

# FCB Africa unveils first North African agency affiliation

As part of its ongoing commitment to clients seeking to increase their market share in Africa, integrated marketing communications network FCB Africa has concluded its first North African agency affiliation.

The new partnership is with Moroccan-owned Alif ('First') Communications, headquartered in Casablanca, whose client base includes major global corporations such as Fujitsu, Siemens, Dell, Sony, BMCI/BNP Paribas, AXA Assurance, Airbus and Total. It is expected to act as a spring board into the rest of North Africa for the FCB Africa network.

The tie-up with Alif Communications follows hot on heels of the consolidation of the FCB operations in Tanzania into a single 'super agency', as part of a drive to become East Africa's leading marketing and communications company.

The move was prompted by the appointment of FCB to handle the above/below-the-line and public relations work in Tanzania for burgeoning cellular operator Vodacom. This account is the largest in Tanzania, worth in excess of US\$5-million.

According to Kaliko Olowole, director of FCB Africa, FCB is committed to extend its footprint in Africa in order to provide localised expertise and support to clients and their businesses.

"Advertising spend in Africa is growing," Olowole explains, "which means we need to expand both our network and the portfolio of services we're able to offer to the market. This development is driven in part by the telecoms industry, which collectively is the largest advertiser on the African continent. Vodacom is a major player within that space, and the largest single advertising account for FCB Africa. Our strategy is to extend our network to match the growth of businesses such as Vodacom, so as to provide world-class services within developing-world environments."

Not only is the FCB agency network growing in terms of reach and stature, but it is also becoming more integrated and therefore better able to marshal its resources to meet the needs of clients across the continent.

"There are many examples of FCB Africa agencies in different countries supporting each other on pitches, campaigns and the like," Olowole remarks. "For an account pitch in Senegal recently, we felt it would be beneficial to compile the presentation documents in French, the Senegalese official language, rather than in English and then having to translate it. We therefore involved in our agency in Mauritius, a bi-lingual country, to provide the necessary skills and input. The proposal was a resounding success."

A vital contributor to FCB Africa's success is its strategy of upskilling the staff of its local partner agencies. Upskilling takes a number of forms, including the sharing of information and expertise, person-to-person contact, training programmes, brainstorming and more.

"For example, we give support to our agencies by visiting their local clients, not just for a 'meet and greet' but to hear first hand from the clients if there is any way we can assist the local agency in adding value," Olowole notes. "As an added value to our SA clients with pan-African operations, we hold workshops where all relevant local agencies attend in order to help establish coordinated strategies and approaches. Additionally, we stage an Annual Conference for MDs of FCB Africa agencies to meet, exchange ideas and discuss strategy."

"Another important and unique element of upskilling is the FCB-proprietary Advanced Advertising Programme (AAP), which annually provides training for staff of the regional agencies on a wide range of relevant subjects, from creativity to media to strategy."

FCB South Africa employees are also seconded into Africa also work at FCB Africa affiliate agencies. Their role is to

share their expertise, assist in the management of the agency's accounts and help with the implementation of FCB proprietary tools and methodologies. Of course, the knowledge transfer takes place in both directions - FCB South Africa employees learn a great deal about working in Africa and this benefits their clients on their return. Over the past 12 months, five employees of FCB South Africa have, at different times, spent 3 - 6 months working full-time in Tanzania. This has given them first hand experience of advertising in Africa, and is enabling FCB South Africa to develop a cluster of personnel that have an in-depth understanding of marketing and communicating in Africa.

Turning to the future of FCB Africa, Olowole says expansion of the network will continue unabated. Much of the envisaged network development will take place in tandem with the further penetration into Africa of key FCB clients such as retailing chain Shoprite. Already one of the fastest growing SA-based companies in Africa, Shoprite has more than 60 stores across the continent, including Egypt, and plans are in hand to open many more.

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