

Leigh-Anne Salonika, founder of OnlyKind



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

14 Jun 2021

From East London to some of South Africa's most storied agencies. After winning on global stages and achieving what she set out to on the inside of the corporate advertising machinery, Leigh-Anne Salonika is living her purpose, and in doing so working with brands to unlock theirs



Fast forward to 2021, Leigh-Anne Salonika is the founder of OnlyKind and we find out more from her this [Youth Month](#).

▣ **Can you tell us more about OnlyKind and what your role entails?**

OnlyKind was created to find every brand's purpose and tell it with intuitive and intelligent thinking and design.

“ Our aim is to make great work that is brave enough to stand out and kind enough to really mean something to the people and planet that it was created to move. ”

We take responsibility for the fact that creativity is only useful if it creates ripples of visible impact and influence. As the founder of a startup in a pandemic, my role is to oversee all our partners and guide them, align with the creative and strategic teams to ensure we are headed in the same direction, and to ensure the business is always delivering on our promise of Human-First and Impact Only. Simply, I am just the conductor that gets to have a little fun with some great minds in the industry, propelling brands to live their purpose with a sustainable view.

▣ **You've worked in the advertising industry for about 10 years. Briefly tell us about your journey.**

In 2011, I started off as a graphic designer at Hunt Lascaris Johannesburg. Here I had the privileged to learn from some of the top minds in the industry which resulted in an international award-winning campaign “We Sent Their Briefs Back”

Ironic, because it was these awards (D&AD/Loeries/Cannes/One Show) that were the catalyst for me to change my path from a creative to the business side of advertising.

It was Ivan Meroke, my CEO at the time, who walked up to me on the Loeries night to congratulate me and in the discussion he referred to me as 'milk'. No this was not due to my pale complexion, which is a sight, but as Ivan eloquently stated 'I might look pure and innocent, but I am more than meets the eye, I am the calcium in peoples bones that they don't even know they need in order to move forward.'

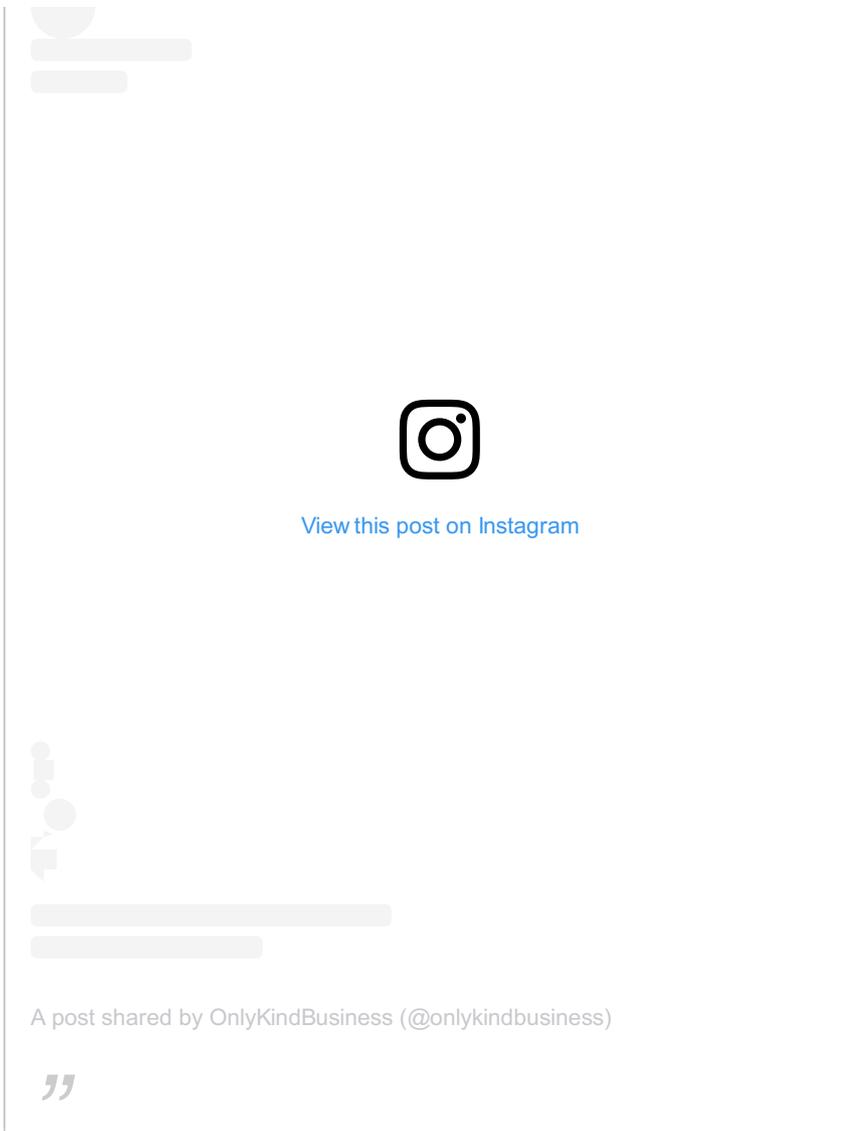
I told him that night that I was going to come and work with him and nine months later I was promoted as the new business marketer for Hunt Lascaris. From there I have had the privilege to work at Xfacta, Grid and did a three-month stint at T&W, the content team that created Chasing the Sun. All three of these places equipped me with a knowledge of brands, clients / partners, business, strategy and content creation.

It is this eclectic experience that has allowed me to open up my own company.

🎯 ***What is the one project you have worked on that you are incredibly proud of?***

We are currently working on Phase 2 of Rand Refinery's 100-year celebrations, it has been amazing to work with some old colleagues and get a 100-year-old business to reshape its views on how they deliver on their purpose authentically... So, watch this space!





We have had the opportunity to work with some old partners in Qatar. This was an interesting brief as we were tasked to name and position their Make-Up fridges in the market in order to reduce the waste of make-up going off. Understanding that this industry is estimated to be worth \$53bn by 2023, it was great to guide the client on a purpose for their product that added impact and influence not only to their consumers but the planet too.

After researching and unpacking the mindsets of cosmetic users in the Middle East (ME) and understanding that 70-80% of salaries are used on cosmetics, we combined these insights with the current trends of organic make-up and ethical behaviour to position these fridges as an enabler to sustainable beauty.

YuQi was the name we landed on as it means 'happiness' and 'snow' which is the feel one should get when make-up doesn't go off enabling you to be responsible and not waste. This allows the consumer to hold the key to their sustainable beauty.

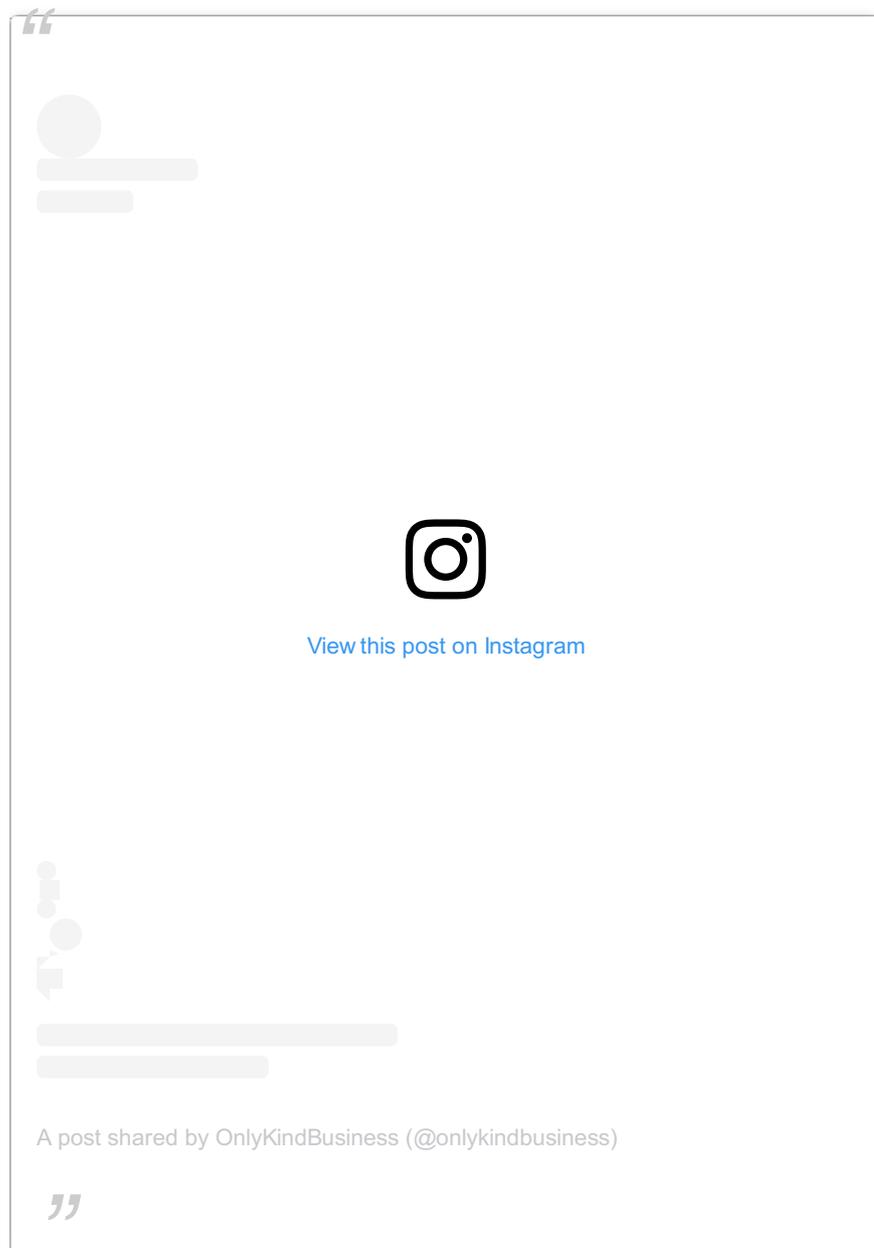
🔴 ***You now run your own company. Tell us more. How did you get into it, and what is your goal?***

Simply, I took a gamble and pitched on a piece of business, bringing a group of eclectic minds together, that allowed us to start OnlyKind. I would like to say there was a plan, but anyone that owns a startup will tell you it is just about being agile, adaptable, learning fast, seeing the opportunities and being brave enough to try.

The 18-month goal for OnlyKind is to up scale the business with a creative partner and bring on more clients that enable us to put the people and planet at the centre of all we do. I would like OnlyKind to be the company that brands come to to find solutions together that truly add an impact... It could be as simple as making our people smile.

🔴 ***What are the victories that you've had since starting out?***

We were given the opportunity to create a campaign with the most capped Springbok in South Africa, Victor Matfield. The best part was on set, as we had just had the reports come through in June 2020 of how many women, 2 million, had lost their jobs in SA due to Covid. Therefore, we hired an all female team which guided, shot, dressed and outperformed the day's expectations to capture the biggest name in rugby.



■ ***What is your biggest motivation?***

Failure. Because when you own your own business this concept of failing being a negative connotation slowly subsides.

■ ***What has your biggest achievement been?***

To have people come back and work with OnlyKind because we didn't just deliver impactful work, but that we were a pleasure to work with along the journey. To have work published in Hong Kong and Qatar during a pandemic, as well as having the privilege to shoot the most capped Springbok and launch Rand Refinery's 100yr celebrations within the 1st 12months of the business.

■ ***If you could travel back in time, what advice would you give yourself?***

Don't be scared to do something most people are afraid to even try... You win just by doing it, and the results can be beyond your expectations.

Hard work never fails anyone.

Read, explore, be more curious about anything and everything, because an idea can come from anywhere and anyone.

🔱 ***If you could have dinner with any 3 people (alive or dead), who would they be and why?***

Maya Angelou: "I've learnt that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." I have used this quote a lot in my presentations, because I believe this is the essence of what purpose lived brands should aim to do with their consumers. She embodies strength through her life story, and it would be a privilege to dine with her.

Freddie Mercury: I grew to love him from my dad. I appreciate that he was the square peg in a round hole of his time. It was his differences in every facet of life that enabled him to change the music world as we know it. He was relentless in his pursuit to be the best, it was shown in his last performances while terminally ill.

Sir David Attenborough: His knowledge, passion, bravery and story telling about his adventures on our planet would make for riveting conversation. In particular, I would like to unpack his point about the world population being 50% urbanised and as a result losing sight of what is happening in the natural world due to their lack of knowledge.

🔱 ***Where do you see yourself in five years time?***

I always say five years is a long time, as we have seen, a lot can happen in three months. But, where I hope to be overall is guiding OnlyKind, which is an international company with a great team of creative minds that push us all to think differently and challenge the norm with an office mascot aka a dog. Surrounded by all my loved ones along the journey.

🔱 ***As we celebrate Youth Month, do you have any words of encouragement for the youth?***

You are smarter than you think, have more grit than you comprehend and wiser than most would give you credit for, never doubt who you are and what you can do along this crazy journey called life.

Be curious and brave, it's amazing where these two traits can take you.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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