

#BehindtheSelfie with... Zumi Njongwe, consumer communication and excellence director at Nestlé

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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This week, we go behind the selfie with Zumi Njongwe, consumer communication and excellence director at Nestlé East and Southern Africa and #NedbankIMC2020 speaker...



“ The importance of marketers is shaping the future of how brands are perceived has never been more important and we create, respond and react to culture. In this changing world, our voices must become more responsible while still maintaining our flair. ”

1. Where do you live, work and play?

I always think of myself as an African first and a citizen of the world second. I do reside in Joburg right now with my family.

2. What's your claim to fame?

I am not famous at all but I have been in the industry for a long time.

3. Describe your career so far.

Eclectic, varied, shaped by many people, filled with joy, struggle and meaning. I have really loved my journey because I have grown leaps and bounds to the point where I often pause and reflect on how far I have come albeit I still have a lot to learn. I always say that I am the result of the love of a thousand and I truly mean that because so many people have taught me valuable lessons, have taken a risk on me when 'I wasn't ready' and eclectic because of the diversity of my experience across continents, roles, categories, teams and cultural experiences. It's hard yards at times but my philosophy now is if it's not stretching, I am not interested.

4. Tell us a few of your favourite things.

I do love storytelling and I think that as I have transitioned into the new chapter in my life, I truly am a sucker for a great story. I, therefore, love watching and creating great work that tells a story, reading and listening to people who have wonderful stories to tell and hearing the crazy stories my family tells me all the time. Oh, and I do love running and exercising too. One day I will also be able to travel again and this has broadened my horizons in an unimaginable way.

5. What do you love about your industry?

I love working in the creative industry and have always chosen industries and businesses that value innovation, they place emphasis on the power of great ideas and that champion the African story. So, I get to match my own personal purpose (leading from the heart to create the change I want to see) with an industry that tells our stories, it's fabulous!

6. Describe your average workday, if such a thing exists.

I have always been fortunate to work with wonderful teams who really leapfrog me when it comes to their strategic thinking and creative flair. So I spend most of my time thinking about how I can unleash them and help them be amazing through planning, discussions, meetings and/or workshops. As a member of the executive team, I am also responsible for helping to shape the future strategy of the business while creating work that delivers to support my business partners so I am constantly checking in on the best way for me to do this in an optimal way. I also have good external partners (e.g. agencies), whom we work with, and I have to ensure that they have the most suitable environment for them to create their best work.

7. What are the tools of your trade?

Curiosity wins all the time. In this industry, you have to be curious about your consumers and what they need. Recently digital tools are very useful for a marketer and I must be honest this is an area I am trying to improve myself. Relationship management and having your own brand of authentic leadership has helped in creating the right networks to get the outcomes I need. I didn't have a marketing degree (I studied science in my previous life), but I am sure it does help.

8. Who is getting it right in your industry?

I am a big fan of the young entrepreneurs that are redefining what it means to create value, I am a big fan of businesses



that drive shared value for themselves, their stakeholders and their consumers. My list is long but it would include Walk Fresh (a young entrepreneur who started his own sneaker cleaning business), Bathu (also a local entrepreneur with his own range of shoes), Woolworths on the work they do on driving sustainability, Nestlé which is innovative, progressive and focused on winning with consumers, communities and the planet among others.



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9. List a few pain points the industry can improve on.

I think we have an opportunity as business to reconnect our success with social progress because these are now integrally. The days of brands on one side and responsibility on the other side are gone. We can do better to ensure we drive this more emphatically and marketing has a big voice in driving this change.

10. What are you working on right now?

There is a lot going on but I am focused on ensuring that my team and I help to create the best marketing team in Africa bar none. So I am pulling on all the resources and bright minds I know to help me achieve this goal. This will ensure we achieve our strategy and create value for the business but also for our people.

11. Tell us some of the buzzwords floating around in your industry at the moment, and some of the catchphrases you utter yourself.

Alignment! I know it's over utilised but we use this term a lot.

12. Where and when do you have your best ideas?

Mornings are the best time for me to think clearly and then evenings to plan the details. I write my thoughts down and this has served me well as I can create order for the noise in my world sometimes. It's my own little trick.

13. What's your secret talent/party trick?

I love dancing but it's no secret. I can dance all night with good music on. I am also a good judge of character I have been told.

14. Are you a technophobe or a technophile?

Technophile albeit my son has to step in and help mummy sometimes.

15. What would we find if we scrolled through your phone?

Lots of music and pictures.

16. What advice would you give to newbies hoping to crack into the industry?

Work for the smartest coach/leader you can, you grow faster that way. Make sure you pay attention and be demanding of them to coach you as often as possible. Money will come if you get this right.

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*Interviewed by [Jessica Tennant](#).

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