mkhwanazi



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■ What does this mean in terms of the deal signed in January last year?

The deal now falls away by mutual agreement.

■ Will you be moving premises?

We will but not because of anything acrimonious, M&C Saatchi Abel needs the space and with our growth strategy it makes sense for us to be in our building, space and identity.

Avatar and M&C Saatchi do not share any clients or staff so we were not operationally dependent on one another. We are all still good friends with the entire M&C Saatchi team, with a mutual understanding that the Avatar and M&N Brands has reached the business maturity to grow independently.

■ Tell us more about the Pan-African network you aspire to build, and why you believe this is a step in the right direction?

We have been locked out of too many pitches because we are independent and are not part of a global network. This makes absolutely no sense to me when SA brands and companies are forced to use agencies that they know are not getting diversity and transformation right, and that are not getting their brand conversations right.

“ We need to own our stories again, and I know that in order to do that that we need to build a network. The M&N Brands' dream is big but is in motion. Five years ago, Avatar was a challenger brand and is now a leader. Now M&N Brands is the challenger, hungrily looking for fellow owner-managed agencies who want to unlock opportunity. ”

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