

Leigh-Anne Acquisto of Liquorish Ink

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Although not a brand manager, Leigh-Anne Acquisto, founder and MD of specialist strategic consultancy Liquorish Ink, has extensive experience working with brands and recently helped create the brand identity for a new restaurant in Johannesburg called Proud Mary.



Leigh-Anne Acquisto

"Working with such an experienced and talented team of restaurateurs and interior designers during lockdown to create a brand that delivers this proposition has been a privilege for us and watching such an amazing team bring it to life, has been

even better," says Acquisto.

Here, she tells us about her work on this project specifically and with brands in general...

■ ***Leigh-Anne, firstly, tell us more about your role and your work with brands and helping them leverage their marketing spend.***

Liquorish Ink is a specialist strategic consultancy that has been running for 10 years. We help our clients find the passion and purpose behind their brands and enable them to deliver that to their people and their markets in the most effective way.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

A lawyer.

■ ***Tell us about your career: what you studied and why, and how you ended up where you are today?***

I studied Law at Tuks in Pretoria. After I qualified, I backpacked through Europe and Asia for almost two years by myself and realised that I have a passion for human behaviour and understanding what makes people tick and behave the way they do, especially when it comes to brands. So, when I returned to SA, I decided to do an honours degree in brand strategy and management, and the rest is history.

I've had the opportunity to work with some of the best and brightest throughout my career, starting off at Interbrand and Enterprise IG and then moving into the world of advertising as strategy director at TBWA\Hunt\Lascaris.

■ ***What do you enjoy most about your job?***

I love that I get to work with a cross-section of brands across a number of territories, and that every project teaches me something new about the world and about people.

■ ***Tell us more about your experience and work with brands.***

Over the years I have had the opportunity to work with some amazing clients across Africa. One of my key areas of competence is in Financial Services. From my days at TBWA to now, I think I have consulted to over 20 banking brands in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria in varying degrees.

My love for branding across Africa started at Enterprise IG where I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to work on some of the continent's biggest brands across both FMCG and financial services in both East and West Africa. I developed a particular speciality for financial services brands, which was strengthened when I got to TBWA. I was part of the team that repositioned and relaunched Standard Bank across the continent, which was an incredible experience and learning journey. I was also part of team that developed The Trillion Dollar Campaign for *The Zimbabwean*, which I think is still one of the most awarded campaigns of all time.

More recently I have had the opportunity to work with MTN, developing and launching the 'Fibre to the home' proposition in 2018, as well as some of our more recent and current clients like The Mpack Group, Investec, Remade Recycling, and internationally with IG.com.

📊 **Any career highlights you'd like to share.**

- Managing the Standard Bank account across 33 markets.
- Building the strategic planning team up from 2 to 12 people.
- Developing a core strategic digital competency into the business.
- Being part of the management team that took the agency from number 21 to being the number 1 creative agency in South Africa and number 5 in the world.
- Successfully managing the communication strategies for the majority of the Tiger Brands portfolio which include Ace, Tastic, All Gold, Black Cat, Jeyes and Doom to name a few.
- Managing the Glo mobile brand across Nigeria and Ghana, as well as launching Malta Guinness and Feyrouz in West Africa.
- Facilitated over 30 disruption (business and brand strategy) workshops in South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and London.
- Awards: Won the TBWA Disruption Grand Prix, Apex Gold and Apex Special Award for *The Zimbabwean* newspaper.
- 2015-2020: First female chairperson of the Brand Council South Africa (a non-profit organisation formed in 2008 by leading members of the brand marketing industry of South Africa).
- 2019 and 2020/2021: Judge for the Marketing Achievement Awards (first award to celebrate excellence in the science and art of strategic marketing, setting a compass point for marketers to aim towards and a benchmark for marketing standards that drive the industry towards constant improvement).



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📊 **If you were mentoring a future you, what career advice would you give to aspiring young marketing and branding professionals?**

Read, read and then read some more. The world is changing so fast that staying up-to-date with all the technological, social, cultural and human changes is almost impossible. And get it out there. The worst place to try and unearth human insights from is behind a desk.

📊 **How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work, Liquorish Ink and your clients?**

It has been an incredibly challenging time for us, but thankfully we have really strong client relationships and partnerships that have seen us through. I think most clients found themselves in very similar situations where they were dealing with other internal financial pressures and marketing and brands took a back seat for a while, which inevitably has a knock-on effect. But I think we can all see the light at the end of the tunnel now.

■ ***Liquorish Ink was recently entrusted with the development of the brand proposition and corporate identity of eatery and wine bar brand, Proud Mary. Tell us more about this, how you went about creating the brand and the rationale behind it?***

This really was a special project for us, working with the team at Proud Mary was amazing and watching this brand come to life has been really rewarding. The project started just before Covid last year and as you can imagine lockdown added a significant amount of stress and pressure to the process.

The team wanted a brand that would become the heart and soul of the foodie scene in Johannesburg. What was key was that it had the comfort of familiarity mixed with just the right amount of nostalgic old-school charm and modern-day fresh sophistication. A place that transcended as the hours go by and feed into the hustle and bustle of the neighbourhood. But most importantly it needed to be that place, where friends become family, where business feels like pleasure and every experience is remembered.

To bring this to life, we created a positioning based around where the past meets the present. A combination of mid-century and contemporary elements.

■ ***Lastly, what are you working on at the moment?***

We are currently working on some really exciting international project with IC.com, a global online trading platform across their global markets.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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