

Rawson, a brand that likes to do things differently

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Founded in 1982 by William 'Bill' Rawson, the Rawson property brand is a familiar one to many. From modest beginnings in a 40m² office in Claremont, Cape Town, it is now a full-service estate agency group with more than 200 franchises across South Africa.



Debbie Reabow, brand and communications manager at the Rawson Property Group

We interviewed Debbie Reabow, brand and communications manager at the Rawson Property Group, to find out what she loves most about working with the brand, what the current challenges are in its sector, and what inspires her personally.

■ ***What do you love most about working with the Rawson brand?***

I love that we are a large brand backed up by over 30 years of history and experience - and yet we are still a brand that continuously likes to do things differently, try new things and constantly challenge ourselves to be better, innovate and develop tools that serve our customers. It's an inspiring environment to be in. I also love the culture of the brand; our 1200-odd Rawson property partners all share our passion for this brand and showcase this at every opportunity, be it by branding their vehicle, sponsoring a local event, or giving back to their neighbourhoods. Finally, and most importantly, everyone who works for this brand is passionate about serving our customers well. We constantly build systems, tools and products that allow us to do this even better each time - it's really exciting!

■ ***How does a brand like Rawson keep up with the rapid pace of evolving technologies?***

That's a challenge we love. We look outside our industry at leading brands both locally and internationally and make sure we're constantly learning from them. Often we look internationally but just as often we find fantastic innovative thinking here in South Africa. We partner with the best local suppliers to ensure that we're backing technologies that will serve our customers better - that often involves saying no to technology systems that will slow that progress down. And finally, we build in-house expertise to ensure we can implement tech ideas that we believe will fit our brand and industry. We love the pace and the challenge!

■ ***What do you see currently as the main challenges and/or opportunities for your brand sector?***

I think an exciting challenge is the changing role of customers. Today's customers demand better service, better value for

money, simplicity and ease of use of any product, and a better experience when dealing with any brand. We love this challenge! The opportunity for us is to develop our services on an ongoing basis so that we can exceed the demands of our customers. Ultimately, property is often the largest investment that a person makes in their lifetime, and so we need to ensure we serve responsibly, efficiently, and make the process as easy as possible.

A great opportunity for our sector and one we really invest in at Rawson is to provide quality information and content, educating and informing customers and potential customers about all things property-related. The more people understand about buying, selling, renting, finance, or commercial property, the better it is. We try and provide as much information, hints, tips, things to look out for and legal advice through our content - ultimately, we want people to be able to make fantastic property decisions - whether it's with our brand or with another.

We have the same challenges as any large brand, and that's making sure that every one of our 200-plus franchises deliver the Rawson service we expect from our partners. We do this by monitoring closely what each and every client found their experience to be with us - and we're passionate about ensuring that every Rawson franchise adheres to our culture, brand values, ethos and DNA. We also invest heavily - and have done since the company's inception, in quality training. This is ongoing and compulsory and it also ensures that we stay on top of our game.

Lastly, like any business, we want to make sure that our neighbourhoods and the people who work with us are better off because of the work we do.

■ ***Tell us about a typical day in your line of work - what does it entail and what are some of the highlights.***

No day is the same and that's what I love.

We have quite a large marketing team - so I spend some time with the team chatting through projects, brainstorming and briefing in jobs. I usually have at least one exciting meeting with the sales side of the business, always trying to understand how we can empower our agents to serve our customers better, what tools they need and how we can get them using those tools fast. I spend time with our creative agencies, brainstorming messaging ideas and media strategies or specific campaigns. I spend a lot of time planning content creation - one area where we really believe we can add value to any South African interested in property. And finally, with over 200-plus franchises around the country, I usually spend some of my day meeting with them and getting insights from the ground. These are so valuable in ensuring as a brand we deliver quality services - ultimately, the best marketing is positive word-of-mouth - so we're passionate about providing services that do that.

■ ***What does brand management mean to you?***

I feel that brand management is showcasing, guarding, overseeing, protecting and improving the way customers feel about your company.

To quote someone with a fantastic customer-centric viewpoint: "A brand for a company is like a reputation for a person.

You earn reputation by trying to do hard things well.” — Jeff Bezos

▀ **What brand marketing campaign have you noticed and been impressed by recently/ever?**

I’m drawn to brands that are focused on delivering real value to customers - and highlighting that value in their marketing - so some of my favourite campaigns are around that theme. I love the work that TD Bank have done in the US. Powerful marketing around a unique value proposition - being a convenient bank (they open longer hours seven days a week). They are passionate about thanking customers - they did a great campaign using ATM’s as ‘automatic thanking machines’ - dishing out gifts to their customers in 2014. They’ve also done some great viral campaigns - such as their [#MakeTodayMatterCampaign](#) giving 24 customers in 24 different cities — one a day for 24 days — and gave them only 24 hours to undertake projects that would benefit their communities most. Each person was given roughly \$30,000 to make their project a reality. What a cool way to spend marketing budget.

Closer to home... who doesn't love a cheeky Nando's campaign?

▀ **What inspires you personally?**

Personally, I get inspired by reading and learning - we have access to so much wisdom via case studies, inspiring stories, brand stories, literature and videos from all over the world. My colleagues and teams are inspiring and fun people with a healthy sense of humour. Mostly I’m inspired by my family, friends and my faith.

Debbie Reabow is passionate about excellently implemented ideas and strategies that alter the bottom line. She has over nine years’ experience in customer-centric strategy and implementation, rebranding and communications.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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