

Miles Murphy on heading up Wunderman Thompson South Africa

Issued by [Wunderman Thompson](#)

11 Jun 2020

On 2 April 2020, Miles Murphy officially started in his role as CEO at Wunderman Thompson South Africa, one of the country's largest marketing services agencies.



Miles Murphy, CEO at Wunderman Thompson South Africa

For the past 30 years, Murphy built a career in marketing and technology and is renowned for being the founder and director of Liquorice, an award-winning digital marketing agency launched in 2005. Within a decade, the agency was thriving and attracted the attention of Publicis Groupe. Following a successful sale to this multinational communications network, Murphy was asked to stay on as COO within Publicis Groupe Africa where he led 42 agencies across 36 African markets.

Commenting on being approached about the Wunderman Thompson role, Murphy described: “I’d been watching the coming together of the agency over the previous 18 months and was enthused by the scale of aspiration and the parts of specialist best-of-breed legacy agencies in SA, including JWT, Aqua, Cerebra, Mirum, Applogix, Acceleration and The Hardy Boys. Each of these companies was first to market and the best in their specialist disciplines. How could I say no? I relish a challenge, and this one is perfect for me.”

Although SA’s Covid-19 lockdown had been implemented by April, the agency’s leadership team pulled out all the stops to welcome Murphy remotely and bring him up-to-speed quickly from day one. Murphy praises his new colleagues as being passionate, problem-solvers and exceptionally talented. He said: “They represent all the expertise that we offer our clients. Our debate is open, honest and lively, but once we agree on a plan, we are a united front. My leadership team are one of the joys of this new role, and I feel honoured and humbled to be working with them.”

Forced to adapt his First 100-Days Plan under the new circumstances, Murphy has prioritised relationship building as well as helping both staff and clients navigate through the disruption.

He shared: “My primary concern is to protect the safety, wellbeing and livelihoods of my colleagues. I’m also concentrating on maintaining exceptional client output throughout this phase. The lockdown has sped-up all the trends that the agency was already riding, and so the pandemic has somewhat fast-tracked our client’s adoption of technology-enabled communication channels. We’ve seen significant growth across these disciplines.”

Unpacking some of his future goals for the agency, Murphy expressed: “While many of the essential building blocks are already in place, I’ve joined Wunderman Thompson at a transformative time. We have a superb team, sought-after clients and access to a global network, but there’s still much to do in raising the profile of the agency and the innovative work we create. Our team also increasingly acts as a centre of excellence for our global network and we’re operating as a technology hub for clients worldwide, so we plan to expand this substantially. Over the next year or two, I want to significantly increase employment opportunities for South Africans in our sector by letting them work on local and global brands.”

The competitive landscape in South African marketing services reveals that apart from Wunderman Thompson, no one agency can provide end-to-end customer experience through advertising, design, digital, media, data, customer experience and technology. Wunderman Thompson is the only agency partner that can truly offer the depth of expertise in all specialist disciplines to provide integrated solutions across multiple customer touchpoints, at scale.

Murphy’s vision is to build Wunderman Thompson SA into the leading tech-enabled integrated agency with creativity and innovation at its core. He intends to firmly entrench the agency as a growth partner to its clients with experts in innovation, data, digital, user experience, design and technology – inspiring consumers to connect with brands.

About Wunderman Thompson

At Wunderman Thompson, we exist to inspire growth for ambitious brands. Part creative agency, part consultancy and part technology company, our experts provide end-to-end capabilities at a global scale to deliver inspiration across the entire brand and customer experience.

We are 20,000 strong in 90 markets around the world, and in South Africa we are one of the largest integrated marketing services agencies with over 600 professionals. Our people bring together creative storytelling, diverse perspectives, inclusive thinking, and highly specialised vertical capabilities, to drive growth for our clients. We offer deep expertise across the entire customer journey, including communications, commerce, consultancy, CRM, CX, data, production and technology.

Wunderman Thompson is a WPP agency (NYSE: WPP).

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