

WPP Hires Adrienne Smith as First Global Director of Inclusion and Diversity



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WPP has hired Adrienne Smith as global director of inclusion and diversity, a new position at the holding company.

In this role, Smith will support and partner with Judy Jackson, who was named WPP's global head of culture last year.

Smith is the founder of Cannes Can: Diversity Collective, an organization dedicated to bringing young people of color to the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity. Last year, Cannes Can: Diversity Collective hosted a week-long activation at the festival called Inkwell Beach, which featured speakers including CBS This Morning's Gayle King, actress Gabrielle Union and model Naomi Campbell.

Prior to founding Cannes Can: Diversity Collective, Smith served as the first executive director of the 4A's Center for Excellence in Advertising at Howard University.

“Adrienne was chosen for this role as she is an entrepreneur and a trailblazer, paving her own way advocating for change around inclusion and diversity for the advertising industry for many years,” Jackson said. “Adrienne believes all things are possible, and will bring to the inclusion and diversity agenda a fresh perspective.”

According to WPP, Smith will work alongside Jackson and other stakeholders at the company to advocate for the ongoing inclusion of talent across its network of agencies, which include Grey, VMLY&R, Wunderman Thompson, GroupM and MediaCom.

She will also lead a collective made up of WPP’s diversity, equity and inclusion leaders that was formed last year. As part of this role, she will be tasked with fostering an “atmosphere of collaboration” so members can contribute to and co-create the collective’s strategy, policies and inclusion programming agenda.

“Adrienne will be the conduit to build alignment across our inclusion and diversity strategy, leverage learnings and the effective practices across brands while establishing accountability for our combined success,” Jackson said. “She will work with leadership, client teams, our talent community and external partners in creating an aligned sense of purpose, and will be a trusted partner around our inclusion and diversity agenda globally.”

Smith said she became interested in joining WPP last January after presenting to a group of the company’s talent leaders at a meeting led by Jackson, which focused on fostering a culture that is “open, optimistic and extraordinary” across the network.

“The goal was to educate and inspire all the WPP companies about our evolving culture and demonstrate all the wonderful opportunities and ideas that make being part of WPP so powerful,” she said. “Judy’s enthusiasm in the room was truly

contagious. Everyone in the room was committed. I left the meeting feeling inspired by the new WPP and the incredible talent and business leaders behind it.”

At WPP, she said she will be responsible for helping the company create an environment where employees can be their authentic selves regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual identity, religion, age, education, disability and veteran status.

“My goal is to get WPP to the point of escape velocity as it pertains to equity, inclusion and diversity—meaning the point of no return for bad industry habits.”

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