

Choose to have a mindset of curiosity, growth and impact

 By Jessica Tennant

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As part of our #EvolutionofWork content feature, Boomtown's all-female digital department shares what the future of work looks like from their point of view and how they're navigating the 'new normal' in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic...



Lara-Anne Derbyshire

With the recent promotion of Cayleigh Zambonini to digital integration manager, Lisa Snyman to digital project manager and Liesl Silverman to digital copywriter, as well as the appointment of Brenda Ulay as community manager and content creator, Boomtown has enhanced its digital service offering to ensure a 'digital first' mindset across the business and for its clients.

The digital department also includes senior social media manager Marion Marais, digital product manager and user experience specialist Helna Brown, art director Tamarin Fraenkel, and digital strategist Lara-Anne Derbyshire.



Boomtown enhances its digital service offering

Boomtown 1 Oct 2020



Boomtown is a creative, fully integrated advertising agency that offers brand design, integrated brand communications and digital marketing. It's headquartered in Port Elizabeth, with offices in Johannesburg. It started trading in 1994 when its founder famously sold his inheritance, yes, two cows, to buy the office's first computer. Today, Boomtown has achieved Level 2 BBBEE status and 51% Black ownership, of which 30% is by a Black women-owned entity. How times have changed!

Here, we chat to digital strategist Lara-Anne Derbyshire...

■ When did you start at Boomtown and tell us about your career trajectory to date, within the organisation and in general?

My journey with Boomtown began in December 2013 where I came into the business as a designer, driven by an intense desire to understand and interpret and share the world around me in a way that was meaningful, aesthetic and valuable to those my work served.

I had always most enjoyed the thinking, figuring and solving part of the design process - the process of understanding and uncovering the best creative outcome for that unique challenge. I loved how every brief was a new opportunity to learn something and immerse myself in a product or brand from another persons' point of view.

I've also always enjoyed learning new things and so from early on in my career I started with part time courses in marketing, digital and the likes. It was this inkling that continued and developed as my career progressed, and with this came the decision to start studying part time toward a degree in psychology to further deepen my understanding and interest in human behaviour and thinking.

Fast-forward one year and four months, I became a creative group head within the company and took on more of a management role in my career where I oversaw a team of creatives and was more involved in the business side of creative.

The role of guiding and mentoring different personalities, managing deadlines and client expectations was pivotal. I remained in this role for two years and nine months and in that time completed my Honours Degree in Psychology. At seemingly the perfect timing, a position became available in the strategy department and I was fortunate to be given the opportunity to take this new position. I was excited to be able to combine my skill sets, putting my experience in creative and passion for psychology and human understanding, into practice. I had found my happy place as I call it!

I've been in strategy for the past three years and two months and have continued upskilling during this time in digital strategy, behavioural science for brands and the likes. As we know, the world has been on a pretty wild ride these last few years and it's so important to keep abreast of shifts and developments in the industry.

■ ***What do you love most about the advertising/digital industry, your career and/or specialisation?***

It fuels my curiosity! This career challenges me daily and gives me opportunity to explore and understand many different human perspectives and experiences. I love how it broadens my own experience of the world.

■ ***Where are you based, at the HQ in Port Elizabeth or at the Johannesburg office?***

I'm based in the beautiful city of Port Elizabeth at our head office. I do also, however, enjoy the fairly regular trips to Johannesburg (pre-Covid) to spend time with our Jozi-based clients.

■ ***What are you most looking forward to (at Boomtown) or what are you working towards at the moment/what's at the top of your to-do list?***

I'm excited to see how the business further adapts and grows considering the way it has embraced and navigated the challenges of the past few months. It has stretched and pushed many businesses out of their comfort zones.

Seeing the agility and willingness of each person in our own company stepping in and stepping up where necessary has been so encouraging. Top of my to-do list is finishing the course I started and just to continue fostering that growth mindset amidst the uncertainty we are all experiencing this year.

▣ **What does the future of work look like to you?**

This quote sums it up in a nutshell... I mean none of us really know exactly what the future of work will look like but: "While some jobs will be lost, and many others created, almost all will change."

▣ **Any advice or words of encouragement to the fellow industry folk in navigating the new normal or rising above the aftermath of Covid-19?**

How we respond now is setting the foundation for the industry of the future. Embrace the changes and choose to have a mindset of curiosity, growth and impact. Choose to add value, not negativity.

For more, visit [Boomtown's press office on Bizcommunity](#) and our [#EvolutionofWork special section](#).

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