

Victoria Skye Grulke - CV

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Founder, Firebird Futures (Global)

October 2019 – Present

Virtual Chief Operating officer helping people and businesses GET IT DONE! I work with entrepreneurs, start-ups and SMEs, to start, grow and polish their businesses. I believe in building solid foundations from day one, allowing people to focus on what they do best, while empowering them to own all operations longer-term and fast-tracking businesses to achieve their goals.

Director, Girl Pride Africa (ZA, Cape Town)

January 2018 – Present

I met the founder of Girl Pride Africa, Lolah Mupotaringa, when I gave her a lift to the mall in Noordhoek. We instantly became friends, connected on levels I never thought possible and this has become my passion project. We help young single mothers across Africa regain their pride by assisting them in times of dire need, completing school, studies and finding a job, so that motherhood does not become a full stop to their future.

Personal Property Portfolio Manager (ZA, Cape Town)

September 2017 – Present

I left the corporate world when I was still married and decided to manage our property portfolio, which consisted of two rental properties, a piece of vacant land I was developing and investing in student housing in Cape Town. Unfortunately, I lost all but one property in our divorce, as my ex-husband wanted to take me to court over all of it. The good news is I have since rebuilt my portfolio, own one large residential property I let out and I have rebuilt my student housing business too - Firebird Properties! I have one house up and running, generating 2x the monthly bond repayments, with approval from my bank to purchase my second property this year! So many learnings, I love this space. Perhaps virtual estate in the Metaverse next?

Chief Operating Officer, Cognician Software (ZA, Cape Town)

June 2014 – July 2017

As COO, I became a member of the Exco team, responsible for helping shape the future of the business, our products, and our people. I was the head of excellence in everything we did: client service, project management, people management, culture, finances, legal and more. I managed some of these entirely in house and in some cases, recruited expert partners to work with us to fulfil the functions. It's so hard, to sum up the enormous number of touch points and influence I had in this role, but the CEO summed it up best: 'You think your worth lies in how much you do, and you do so very much more than most of us. But your true worth lies in polishing diamonds and what a brilliant diamond you have made us'.

General Manager, Cognician Software (ZA, Cape Town)

October 2013 – June 2014

I joined Cognician at a time when the Chairman was just about to leave for the USA, to set up our offices in San Francisco. They needed someone with my skill set to run the business and support the soon to be new CEO. My focus during this time was to look at the business under my microscope and identify what needed to change, be removed, added or remain as is. I spent this window setting up some of the foundations of Cognician across all verticals, a lot of which at their core are still in place today.

Volunteer, Homestead (ZA, Cape Town)

July 2013 – October 2013

I volunteered at Homestead, a charity helping street children and their parents rebuild their lives. I taught the woman that work on the Ubunye Beadwork how to use a computer, covering basic Microsoft Office and email skills. I also helped the CEO set up a new CRM system to manage the enormous database of current and potential donors. I also got involved with wages, stocktaking, the buying/delivering of food to the townships and so much more!

Client Service Director, Quirk /Mirum (ZA, Cape Town)

October 2011 – December 2012

I managed the Client Service team of 23 people, ensuring business objectives; client expectations and personal goals were being met. As an Agency Exco member and 2iC to the MD, I was integral in the overall running of the agency, in terms of revenue, clients, operations, people, training and growth. In my role I also acted as the key link between the Client Service team and studio, working across all teams: strategy, concept, design, development, media, UX, IA,

Analytics, etc. I was the regional Client Love lead responsible for marquee customer satisfaction, client events (inspiration sessions, education, celebrations, etc.) and networking (building deep networks within each company).

Business Director, Quirk / Mirum (ZA, Cape Town)

June 2011 – September 2011

I joined Quirk initially as a Business Director, due to my then lack of agency experience, but based on performance I was to be promoted to Client Service Director in 6-12 months. I was in fact promoted early, after only 4 months. The roles were very similar, except as the Business Director I was responsible for a slightly smaller team, 17 people and I was a member of Manco responsible for driving key operational changes and solving key business challenges within the agency.

Director Business Development, Marketwire (USA & Canada)

February 2011 - April 2011

I was flown over to Canada, chosen for the role, but after 3 months, USA visa delays stopped me from being able to accept & move overseas. This was a huge disappointment as I was so looking forward to the challenge.

Consultant, FutureWorld International (ZA & UK)

November 2009 – January 2011

I joined as a consultant to lead the redesign, from concept to execution, of the FutureWorld International web interface. The main objective was to evolve the static platform into a deeply engaging, social media-centric, environment. I also attended annual general meetings with FutureWorld gurus and fed into new themes in development, as well as participated in the vetting of Mind Bullets 'News from the future'.

Regional Executive, NBC Universal (USA)

December 2007 – October 2009

I managed in partnership with another Executive, NBC News online (MSNBC.com) for the West Coast of America, traveling between Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. MSNBC was a joint venture between Microsoft and NBC Universal and the agreement was that Microsoft was the sole sales house for all advertising, so a lot of my time was spent managing the relationship with the 200+ sales people in the region. We also sold directly to advertisers: standard media campaigns, sponsorships, and original programs. I had to ensure revenue targets were met; manage key brands including T-Mobile, Expedia, Nike, Best Buy, HP, Clorox, Microsoft, The Gap, (100+ brands); manage a team of account managers; manage relationships with VPs, directors, product teams, marketing, research, PR, development; and hosted MSNBC.com marketing events across the region.

Strategic Account Manager / Executive, Microsoft Limited (USA)

October 2006 – November 2007

I managed a portfolio of advertising clients and agencies, ensuring that campaigns were performing optimally and client objectives were being met. I was responsible for delivering against MS revenue targets and reporting on them monthly. Sales were driven through educating media directors & planners through agency/client product days, responding to formal RFPs; as well as proactive pitches. A part of my role was also to manage relationships with key partners: MSNBC, FoxSports, Massive, Xbox etc., as we sold media across the MSN.com portal. I also managed a couple of Account Managers & mentored several university graduates.

Senior Account Manager, Microsoft Limited (UK)

July 2004–October 2006

I was part of a team managing the direct partner relationships, most of which being content partners, as well as advertising clients. I worked with the MSN editorial team to ensure content was always up to date and relevant, driving user views and interaction rates, while at the same time delivering sales for the partners. I was responsible for ensuring advertising ROIs were at a maximum and all targets were being met. A major focus of this role was to not only maintain revenues but to identify new business opportunities to grow the overall accounts.

Operational Account Manager, Microsoft Limited (UK)

April 2003–July 2004

I was aligned with two senior account executives, managing a portfolio of MSN advertising partners. I was solely responsible for campaign set-up, optimisation, and delivery, as well as feeding insights into new proposals. A major focus was building relationships with assigned agencies and clients, as well as external vendors, such as Rich Media partners EyeBlaster and Tangowide.

MSN Shopping Manager, Microsoft Limited (UK)**October 2001–April 2003**

I was part of a small team responsible for the management of MSN Shopping, in terms of revenue, clients, merchandising and development. I personally managed 10 of the departments on the site, working closely with all creative, editorial, product teams in MSN UK, across Europe & the USA. We drove sales by creating seasonal, editorial and sponsored specials, which were promoted across MSN Shopping, the MSN Homepage, as well as the rest of the portal.

Web Coder & Account Manager, Fish4 Limited (UK)**October 2000–August 2001**

I was part of the HTML team, who developed the new fish4homes, fish4jobs, fish4lettings & intranet platforms. We were responsible for the search optimisation for Google, Yahoo & AltaVista and also got involved in developing digital TV content.

Web Designer & Account Manager, The Internet Solution (ZA)**November 1998–October 1999**

I was part of the web development team, creating websites, from conception to customer delivery, such as Nedbank, the SA Tourism Board, KTV & Hyundai, some of which were award-winning sites. We maintained all content, design & code of existing hosted sites, as well as managed & developed key client relationships.

Qualifications

- Countless training courses while with Microsoft & NBC in the UK & USA – Sales, Negotiating, Presentation, Personal Excellence, various systems training, etc.
- Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, etc.); CRM Tools (SalesForce, Hubspot, etc), the full suite of Google for business applications (drive, office, mail, etc.), online communication tools (Skype, Zoom, Flowdock, etc), various creative tools, ad management systems, Windows & Mac proficient.
- Speak fluent English and some Afrikaans (out of practice!).
- B.A / BSC, Business Economics & Business Information Technology - London Metropolitan University, Ongoing. I am considering furthering these business studies sometime in the future.

Interests

- Horse riding, tennis, yoga, fashion, music, art, interior design, architecture, food, traveling, photography, friends & family, charity work and so much more!