

Insights into Nahana Graduate Programme with head of learning Papikie Seopa

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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For over the past eight years Nahana Communications Group has helped 190 graduates gain work place experience through its graduate programme. For Youth Month I sat down with head of learning Papikie Seopa to learn more about its impact and objectives.



Almost 200 graduates have gone through the programme in the past eight years. Source: Supplied.

■ ***Can you provide an overview of the youth graduate programme? What is its purpose and objectives?***

We have a long-standing graduate programme within the industry that was spearheaded by Nkwenkwe Nkomo, as a way to be intentional about bringing young, talented and diverse graduates within our group. The programme kicks off with a three-month induction, followed by an intense and highly structured graduate experience for nine months.

During this 12-month period, graduates get to work on some of the best brands alongside some of the most exceptional talent in the country in order to build their professional skills, relational skills and industry knowledge. At the end of the 12-month journey, we host a graduation to commemorate the year and pay tribute to everyone that makes the programme a great experience.

■ ***What are the eligibility criteria and requirements for applicants to participate in the programme?***

Because our programme is co-funded by MICT - Seta, below are some of the contractual obligations:

- Candidates need to be in possession of a qualification from an institution of higher learning.
- Candidates need to be between the ages of 18-35 years.
- Candidates need to be South African.

■ ***How does the programme support the career development and growth of young graduates?***

Our programme has three pillars:

1. **Work experience:** Each graduate is assigned a manager and works in a particular team along with other members.

They would either work on a dedicated brand or work on multiple brands depending on their skill set. Graduates receive quarterly performance feedback from their managers to ensure that they are on track with their professional development.

2. **Life skills:** Each graduate is allocated a mentor. During their monthly meetings, graduates learn how to navigate the inner workings of advertising, media and PR by building relationships, gaining confidence, learning how to network and overall developing a relationship with a well-experienced member of staff that will help shape their perspective about their career.
3. **Graduate activities:** Because of our commitment to building healthy cultures, we have a series of fun internal events, grad challenges, excursions, and team-building activities. Given the size of our group and how widespread it is, graduates are allocated to different companies and departments, creating a safe community for graduates to interact which goes a long way to developing a healthy organisational culture.



Papikie Seopa is the head of learning at Nahana Communications Group.

■ ***Could you share some success stories or examples of past participants who have benefited from the programme?***

There are plenty of success stories, one that springs to mind is an art direction graduate named Ole Tshetlo who joined the programme in 2018 after completing his studies at AAA school of advertising as their top student.

Upon arrival into the graduate programme, he was afforded the opportunity to travel and experience Canada by working at FCB Canada for a week. A year later, he decided to move to Canada and join the FCB team there.

Shannon Koor and Nontokozo Tshabalala: In 2017, two of our graduates participated in an internal grad challenge and got the opportunity to go to Michigan, US.

The Nahana Group is regarded by many to be an academy within the industry because we are known to create great experiences for young talent to learn and launch their careers.

▀ ***What sets this youth graduate programme apart from others in terms of its structure or offerings?***

It's extremely structured. Here is why:

- **Recruitment:** We have a rigorous recruitment process that involves an initial screening and a two-week bootcamp.
- **Induction:** We have a three-month induction process that acts as a transition point to assist graduates to integrate in the business. This period fortifies interpersonal skills and the necessary business skills needed to thrive in advertising, media and public relations.
- **Graduate Programme:** The rest of the programme, is a combination of work experience, graduate activities and psychosocial support. We've placed a great emphasis on creating where graduates aren't simply doing miniature pieces of work but are truly put to the test in order to be ready for the working world.

▀ ***How do you ensure ongoing support and engagement with the graduates even after they complete the programme?***

On average 80% of our graduates get absorbed into the business. We have a group of our up-and-coming leaders who manage the graduates. It is their responsibility to build a community and network of support such as mentorship, regular HR check-ins and career development support through their manager.

▀ ***Are there any plans to expand or enhance the programme in the future?***

We are a large group, and so every one of the companies in our group has a certain number of graduates allocated to them.

We are always open to improving our programme, for instance, we have increased the time graduates spend in our induction period to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the work to be undertaken once they transition to the graduate programme with the respective organisations within the group.

Keeping our ears plugged in the business allowed us to integrate the feedback we were receiving from business heads.

▀ ***Any useful links and information?***

- Nahana Graduate Programme Instagram page: [Nahana Fela](#)

Quote by Khanyisa Malungana, graduate 2023: "The graduate programme has truly been a transformative experience for me, propelling my career to new heights. I am provided with invaluable work experience, mentorship and study opportunities that are instrumental in my career success. I've had the chance to work with the most talented people in the industry. The work culture is very inviting and challenges me to push beyond my limits. The workshops, seminars, and training sessions that I have attended have expanded my knowledge base. This programme is an opportunity of a lifetime."

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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