

# Eugene... the new face of banking radio?



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

29 Aug 2014

Radio has long been the battlefield for banking. Over the past couple of years the banking sector, because of some guy called Steve, became even more competitive.

This competitive environment, plus the need to transform, led to Nedbank going through a profound journey of change and transformation from being perceived as a bank for the rich and inaccessible to the ordinary South African, to where it is today.

This was according to Sydney Nhlanhla Mbhele, Divisional Executive: Group Marketing at Nedbank, who told delegates at the recent Radio Advertising Bureau's (RAB SA) RadioWorks Conference held in Cape Town and Johannesburg: "To achieve this we had to demonstrate that we are open to doing business with all South Africans, in particular the middle market. We had to develop a new image that was more accessible and lastly we had to unashamedly unpack Nedbank's value proposition."

## Meet Eugene

Personifying the changes in the bank - and the country - is the central figure in the Nedbank campaign: Eugene. Originally, Eugene was the voice of the bank, but Mbhele says this made him quite fake. So they introduced the voice in the commercials, to guide Eugene, who now became the vulnerable consumer.

"Eugene is the new generation who is optimistic about the future. He is fun, but authentic," says Mbhele.

While the campaign used a number of media, these were selected in line with resolving the Bank's business problems, and did not just blindly following the popular 360° route. Key to their radio success was choosing the correct stations. It meant going back to the basics. "We did the consumer and brand analysis, media weighting and execution planning and found our target market more than often not listened to the radio when they were in their vehicles and were more discerning about their choice of radio station. Station selection was based on this and on balancing reach and affinity to avoid wastage," explains Mbhele.

## Simple messages

Despite having eight commercials, they decided to limit the executions and spread them. "We did not go with all eight at once, and thus gave each commercial a fair chance to succeed and [this] assisted us in cutting through some of the clutter."

The commercials had to articulate and communicate what the bank stands for in a compelling manner and that was achieved using simple messages, distinct to the brand, but which solved the business problem says Mbhele.

He explains that the bank has developed its own creative review principles and these helped them to be very clear about what makes a Nedbank commercial distinctly Nedbank. "This process has checkpoints, so when we put in a brief to the agency, the agency can work effectively and come back with meaningful work. Once the process has started work we work through it using the guidelines and so know at what point a commercial is ready to go out."

He says they also look at the commercials collectively to ensure that all of them, no matter how good, are consistent with the brand.

## So, did it work?

They then asked the important question: Did it work? Data and stats could not be more important he says. "We compared our performance on a month-to-month basis and after six months, we had 15% uplift, but more importantly we had new clients. Recently we have been running neck-and-neck in terms of awareness with FNB on radio."

Mbhele gave the following as learnings from this campaign:

- Get integration right to sweat the assets.
- Have enough media weight
- Media owner partnerships. This will amplify your spend. We missed out on this opportunity, but will look at it for the next phase of the campaign.
- Focus on one reason to believe at a time. One commercial at a time, be clear and single minded.
- Don't just translate. Bring meaning, understand nuances and consumers in their true sense.
- Use insights to tweak as you go along. For example changing Eugene from the voice of the bank to the vulnerable, translated into more legs for the campaigns with better results.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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