

#BehindtheSelfie with... Abigail van Zyl

 By Leigh Andrews

1 Aug 2018

This Women's Month, we go behind the selfie with Abigail van Zyl who decided two weeks before giving birth was the perfect time to start her own company. Two years later, she's managing director and founder of remote-based agency, The Digital Thread.



"Smashing deadlines and creating amazing work!"

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I live in Johannesburg and work everywhere – this is the digital age, you know. I've been known to create cosmic campaigns from the comfort of my iPhone.



Marble's Wikus Human named the 2017 Best Young Sommelier

6 Sep 2017



You can catch me relaxing at any place that has city views and good wine. Marble is one of my favourite places!

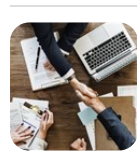
2. What's your claim to fame?

I'm known for having quite the potty mouth. If there was a creative award for the best use of profanities, I'm pretty sure I would have taken home the gold – which I would have bedazzled.

I also just get \$#!t done as I hate procrastinating. I thrive on pressure and playing superwoman to others under pressure.


3. Describe your career so far.

My longest stint as an employee was four years. That's pretty long for a millennial in this industry, but I had a good mentor, so sucking the life out of him was my goal!



What does the shuffling of the big guys mean for smaller agencies?

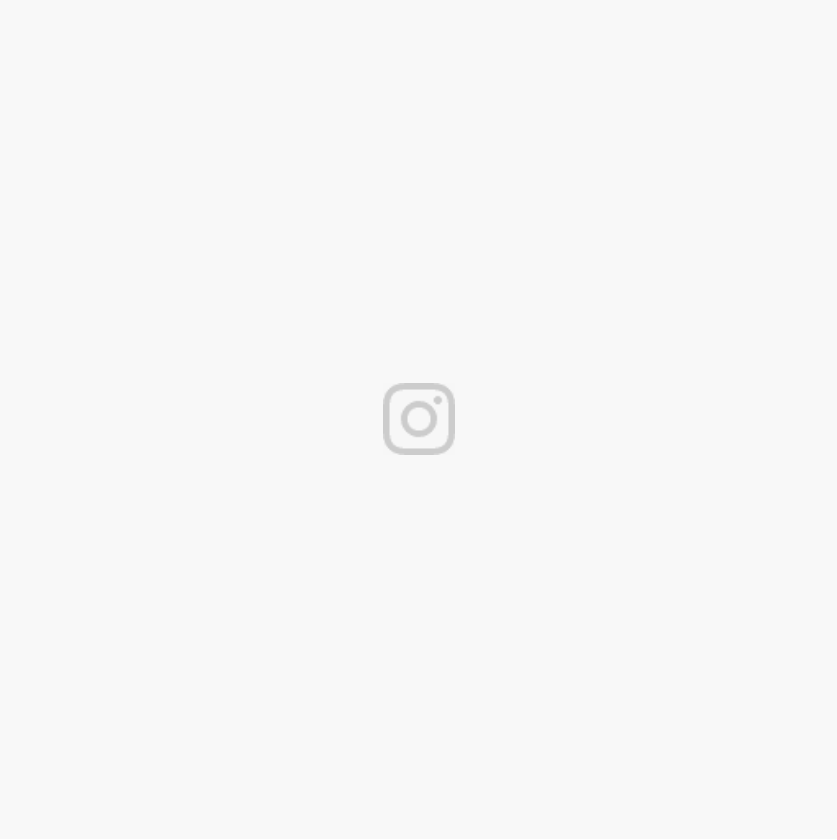
Andrew Macfarlane 20 Jul 2018



Back in 2011 I first tried to go for it on my own, but without experience it was difficult to keep afloat. Years later, I decided to start my own agency and had enough know-how to do it properly.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

Firstly, my kid, then good food.



My little boy growing too fast #babyboy #terribletwos

A post shared by [Abigail van Zyl \(@absvanzyl\)](#) on Mar 15, 2018 at 11:15pm PDT

I love quality food and wine to the extent that I would rather have a fine dining experience than spend the money on

shoes.

Then, if there's any budget left over I'll splash out on a rad pair of sneakers. And finally, I would consider myself an avid wildlife enthusiast; you can see the proof on my [Instagram account](#).

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A mothers love #wildlife #wildlifephotography #wildlife_shots #wildlifeconservation
#wildlifeofinstagram #wildlifelovers #wildlife_seekers #wildlifephoto #africa
#africanwildlife #zebra

A post shared by [Abigail van Zyl \(@absvanzyl\)](#) on Apr 15, 2018 at 10:35am PDT

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Marching elephants #wildlife #wildlifephotography #wildlife_shots
#wildlifeconservation #wildlifeofinstagram #wildlifelovers #wildlife_seekers
#wildlifephoto #africa #africanwildlife

A post shared by [Abigail van Zyl \(@absvanzyl\)](#) on Apr 15, 2018 at 9:56pm PDT

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#leopard #wildlife #wildlifephotography #wildlife_shots #wildlifeconservation
#wildlifeofinstagram #wildlifelovers #wildlife_seekers #wildlifephoto #africa
#africanwildlife

A post shared by [Abigail van Zyl \(@absvanzyl\)](#) on Apr 15, 2018 at 9:09am PDT

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5. What do you love about your industry?

The advertising industry, and digital specifically, is exciting and always evolving, and wow, things are becoming so intelligent with programmatic buying on TV and radio!

#KantarOnAir: Commercial TV in a FFW VOD world

Leigh Andrews 2 Jun 2016





#BizTrends2017: Programmatic buying as a powerful tool

Paula Raubenheimer 18 Jan 2017



It's coming, and it's going to revolutionise this industry.

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

I wake up and drink coffee, then get the kid ready for school. Then I happily graft all-day, and sometimes I get thrown hot messes to clean up!

7. What are the tools of your trade?

My laptop, great internet connection, and a bag.

As a web-based company, everything I do is linked to the internet.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

Currently, I'm more into agencies that aren't bricks-and-mortar establishments. But I love what Retroviral is doing, they know content!



RetroVlral

Mike Sharman 5 Jul 2017



9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

“ I honestly think that the industry could do with less of the toxic masculinity mindset and be more inclusive of individuals with families. The idea that ‘without constant personal sacrifice you’re just not trying hard enough’ is rubbish. ”

There's nothing wrong with the odd, tight deadline, and I love my work, but at the end of the day it is a career and I'm still accountable to my family.



Can media workers ever really switch off from work?

Leigh Andrews 25 Jul 2017



10. What are you working on right now?

Right now I'm working on maintaining client relations and expanding the business. And as usual, I'm on the hunt for great creatives.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter to yourself.

Artificial Intelligence, man! AI is taking over the marketing world. While everyone is going, "Nah, not really", you need to remember Google's algorithm is a piece of technology that mimics human behaviour – thus AI! And Google's been doing it for years.

Omnichannel! Your customers' path to purchase is getting more and more complicated – understand what it is, where the connection points are, then go forth and advertise!



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Nunu Ntshingila 8 Jan 2018



12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

I feel like I have my best ideas when I have the opportunity to be introspective. A mentor of mine was big into introspection, and he taught me that growth mentality is super empowering.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

The [Ninja Bomb](#)! Google it, it's a talent refined over many years of being the life of the party!



#BehindtheSelfie with... Andrew Brand

Leigh Andrews 29 Nov 2017



14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

I'm a technophile for sure because my whole company operates using technology.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Loads of baby pictures, some portable toilets, animals, and work emails.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Keep pushing and searching for that next opportunity. If you're not hustling, you're losing out.

Simple as that. Be sure to follow both The Digital Thread and Van Zyl on Facebook and Instagram, as follows:

[The Digital Thread's Facebook](#) | [The Digital Thread's Instagram](#) | [Van Zyl's Instagram](#)

**Interviewed by Leigh Andrews.*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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