

Adelaide Tshabalala, new head of digital marketing at Hill+Knowlton Strategies SA



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Hill+Knowlton Strategies South Africa has appointed Adelaide Tshabalala as the head of digital marketing. Over the past two years Tshabalala has completed her Advanced Diploma in Digital Marketing with Red & Yellow Creative School of Business. Throughout her career, she has demonstrated her ability to connect with her clients and to develop and implement client-centered, successful campaigns, aimed at improving brand awareness and presence.



Adelaide Tshabalala, newly appointed head of digital marketing at Hill+Knowlton Strategies SA

Says managing director Jennifer Leppington-Clark, “Adelaide joined H+K in June 2014 as an account manager. When we redesigned our structure internally, Adelaide put up her hand to work on social media and since then has helped to develop our offering into the full-fledged Digital marketing offering, we have today.”

📊 ***Congrats on your appointment. How do you feel about it?***

It is very exciting! I have some great ideas that I can't wait to implement with current and future clients. It is also a wonderful feeling when you are recognised for all of your blood, sweat and tears, but mostly for your passion.

📊 ***How and when did this come about?***

This came about when H+K decided to change the structure of the business from a traditional PR agency into a structure that enables its employees to carve out a niche for themselves and become experts in. At this point, my social media knowledge was based on what I did on my own platforms and a bit of client work, but I was intrigued and wanted to explore more. That was where it all started.

“ Day by day my passion fuelled me to grow and learn about how I could make this digital business my own. ”

I soon landed social accounts across industries as well as across Africa and turned my passion into a consistent revenue

generating arm of the business.

H+K then offered to invest further in my capabilities and offered to pay for my Advanced Diploma in Digital Marketing, which I completed last year with merit. It was a tough balance to achieve but necessary for me to finally have the qualification to back up the experience that I acquired from scratch. It also helped to be exposed to our vast network of global digital leads with whom I now collaborate to create structure, implement best practice and consult at a world-class level.

■ ***What excites you most about taking on this new role?***

Being empowered to consult on another level, make decisions and take control. It feels like the training wheels have been taken off and I am now able to take on new challenges, decide the pace and intensity and challenge the barriers and break boundaries.

■ ***How did you end up working in the communications industry?***

After graduating matric, I was a bit of a lost lamb. School in general wasn't the best experience for me, so I took a gap year, got bored halfway through, and decided to get certified as a call centre agent. I did that for a bit, which turned out to be a little traumatising, because although I liked talking to people, I wasn't used to that level of dislike from them. After that, I worked at Mr Video for a while, but I suffered from a heavy case of FOMO watching my friends blossom into themselves while studying. I then went to a college to find out my options and an advisor suggested Public Relations and I liked it and for the first time I was getting distinctions. From there I graduated from UJ with a National Diploma in PR and Communications Management. I won an internship in my final year and started working for a boutique agency straight off the bat.

■ ***What do you love most about your career, the industry and what you do?***

I love that my industry is so personal and so impactful, and you are always learning something and evolving.

“ I love the ability to create and shape conversations. To be able to create an opportunity for brands to connect with its public. ”

To learn about the psychology and behaviours of people and working with that to decide how, when and where to communicate with them and create relationships with them. I love being able to tell stories – being able to give something a voice is powerful for me because a lot of what I experienced in school and in life in general put me in positions where I felt voiceless.

■ ***Which are the most memorable campaigns that you've worked on?***

Definitely a campaign called Project Butterfly by Dow Packaging & Speciality plastics. Project Butterfly was developed to address one of Africa's most pressing visible environmental issues – waste management. The project was inspired by the belief that the way to encourage waste management behaviour is through not only educating but also entertaining and providing young people with the opportunity to interact with what they are learning.

This project took me from country to country (not always physically) discovering how waste has impacted societies and how Dow was empowering communities through waste management. I had the opportunity to talk to waste pickers to learn how they are using waste to provide for their families and tell all of their stories, their hopes, and their dreams through social media. This project is memorable because I too came from humble beginnings, and it gave me an opportunity to use social media to touch lives, inspire others and give them a way out of their situations through waste.

■ ***Do you have any career highlights?***

In my first job I won a Gold PRISM Award for crisis communications and Project Butterfly won a Certificate of Excellence at the SABRE awards. I have had the opportunity to speak at Madex about the fundamentals of social media. I also have done a few speaking engagements as part of H+K's CSI initiatives to schools in Johannesburg and Durban about considering a career in digital marketing.

■ ***As the new head of digital marketing at H+K South Africa, what approach will you be taking?***

I am lucky in that the H+K breadth and depth model allows for us to bring together the best expertise and specialisms from across industries to create agility for our clients. It also allows me to use my deep sector knowledge and breadth of experience to solve complex communication challenges for my clients. I'm excited to bring this and intentional and purposeful communication to the Digital Marketing sector of our business.

■ ***What is your biggest motivation in life?***

To be successful. Who doesn't want to be successful?! I want all the things that come with success – the recognition, to be a good provider, to be a good role model, to be as good at something as possible.

“ I want to feel great about myself and feel like I am making an impact. ”

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