

Discovery's Celeste Williams - inspiring better lifestyles

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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At the end of June, Discovery's group CEO Adrian Gore announced Celeste Williams' promotion to general manager, the most senior grading in the organisation.



Image supplied. Celeste Williams, GM at Discovery says inspiring people to change their lifestyles in a meaningful way is incredibly rewarding

Williams has been with Discovery for over 18 years, serving as head of marketing for Vitality and most recently as head of sponsorships and experiential marketing. She spoke to Bizcommunity about the Vitality brand's journey and new offerings such as Vitality Travel.

 ***You have been at Discovery for nearly two decades. What are the biggest changes you have seen that have led the brand to progress itself?***

I joined Discovery because their strong purpose and culture resonated deeply with my own values. Their vision to make people healthier and enhance and protect lives highly appealed to me.

At the heart of this is Discovery Vitality, a behaviour change platform that was formed to guide and incentivise people towards better health.

We started off by reducing the cost of going to gym and rewarding members for gym visits. What's been interesting for me

is to see how we evolved from simply enabling members to gym at a reduced cost into so much more, such as rewarding members for logging their workouts through their fitness devices, for attending fitness classes, buying healthy food and engaging in mental well-being activities.

We have also expanded to focus on other key areas to improve society, such as Vitality Drive and Vitality Money.

▀ ***What lessons has the brand taken out of this for the future?***

As a brand, we have learned how critical it is to be agile and be able to adapt quickly. But one of the biggest lessons was a reminder of the power of community.

We saw this with our virtual runs where people still 'showed up', proving they still want to connect and be a part of a community.

Transferring our social and digital strategy into the nutrition and physical activity space, and our partnerships and collaborations with different brands, people and ambassadors helped us grow and maintain those connections. Even in a virtual world, people still crave human connection.

▀ ***What have been highlights for you in your career to date?***

There have been so many and each of them is the reason I continue to grow personally and professionally.

The introduction of Vitality Active Rewards and our partnership with Apple is particularly noteworthy. It shifted the entire programme from engaging members a few times a month, to gamifying and engaging daily and weekly just by wearing an Apple Watch.

I've also been lucky enough to meet very inspiring people such as Oprah Winfrey, Jamie Oliver, David Beckham and Usain Bolt. It has been a privilege being able to connect with sport heroes, our ambassadors and our members at events, where we see the difference Vitality makes in people's lives every day.



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▀ ***What are you most excited about in your new position?***

Being able to think of new and innovative ways to inspire people to change their lifestyles in a meaningful way is not only challenging, but incredibly rewarding.

Working on Vitality Travel is a lot of fun for me right now. I love to travel and have managed to catch up with my bucket list this year by completing a half marathon in Ireland and doing some shopping in Portugal and the Netherlands. I even got to visit my family in Australia.

As a marketer, it is a whole new opportunity to disrupt the travel landscape with a stellar end-to-end travel service.

We've really considered it all – from our Priority Fast Track Lane at the airports to our exciting new airport lounges with SAA. It is through touchpoints like these that we ensure the travel journey is convenient and memorable for our members.

We also have a few new sponsorship announcements in the pipeline: we really want to get more people playing and enjoying the great outdoors. Women in sports also remain a passion point of mine. So, from the athletes and ambassadors, in-person events and hospitality, we are taking things to the next level – I can't say more but watch this space!

▣ ***How do you walk the talk of the Discovery brand in your personal capacity?***

I have quite a frenetic work schedule, so I must get a run in early in the day – usually at 5am. Running helps me manage my day better and keeps me mentally and physically fit. I am at most Vitality events and races on the weekends – it's an extraordinary way to see and explore our beautiful country and meet and connect with our members directly. I am also a travel addict.

▣ ***What did you want to be when you grew up?***

From an early age, I wanted to be a teacher and I think that was always at my core – to nurture and inspire others.

In high school, I was also excited by the world of genetics and understanding human behaviour. That led me into the world of psychology and studying consumer behaviour.

I think aspects of all these interests culminates into the world of marketing, especially in a data-driven environment like Vitality.

Finally, I always knew I wanted to have the power to be able to make a positive difference and contribution to the world. And I'm fortunate enough to be living that dream.

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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