

Danielle Sneiders, MD of HelloFCB+, shares the growth of the human connections agency



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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HelloFCB+, a digital human connections agency, which resulted from the merger between Hellocomputer Cape Town and FCB Cape Town, has a lifespan of little over two years, and despite a volatile business landscape with constantly changing operational context, has retained clients, won new business, and led to client pivoting and become more competitive; whilst rolling out social impact work that fostered human connections with clients.



Danielle Sneiders, managing director at HelloFCB+

Danielle Sneiders, who was appointed to head up HelloFCB+ in April 2020, says "I joined the agency in the week of the first lockdown. Taking over the reins having met three people in person was challenging to say the least. That said, the last two years have been testing for everyone in our industry – clients, partners and agencies alike have felt and seen tremendous heartache, and experienced loss not to mention the physical, mental and spiritual toll it's taken on all of us."

During these trying times, HelloFCB+ looked at themselves critically and flipped the coin to focus on learning, adapting, failing forward, and navigating the pandemic with a creative and entrepreneurial mindset with their people at the heart of everything they do.

Their strategy at the onset of the pandemic was two-fold; retention of clients by focusing on 'value-add partnership beyond the brief' with organic growth delivering the lion share of revenue over the period. Secondly, focusing on their most valuable asset, their people.

Human connection

"As the 'human connections agency' we set up the Connections Club; to ensure humans in our agency feel valued, recognised, respected and rewarded with the aim to connect, inspire and support as we adapted to remote working. Interestingly, the remote scenario brought our people closer together with everyone working hard at connecting with each other underpinned by a strong purpose-led culture. Regular Monday meet-up's and quarterly updates outlining the goals of the quarter and feedback at the end of each quarter ensured an agency that was aligned on our goals, ambitions and progress," notes Sneiders.

Dynamic workspaces and teams

Like many other businesses, HelloFCB+ has had to make some operational changes during the coronavirus pandemic.

"HelloFCB+ have been in a unique space to get a lot right during this time and step-change, having a proactive and entrepreneurial mindset has continued to carry us through. In an ongoing effort in building dynamic workspaces and teams, we've reengineered the concept of brick-and-mortar and have created a future-fit WFA model allowing us to re-invest our always-on overheads into tech, tools and our people delivering value to our clients, partners and staff alike.

"Remote work could mean that people don't feel 'seen' by their HODs and as a result HelloFCB+ has committed considerable investment towards training, with a focus on upskilling, leadership and equality workshops with the intention of cultivating opportunities for growth, mentorship and self-mastery at all levels within our organisation," Says Sneiders

"In addition, the WFA model affords our staff the autonomy to choose whether they want to be in their dedicated workspace at The Foundry (in Green Point, Cape Town) full-time, at home full-time or a combination of the two, the flexibility is seen as a value-add incentive to our staff.

"Building our team is an ongoing process directed by the ever-evolving need scope of our clients, and the WFA approach has meant that geography is no longer an issue, allowing us to glean talent from a wider network and cherry-pick specialists," explains Sneiders.

Another key change was reducing the number of full-time staff to bring on need scope permalance specialists and fresh thinking. HelloFCB+ also reorganised its creative department by bringing creativity, strategy and social into one centralised thought-leadership hub, together with key senior hires to reinforce the approach.

"Fuelcontent, our award-winning content production unit introduced our new Rapid Content offering where we deliver short-lived content at competitive rates with quick turnaround," adds Sneiders.

Retaining clients

With the exception of one client, HelloFCB+ have retained all business through the most unprecedented times. Retaining Western Cape Government for four consecutive years, along with long-standing relationships like Ninety One (12 years) demonstrates that HelloFCB+ can consistently deliver in the most challenging of times.

"The greatest pivot was probably Western Cape Government and City of Cape Town who had the task of educating citizens on containing the spread of the virus, the importance of sanitising and social distancing and the vaccination programme itself," notes Sneiders.

[Covid Diaries](#) from [HelloFCB Agency](#) on [Vimeo](#).

During all three waves of Covid-19, HelloFCB+ needed to react quickly and decisively when dealing with an ever-evolving narrative around the pandemic. Not only did they produce behaviour change work that took care of communities but worked hard to combat the stigmatisation of Covid positive people by changing the emotional connection society has towards one another.

Sneiders comments, "We created empathy and kindness in a traumatic time and prevailed in truly changing lives. Importantly we demonstrated that we are incredibly quick to respond with real-time data led insights and agility in an unpredictable evolving landscape."

Making strides

As a relatively newly merged agency, HelloFCB+ was honoured to be a Mid-size Agency finalist at the *Financial Mail* AdFocus Awards (2021).



All the 2021 *Financial Mail* AdFocus award winners!

24 Nov 2021



They were also accoladed at the IAB Bookmark awards proving their prowess in the digital communication world, and their ability to partner at all levels by putting creativity at the heart of the entire customer journey, across all disciplines delivered with measurable results.



HelloFCB+ and Fuelcontent landed 6 Pixels for 3 clients at the IAB Bookmark Awards

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Creativity remains the lifeblood of HelloFCB+, ranking 2nd at the Loeries in the mid-sized agency category and a strong showing at Bookmarks and a finalist for AdFocus mid-size agency of the year. This, along with a host of new business wins and significant organic growth, has seen HelloFCB+ set a solid foundation to becoming one of the fore-leading agencies in the country.

The appointment of Lactalis and their portfolio of brands (Parmalat, President Cheese, Melrose) and the subsequent appointment of Steri Stumpie included some of their news businesses.

"We were also excited to be chosen as partners for Twizza, a proudly South African homegrown brand, Atlantis SEZ a zoned area for sustainable and green business. News24 are collaborating with us and we are proud of the repositioning project work that recently launched", adds Sneiders.



HelloFCB+ and Twizza say Cheers to a new partnership

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Sneiders believes that Hello FCB+ would be hard pressed to single out any one piece of work as a large number of the campaigns they've created for both the City of Cape Town and the Western Cape Government over the years have been hugely impactful.

"We're incredibly fortunate that we get to use creativity to help solve, not only business issues but social issues as well. Some of the most meaningful and powerful campaigns we've produced have been on themes like GBV, road safety, anti-bullying, literacy and most recently Covid-19 and vaccinations.

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Getting it right though, takes a thorough understanding of your audience's mindset and close involvement from everyone associated with the project; from client and account management all the way through to strategy and creative. Our culture as an agency is firmly centered around collaboration and interrogation. Without those two components, making a genuine human connection with your audience is just guesswork," concludes Sneiders.

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