

Nedbank IMC speaker Khensani Nobanda

By  Jessica Tennant

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Khensani Nobanda, group executive Marketing and Corporate Affairs at Nedbank (the IMC's naming sponsor) is going to be in conversation with group CEO Mike Brown, discussing how to ensure your CEO doesn't see marketing as an indecent proposal. "I think it's a key topic because a lot of times marketing is looked at as a cost centre versus an investment for the growth of an organisation. It's going to be interesting to hear Mike's view on this!"



Khensani Nobanda

Nobanda's marketing career spans 18 years, working across a number of local and multinational organisations. Her first marketing role was at Unilever where she started as the Rama assistant brand manager. Her tenure at Unilever culminated in her running the skin category for Unilever in Africa, Middle East and Turkey, based in Dubai.

She has also worked at Diageo, South African Breweries and Vodacom where she was before she joined Nedbank in

September 2017.

She's passionate about brands, especially brands that are purpose led, and embody that purpose in everything that they do.

Here, we find out more about what's really behind her mask, only to find "NOTHING!"

"I am as authentic as they come and wear my heart on my sleeve (with a few swear words thrown in), and this shines through my literal masks as well!"

■ ***Tell us about your role as group executive marketing and corporate affairs, Nedbank?***

I head up marketing for the bank, and in my broader corporate affairs role, I ensure that we use our purpose "to use our financial expertise to do good" as a north star for the brand in everything that we do.

■ ***Tell us more about your experience and any career highlights to date?***

I've worked on some pretty amazing brands in my career. Two key role highlights besides my current role have been when I was brand manager for Smirnoff Vodka as a young 23-year-old. I loved that role so much, I couldn't believe that they paid me to do it!

Another highlight was running the skin category for Unilever for Africa Middle East and Turkey working from Dubai for three years. The combination of the very different markets, the fantastic brands (like Vaseline, Dove, Lux) and being on the global teams of these brands was just an incredible experience. One day I'd be in Jeddah discussing the growth of Lifebuoy whilst wearing an abaya, and the next I'd be in Nigeria looking at how we could make Vaseline a big brand in that market. No two days were ever the same, and of course, the bonus was the travel!

■ ***You're particularly passionate about brands, especially brands that are purpose led, and that embody that purpose in everything that they do. Please elaborate.***

Brands have to play a broader societal role that makes a positive impact. It can't just be about your functional role, but a functional role linked to solving for some of societies challenges. That's what I love about heading up the Nedbank brand. Our impact goes beyond, yes, the important business of providing banking products and services for our clients, but we are also very clear that in order for us to be a sustainable business, we need to build a sustainable society through not only CSI, but in how we do business, and in the funding that we do.

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

An astronaut - can you believe that?! A young black girl growing up in Swaziland wanted to be an astronaut. That's the audacity I've always had. Then I wanted to be a lawyer because I watched too much *LA Law*. I'm glad that didn't work out.

■ **What did you study, where did you expect your career to take you, and how does this measure up to your current reality?**

I studied a B.Comm in Marketing and Information Systems from Wits. In my second year, as I sat down for my first marketing lecture with Professor Steve Burgess, I knew with absolute clarity that this is what I wanted to do. So being the group executive for marketing at Nedbank is exactly where I wanted to be. Heading up Corporate Affairs which includes CSI and transformation is an absolute cherry on top!

■ **When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?**

Lots of reading. Lots of wine. Lots of online scrabble. Not enough running. Lots of series with my husband, Nelson. Thrown in with some physical connections with friends and family here and there.

■ **What are you reading/listening to/watching at the moment?**

I generally read three books at a time. I'm currently reading *The Twelve*, the second novel in Justin Cronin's *The Passage* trilogy; *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* by Jenny Nordberg; as well as *So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love* by Cal Newport.

And I'm watching *Barry* (dark humour) as well as rewatching *True Blood*.

■ **What's the first thing you plan to do when things go back to normal?**

Go on holiday. I miss travelling out of the country.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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