

EXCLUSIVE: Lowe drops Bull, Peter Badenhorst joins as ECD



By Herman Manson: @marklives

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[Lowe Bull](#) is rebranding as Lowe and Partners South Africa after the international parent company acquired a majority share in the local agency. Its two offices become Lowe Johannesburg and Lowe Cape Town.



Wayne Naidoo, CEO of Lowe + Partners South Africa.

[Lowe and Partners](#) (an [Interpublic Group](#) company) bought out [Matthew Bull](#)'s shares in the local agency when it took up its call option on the shares at the end of last year. Bull ([@stixbull](#)) recently teamed up with another South African, [Andrew Whitehouse](#) ([@andrewerdna](#)), to launch a New-York-based agency, [The Bull-White House](#).



Always been a minority shareholder

[Lowe and Partners](#) had always been a minority shareholder in Lowe Bull, where it played an important strategic role, says Lowe + Partners

South Africa CEO [Wayne Naidoo](#) ([@WNaidoo](#)). The local agency had always been one of the top five agencies in the Lowe network and, with increased client attention on emerging markets and Africa, it made sense for the global network to consolidate and beef up its presence here.

The rebranding takes Lowe and Partners SA closer to the ID and positioning of the global network and is being rolled out over the course of the next month.

Naidoo also announced that [Peter Badenhorst](#) has joined the agency as its new ECD for the Johannesburg agency. Badenhorst was the former chief creative partner of [M&C Saatchi Abel](#), of which he was a founding member, for a short time, and before that chief creative officer at Ogilvy Cape Town. He takes up his contract at the beginning of March 2012.

In practical terms, the new majority shareholding doesn't change the client-facing side of the local business, although changes have been made to its financial reporting system, says Naidoo. The local agency will continue to enjoy access to the people at the top of the network, which Naidoo describes as medium-sized with agencies in only key cities, which gives it scale but also helps retain an intimate work environment, and will continue working on global briefs put into the network.

Global and collaborative approach to client work

"We fly local staff all over the world to work on jobs for the network, which is great for them and for us," says Naidoo, who says he knows of few agencies with such a global and collaborative approach to client work.

Lowe and Partners SA works extensively across Africa for key clients Unilever and SAB-Miller through affiliate agencies but, as part of the global network's long-term strategy, the agency will be investigating acquisitions in key African markets, depending upon client needs and local agency environments. Naidoo says that, over the years, his agency has built up a strong foundation for taking work into Africa beyond South Africa, and it knows the rules of engagement well, but they are looking at ways of beefing up that capacity.

In the shorter term, the agency is looking at bulking up its operations in the SA market, with possible acquisitions in the digital and below-the-line segments to deliver on its contemporary integrated client offering. Naidoo says announcements will follow in the coming months.

Badenhorst, meanwhile, has been tasked with bringing the local agency closer to the global Lowe and Partners positioning

of "Populist Creativity." According to Naidoo, this positioning is all about results for clients, storytelling and work that engages the many, rather than the few.

Intention to shake things up, grow

Naidoo says the SA agency enters the year in a stable position, having retained all its key clients through the past couple of years and a tough economy. Its transformation into Lowe and Partners SA signals its intention to shake things up and to grow.

The SA group head count stands at around a 100, while its revenue falls in the R60-80 million band. A BEE trust and local management retain their shareholding in the SA agency.

Lowe and Partners is headquartered in London. The network is owned by New York-based Interpublic, a group that employs approximately 41 800 people and in 2010 had revenues of US\$6.5 billion. Apart from Lowe and Partners, it is also the parent company of [McCann Erickson](#) and [Draftfcb](#).

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