

Merissa Himraj set to take the reins of major media house Wavemaker South Africa in 2022

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Merissa Himraj will assume the top position at Wavemaker South Africa, the South African division of the world's fifth largest media company, on 1 February 2022. She takes over as CEO SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) from Lwandile Qokweni, who is stepping down from a role he has held since March 2018 to pursue other interests.



Merissa Himraj

Qokweni joined MEC (which later became Wavemaker) in 2015, quickly rising through the ranks from chief strategy officer (CSO) to managing director and then to CEO. During his tenure, he steered Wavemaker to great heights, ensuring the company was recognised as the fastest growing agency in South Africa by ComVergence in both 2019 and 2020.

"He was also at the forefront of an impressive pitch track record," says Himraj, "and championed the growth of a diverse team. He was passionate about nurturing new talent in the industry and served as a mentor to many rising stars. He will be sorely missed."

A pioneering strategist and exceptional leader, Himraj first joined Wavemaker in August 2014 as a business unit manager, before taking on the role of CSO in January 2019. In 2020, she was appointed to the executive committee of Wavemaker's parent company, GroupM, and in 2021 she became Wavemaker South Africa's managing director.

Her CSO appointment brought with it the provision of strategic and solutions-driven oversight both internally at Wavemaker and among its many clients. In her role at GroupM, she was actively involved in projects that take place at a broader, sector-wide level, including retail, FMCG and ICT.

"I am excited about my new responsibilities at Wavemaker, and feel optimistic about the future of both our company and our industry," Himraj adds. "With a young, dynamic and diverse team, I believe we are ideally placed to meet the needs of our extensive client base – now and into the future."

Himraj will be joined at the helm by Christa Kruger, Wavemaker South Africa's new chief operating officer – a role that will replace the company's former managing director position. With a BCom degree in Marketing Management and a diploma from the AAA School of Advertising, Kruger first joined the MEC team in 2013 as a business unit head and media strategist. She became client lead at Wavemaker in November 2019, and boasts particular expertise in media strategy, consumer insights and team management, skills that will serve her well in her new role.

"I am so looking forward to this new position, leading a magnificent team and working alongside talented, passionate people," says Kruger. "It is a privilege to be part of Wavemaker's growth during this time. I believe the best is yet to come."

These two appointments actively demonstrate Wavemaker South Africa's long-standing commitment to representing South Africa's rich diversity, particularly in terms of gender. It prioritises the growth and succession of women at every level of the organisation, and actively strives to place them in leadership and executive positions.

"It's great to see internal succession planning at work with Merissa taking the CEO role and Christa the COO role of Wavemaker," says Federico de Nardis, GroupM CEO SSA. "At GroupM, we invest in our people from the very beginning of

their careers to help them grow, take on more responsibilities, and become more effective leaders.”



Christa Kruger

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