

Ross returns as Tribal DDB SA ECD

 By [Simone Puterman](#): editor-at-large

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It seems local ad agencies are finally getting with the digital programme, plus luring more expats back. Matt Ross has returned to become executive creative director of Tribal DDB South Africa, which launched two months ago with Michael Udell, another former expat, as MD. Ross - a recent Cannes Cyber Gold Lion and Clio Gold winner - joins from Tribal DDB London, where he used to work together with Udell.



Matt Ross, newly appointed ECD of Tribal DDB South Africa.

Tribal DDB is the digital agency group of the global DDB network. Udell, then a London-based South African, returned to Johannesburg to set up Tribal DDB SA and run it. TribalDDB SA has since won business with Mango, McDonald's, Vega School and Ster-Kinekor.

"This is where the market is going"

DDB SA Glen Lomas told Bizcommunity.com: "Fortunately [Ross] missed South Africa and his old strat partner Michael... so we were lucky enough to be able to entice him here. DDB SA is investing massively in Tribal DDB SA because we strongly believe this is where the market is going and the likes of Gloo have had it too good for too long and need to be challenged... and beaten!"

Ross moved to the UK over 10 years ago, where he worked his way up the digital shop ladder before finally being poached by Tribal DDB London - the most awarded digital shop in London. He became ECD there and then helped combine DDB London - the most awarded ad agency in the world - with DDB Tribal London. He was one of the two creative directors of the combined shop alongside Jeremy Craigen - who needs no introduction, according to Lomas.

Comments Udell on the appointment of Ross, "Matt and myself worked really well together as a creative and a planner. I now look forward to us building a successful business together, while having a lot of fun."

Global spending more digitally

Globally, Udell points out, major clients are spending more money digitally than on traditional media advertising. Tribal DDB SA's big promise is its capacity to integrate communications.

"Digital silos served a short-term purpose in giving digital its stature," explains Udell. "But now clients are coming with integrated briefs. We will still have a separate brand in SA, but our approach will be an integrated one with DDB SA. No matter how hard you push, it's the above-the-line agency that usually owns the relationship with the clients and leads the thrust."

So what brought Udell himself back? After having been away for 13 years, he says, he reached a point in London where he had achieved what he wanted.

"Here in SA we are just on the cusp of the digital revolution and there is a huge opportunity to use the knowledge from our operations in Europe to offer real stewardship and partnership to brands that want to embrace the opportunities offered by digital integration. It's a perfect opportunity for me personally to leverage my skills in sunny wide open spaces with nice guys," he explains.



Michael Udell, recently appointed MD of Tribal DDB South Africa.

"We need the best talent"

Lomas is equally confident of the enormous potential here. "Thanks to mobile phone penetration, more people use the Internet in SA than pay taxes. Some of the best thinking is happening here on the vanguard between the developed and the developing markets. We have some of the most advanced clients in the world, particularly in banking. So we need the best talent."

DDB South Africa was named *AdReview's* agency of the year for 2009 and *The Annual's* Agencies' Agency of the Year

ABOUT SIMONE PUTERMAN: EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Simone Puterman (@SimoneAtLarge) is currently editor-at-large at Marklives.com and deputy chair of the SaneF online editors subcommittee. After majoring in psychology and linguistics at Rhodes University, and then completing her honours in psychology, she has been in the world of B2B publishing since 1997, with 7.5 year stints at both WriteStuff Publishing and Bizcommunity.com (March 2006-August 2013). Email her at simone@marklives.com.

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