

# Stretch and Point Blank merge to form new below the line agency: Elevator

Today saw the official launch of Elevator, a new below the line (BTL) agency formed through a merger between Stretch Experiential Marketing and Point Blank Marketing Communications.

The new entity, with an established national footprint, will better leverage the unique BTL marketing capabilities and service offerings of each agency team to deliver world-class BTL brand campaigns to a cross-section of South Africans from mass markets to niche luxury markets.



Picture: Supplied

“It’s always been our ambition to expand our client offering. We knew a merger between Stretch and Point Blank would be a perfect fit because we are culturally-aligned, with shared passions, belief systems and values,” says Mike Silver, CEO of Stretch, now joint-CEO of Elevator. “We believe this move will enable us to deliver even bigger and better disruptive BTL marketing campaigns for our clients, on a national level.”

Stretch grew from a specialist experiential agency into a fully-fledged below the line agency, managing campaigns across multiple channels and creating share-worthy content. Point Blank established itself as a recognised in-store promotions, event staffing and brand activation company. The merger of the two results in a broad spectrum of skills that create a true BTL specialist with Stretch bringing a wealth of mass market and township communication expertise and Point Blank adding a deep understanding of retail and shopper marketing.

## Elevator Integrated, Engage, People & Digital

The new agency will manage broader BTL client campaigns under the Elevator lead brand, with subsidiary divisions: Elevator Engage, offering employee engagement campaigns; Elevator People, offering activations and event staffing; and Elevator Digital, offering social media and digital campaigns.

“It made perfect sense for us to come together, motivated by client success as opposed to what works best for the individual agencies. We aim to reinvent the way that brands are launched or built through compelling, memorable communication campaigns. Our combined offerings will allow us to deliver even more meaningful connections between our client’s brands and their consumers,” says Trevor Bernberg, MD of Point Blank, now joint-CEO of Elevator.

Business & Strategy Director and Mass Market Specialist at Elevator, Bongani Chinkanda, explains that as consumers’ lives are bombarded with constantly changing media consumption trends, it's vital that brands consider truly integrated communication campaigns that harness the power of non-traditional mediums to break through the noise and reach their customers more effectively.

“Both agencies have rich experience developing disruptive and share-worthy campaigns. This continues to be part of Elevator’s DNA,” he says.

“The Elevator team’s unique BTL marketing expertise will enable our clients to reach diverse target markets from luxury, high-end consumers to middle income and township consumers throughout South Africa. In one diversified campaign, we can speak to the full spectrum of the South African population, underpinned by an insights-led strategy and flawless execution,” Chinkanda says.

The ownership structure of Elevator includes a black-owned employee trust, which holds 51% of the company. The remaining 49% is owned by the directors of the new entity. The agency has also successfully achieved a B-BBEE Level 2 rating. This rating enables the agency to be retained by private and public sector clients who have certain minimum B-BBEE requirements in their procurement policies.

“Being an independent, proudly South African agency allows us the freedom of thought and movement while not being driven solely by profit. We also remain fluid and can evolve our service offering in response to our clients’ needs, without the need for global approval,” Chinkanda says.

The agency has launched with an already impressive list of clients, including brands such as Uber, Standard Bank, Tiger Brands, Heineken, Pernod Ricard, Lipton, Cell C and Hisense.

## About Elevator

Elevator is a fully independent Level 2 B-BBEE below the line specialist with a presence in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The agency is made up of 60 highly skilled and dynamic staff across its employee engagement, activation, event staffing and digital businesses. The company's management team is made up of the following directors:

- Joint-CEOs, Mike Silver and Trevor Bernberg;
- Business & Strategy Director, Bongani Chinkanda;
- National Operations Director, Catherine Mavrocoleas; and
- Executive Creative Director, Peter Hutchings.

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