

# Yesterday, today, tomorrow...

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2020 didn't go quite as expected, but we are ready to approach the new year with the learnings from the year that was, says **Koo Govender**, CEO of [Dentsu South Africa](#).



## Reflecting on yesterday

It goes without saying that the coronavirus pandemic had an instrumental impact on every aspect of life – here and abroad – and there's every indication that we have not seen the last of #TheRona. The media and advertising industry, as well as our industry partners and clients, experienced sustained disruption resulting from months of uncertainty and global restrictions and regulations.

While it might be hard to believe, there were a few positives and multiple learnings to take from this experience. As a business, staff were able to spend more time with their children and families due to reduced or no time spent commuting to and from the office. Colleagues, teams and clients forged deeper relationships, and increased collaboration between various lines of business propelled innovation and dedication, creating a strong foundation and strengthening our positioning for 2021.

The role and importance of technology as a key enabler of mobility proved to be more important than ever before. Agile working strategies were successful within our organisation, and we empowered our people to decide how, when and where they worked to responsibly deliver results, which reflects both our business values and the evolving workplace as a digital-economy business.

## Making plans today

As part of a global agency, which considers people to be our greatest asset, one of the major focus areas for 2021 will continue to be investing in people. Upskilling and developing staff, building and protecting the 'one Dentsu' culture, as well as a strong focus on diversity and inclusion are all goals we plan to drive forward with great enthusiasm.

Innovative and sustainable social-impact strategies and CSR initiatives designed to support community upliftment are more important than ever given that [2.2 million jobs were shed in South Africa in 2020](#), accelerating the expanded unemployment

rate to 42% for the second quarter of 2020.

From a business perspective, we will be building on a more client-centric operating model – utilising our network, marketing and sales strategies, owned products, technology and tools to strengthen client strategies – maximising client ROI and brand growth.

Based on the latest [Dentsu CMO survey 2020](#), which draws on the views and input of 1,361 CMOs across 12 markets as they plan for recovery, the number-one challenge is understanding how consumer behaviour has irrevocably changed as a result of the pandemic. Therefore, another area of focus is to assist our clients in navigating change and providing them with fully integrated answers to their marketing challenges.

### **Approaching tomorrow with positivity**

Naturally, there are challenges we all may face in 2021. Everyone is wondering when we will experience some semblance of normality, when South Africa will receive a vaccine and how we are coping with the second wave. How many more alcohol bans and budget cuts are on the cards? These are all questions we ask ourselves every day, but we walk into the unknown with the certainty that we are strong as individuals and as an organisation.

Going forward, I believe, it continues to be our responsibility to protect our people, create a positive working environment, focus on community upliftment, maintain and foster innovation, practise agility towards our clients and treat the recovery of our industry as a marathon and not a sprint.

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