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# PRESS RELEASE



## PUBLICIS GROUPE CONTINUES EXPANSION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN MARKET WITH THREE NEW ACQUISITIONS

*Market-leading agencies BrandsRock, Liquorice  
and MACHINE to join Publicis Groupe*

**Publicis Groupe [Euronext Paris FR0000130577, CAC 40]** advances as a key player in South Africa. With much determination, the Groupe has forged the way for a network of expertise covering all segments of communications. Today, the network is harmoniously and efficiently completed with three acquisitions that considerably expand the Groupe's service offerings and know-how in South Africa across a range of specialties. Publicis Groupe announces the acquisition of BrandsRock, industry leader in brand engagement, Liquorice, one of the country's leading digital marketing agencies, and MACHINE, award-winning integrated agency. These additions will bring new leadership and a strong portfolio of new clients into the Groupe.

### **About BrandsRock**

Founded in September 2009, BrandsRock is a through-the-line brand solutions agency with offices in Cape Town and Johannesburg. They operate with a growing team of experienced, skilled individuals who understand business, brands, strategy and the best creative marketing programs needed to deliver results.

The BrandsRock Group services a portfolio of blue chip clients with four integrated offerings - marketing & brand strategy; creative design & advertising; digital engagement and shopper marketing & experiential brand activations through their amp Experiential division. Clients include: Harley-Davidson®, KWV, eBucks, Jose Cuervo Tequila, Nando's, Seartec, 466/64 Fashion, Isotherm, Vukani, Puma, Brandhouse, Touchlab, Vodacom and Kiehl's.

Brandsrock will merge with Saatchi & Saatchi South Africa, forming a new entity, Saatchi & Saatchi BrandsRock. The BrandsRock staff team of 45 will be integrated into the Saatchi & Saatchi offices in both Cape Town and Johannesburg.

John Dixon, CEO of BrandsRock, becomes CEO of both Saatchi & Saatchi BrandsRock and the Saatchi & Saatchi group in South Africa. Brandsrock founder, Mike Joubert, becomes Chief Strategy Officer of Saatchi & Saatchi BrandsRock. BrandsRock's Chief Creative Officer, Jonathan Beggs, and Chief Operating Officer, Heidi Nelson, make up the remainder of the leadership team for the new entity.

Justin Billingsley, COO of Saatchi & Saatchi EMEA, explains the logic behind the merger: *"South Africa is ranked as the eighth fastest growing advertising market in the world between 2013 and 2016 and the growth opportunities across the African continent are well documented. The new integrated group will capitalize on this growth. The all-new Saatchi South Africa will include best of breed skills in experiential, traditional communications and digital; all under really strong leadership."*

According to Dixon the Saatchi & Saatchi ethos of "Nothing is Impossible" was a key attraction. *"It's not just etched in a stair at their London office, it's lived by everyone we've come in contact with. This is an attitude which resonates with us as Africans,"* he says.

Joubert adds: *"The merger with Saatchi & Saatchi is the fulfillment of a dream for me. Together we will be a strategically led brand engagement agency for the digital age based on an approach to consumer centric work that is powerful, practical and measurable. We will make brands happen. We are not just creators, but also curators of great work."*

## About Liquorice

Liquorice is one of Africa's leading digital marketing agencies specialising in a range of services from web, mobile, social media, CRM, content creation and search engine marketing.

Founded in 2005 by Chief Executive Miles Murphy, Liquorice currently employs 115 people in four offices – Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Bellville – deploying work across sub-Saharan Africa. The agency has long-term relationships with some of Africa's biggest brands including Unilever, Distell, Sanlam, Pioneer Foods, SAB Miller, SA Home Loans and Elizabeth Arden.

Liquorice will be aligned with DigitasLBI, forming part of its Middle East & Africa region under the leadership of Anil Pillai, who will take on the newly created role of Chief Executive, UK, Middle East & Africa.

The move further strengthens DigitasLBI's global footprint, providing it with unparalleled marketing and technology expertise in fast-growing South African markets, as well as the ability to help both local and global clients transform themselves for their digital age.

Commenting on the acquisition, Pillai said: *"Liquorice is a great business that is perfectly placed to help brands in emerging African markets harness the transformative power of digital technologies. Liquorice is an exciting addition to the DigitasLBI family and I look forward to working with Miles and his team to capitalise on the huge growth potential of sub-Saharan Africa."*

Murphy said: *"We are tremendously excited about this opportunity to take our already successful South Africa business onto the global stage with DigitasLBI. Several potential partners approached us, but DigitasLBI stood out head and shoulders above the rest. We believe DigitasLBI is the most progressive marketing and technology agency in the world and we look forward to working together to grow our presence throughout Africa and beyond."*

Ewen Sturgeon, Chief Executive, International, DigitasLBI, added: *"The acquisition of Liquorice demonstrates our on-going commitment to strengthening our expertise in fast-growing markets and providing both our local and global our clients with a full suite of best-in-class digital services wherever they may be in the world."*

## About MACHINE

Founded in 2012, MACHINE is one of South Africa's largest independent communications agencies with over 130 passionate employees, offering a unique combination of award-winning creativity, compelling consumer insights and leading digital capabilities. The agency is represented in both Johannesburg and Cape Town, with specialist talent across five core pillars: Machine (integrated communications), Narrative (content marketing), Incentiv (loyalty and rewards), Answered (research), and Moon Walk (public relations).

The agency has won many awards, including Loeries, Assegai Awards, Bookmarks, Clio, Cannes Lions, and D&AD Award, and was also named Breakthrough Agency of the Year 2013 by AdReview. MACHINE works with a variety of local and international clients, including Red Bull, Nando's, SABMiller, Sanlam Reality, and Peermont Hotels & Casinos. It has also recently won the business of Jaguar Land Rover and Auto & General insurance.

MACHINE will be integrated into Publicis Worldwide, and will be rebranded as Publicis MACHINE. CEO Adrian Hewlett will continue his role in the agency, reporting into Kevin Tromp, CEO of Publicis Africa Group.

Arthur Sadoun, CEO of Publicis Worldwide, said: *"With the acquisition of Machine following that of Prima, in a such strategic country for our client's business, we are strengthening even further our digital capabilities to be the preferred partner of our clients in their own digital transformation."*

*"Publicis Worldwide is thrilled to join together with a young, successful agency that has a dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit that only a young agency can. MACHINE's exciting portfolio of clients and unique culture, combined with the experience and scale of Publicis Worldwide will ensure the new agency's growth into a powerhouse, geared for the future of communication in Africa,"* Tromp added.

This sentiment is echoed by Hewlett, stating: *"The global skills and IP that Publicis Worldwide brings to the table will position the newly-formed agency extremely well to provide a fully integrated offering to clients on a pan-African scale. We are most excited about what this means for our clients, who will be enjoying the benefits of an agency leading the change in our industry".* Notwithstanding MACHINE's past accolades, Hewlett has big plans going forward: *"As a result of the joint skills and client roster, our aim is to be recognized as the agency group of the year within 12 months, while consistently achieving a top 5 creative ranking. Watch this space."*

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These acquisitions follow those of Prima Integrated Marketing, OwenKessel, and Lighthouse Digital, plus the stake in AG Partners, earlier in 2014, showing Publicis Groupe's proven commitment to expanding its scope across Africa.

According to ZenithOptimedia, South Africa is the eighth fastest growing advertising market in the world between 2013 and 2016.

## About Publicis Groupe

Publicis Groupe [Euronext Paris FR0000130577, CAC 40] is one of the world's leading communications groups. The Groupe offers a full range of services and skills: digital (DigitasLBI, Razorfish, Rosetta, VivaKi, Nurun), advertising (BBH, Leo Burnett, Publicis Worldwide, Saatchi & Saatchi), public affairs, corporate communications and events (MSLGROUP), media strategy, planning and buying (Starcom MediaVest Group and ZenithOptimedia), healthcare communications, with Publicis Healthcare Communications Group (PHCG), and finally, brand asset production with Prodigious. Present in 108 countries, the Groupe employs 63,000 professionals.

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## About DigitasLBI

DigitasLBI is a global marketing and technology agency that transforms businesses for the digital age. We help companies of all shapes and sizes decide what's next... and then we take them there. In 25 countries around the world, across 40 offices, there are more than 6,700 digital experts working to enrich people's lives via our unique blend of strategy, creativity, media and technology. Our skills span insight, brand building, content creation and distribution, as well as the ability to help clients organise themselves for the consequences of change. We act as strategic partner to some of the world's most exciting brands across travel, financial services, FMCG, publishing, telecoms and retail. There are many things that make DigitasLBI unique but if we had to choose one it would be our ability to connect data with storytelling to help make brands special, shareable and more ultimately valuable wherever, whenever and however people choose to engage with them.

[www.digitaslb.com](http://www.digitaslb.com)

## About Publicis Worldwide

Publicis Worldwide is a global creative agency, with 88 years of experience providing change leadership for its clients. We believe that this era demands a combination of strategic, creative and digital ideas that help clients to Lead The Change in their own digital transformation. With over 12,000 employees in 84 countries, clients include Axa, BNP Paribas, Carrefour, Cartier, Citi, Coca-Cola, Haier, Hilton Honors, HP, l'Oréal, LG, Luxottica, Nestlé, Orange, P&G, Paypal, Pernod Ricard, RATP, Renault, Sanofi, Seb, Siemens, Telefonica, Total, and UBS.

Publicis Worldwide is a part of Publicis Groupe.

[www.publicis.com](http://www.publicis.com) | [@PublicisWW](https://twitter.com/PublicisWW) | <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Publicis-Worldwide/205430832807607?fref=ts>

## About Saatchi & Saatchi

Part of the Publicis Groupe, the 3rd largest communications holding company worldwide, Saatchi & Saatchi's Network clients include Diageo, Carlsberg, General Mills, HSBC, Lenovo, Mead Johnson, Mondelez International, Novartis, Procter & Gamble, T-Mobile, Toyota and Visa Europe. With 130 offices and over 6000 employees, Saatchi & Saatchi is known for its outstanding creative ideas that generate powerful emotional connections between consumers and products. This is a key element in Lovemarks, Saatchi & Saatchi's unique methodology for elevating the status of brands by creating 'loyalty beyond reason' and 'inspirational consumers'.

[www.saatchi.com](http://www.saatchi.com)

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