

A cyclical change to the glass ceiling

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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8 March is International Women's Day. We asked women at the top of their field in the creative industry and women who have been in the industry for a while or just joined, about women in the creative industry.



Image supplied. Neo Makhele is the chief strategy officer for Ogilvy South Africa

Senior leader: Neo Makhele

Neo Makhele is the chief strategy officer for Ogilvy South Africa.

Has the glass ceiling shifted, cracked, or collapsed?

The glass ceiling in the advertising industry has shifted - it's more of a cyclical change influenced by our response to

Covid-19. This period significantly altered our business approaches, emphasising the need for proactivity in our professional and personal lives.

As women in leadership, the pandemic has made us re-evaluate our priorities, placing a greater emphasis on life, loved ones, and the delicate balance of managing successful advertising businesses.

Whilst challenges exist, the landscape for women of colour to ascend to C-suite positions has become more accessible compared to the past; often time driven by client demands for transformation.

However, there is much to be done - we need to continue to encourage the advancement and growth of more women of colour rising to leadership positions.

The advertising industry's complexities bring about substantial responsibilities for leaders, highlighting the importance of shared burdens among teams.

However, the autonomy women have over self-management has diminished somewhat due to the constant juggling act required to balance work and personal life. As a result, having a supportive team or family setting has become crucial in navigating these challenges.

What still needs to be done?

To further progress in our industry, we need to focus on several key areas, including diversifying leadership with more female representation and by bringing in a youthful energy for a more progressive outlook.

We need to expand our approach to diversity, not just in hiring but also in upskilling staff and fostering collaboration among teams. Encouraging younger individuals to step into leadership roles can bring fresh perspectives and drive innovation.

Another crucial step is embracing new technologies more authentically across the industry. It's not just about adopting the latest tools, but truly integrating them into our work to enhance creativity and efficiency.

Additionally, there's a continuous need to grow employees' capabilities. Hiring the right people for the job is essential as well as our commitment to their growth.

Leaders in advertising should elevate the profession's profile and longevity by empowering individuals to pursue long-term careers. Additionally, nurturing talent and advising the younger generation to embrace patience and humility is crucial, understanding that success results from collective effort.

Cultivating a work culture that values bravery, curiosity, and dedication to developing skills over time is essential. These areas can help us build more inclusivity and drive industry advancement.



Image supplied. Aqeelah Kader is a UI designer at Ogilvy Digital and a graduate of the 2023 Ogilvy Graduate Programme

Junior professional: Aqeelah Kader

Aqeelah Kader is a UI designer at Ogilvy Digital and a graduate of the 2023 Ogilvy Graduate Programme.

■ ***What attracted you to the industry?***

The advertising industry is both dynamic and innovative; the unique blend of creativity and technology attracted me to work within the digital advertising space. Also, the opportunity to create human-centric experiences and witness their impact spreading across the globe is truly inspiring.

■ ***What has your experience been so far in the industry, as a woman? Does it align with your expectations or not? Please give an example.***

As a young woman of colour in the digital advertising industry, my experience has been a blend of fulfilling moments and growth. I have worked on various projects with iconic brands – which can come across as intimidating at first, however, with a supportive team and a positive outlook, you can achieve anything.

■ ***What would you like to change or see change as a woman in the industry?***

While a lot of effort has been made to support women in this industry, there's still room for improvement in nurturing young women into leadership or management roles and investing more in our youth beyond formalised programmes.

By prioritising the youth and providing mentorship opportunities through industry leaders for those from underprivileged backgrounds, we can create a lasting impact for generations to come. The youth is the key to a bigger and brighter future for South Africa.

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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