

Sizwe Mdladla from soccer to a passion for branding

 By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

5 Sep 2023

Sizwe Mdladla Nando's GM: digital marketing IMEA started off thinking he wanted to own a soccer team, but then he found his passion for branding.



Image supplied. Sizwe Mdladla Nando's GM: Digital Marketing IMEA discovered a passion for branding

What did you study and why?

After school I studied a Sports Management degree at university. The plan was to one day own my own soccer team and get it promoted from grass roots soccer all the way to the PSL.

I was influenced a lot by Sir Alex Ferguson back then and I wanted to emulate him.

But then I saw this degree had physiology, biology and all sorts of other sciences; and I realised that perhaps this wasn't for me.

So after a year I registered at Bond University for a BCom in management. Here I discovered that I actually enjoy the principles of selling and marketing and it became my niche.

After completing that degree, I was compelled by my mother to continue studying and do my honours. She was very concerned that nothing made me stand out, as most job seekers have undergraduate degrees in tow when seeking employment. My next step was to register at Vega Brand Communication School for my honours degree, which I completed in a year and the rest as they say is history.



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■ **How did you get into branding?**

My first step towards a career in branding was my honours degree from Vega. It ignited in me a need and desire to be involved in all things branding and brand building. My actual qualification was BA Hons in Brand Leadership – a degree I recommend to anyone who wants to get into branding. Here is where I found my passion and motivation for branding.

■ **What does your job entail?**

In short, my job entails being accountable for the design, implementation and execution of the digital marketing strategy for Nando's SA & IMEA. I am also responsible for digital channel growth, all digital communication and media management. But the most important part of my job is driving digital revenue generation.

“ Not everything that we conceive works all the time, but am lucky enough to work for a company that allows us to fail quickly - but fail forward and use failure as learnings ”

■ **What do you love about your job?**

What I love the most about my role is that not much is subjective. It either works or it doesn't. In our field we are fortunate to have data readily available at our fingertips. So, it's very easy to see whether an initiative is working or not. This also allows us the flexibility to pivot quickly when we need to. Not everything that we conceive works all the time, but am lucky enough to work for a company that allows us to fail quickly - but fail forward and use failure as learnings.



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■ **What is challenging in your work, and in your industry in terms of branding?**

Competition is very intense in our space; the most challenging part of my role is trying to always stay ahead of the curve.

Then there is making sure my team is strategically aligned with the business goals and objectives, which can prove challenging when you manage a team of strong-willed specialists.

The challenge is to channel all their specialist knowledge and energies towards a common goal. Key to this is being able to provide the right environment for them to thrive within.

“ 24 hours can be a long time in our industry, always be at the forefront of new information ”

■ **What would you say to a young person who expresses an interest in branding and this kind of work? What advice would you give them?**

I'd tell a young person to not give up after one or two or three or even four rejections. If you really believe this is the space in which you want to grow your career, fight for it.

It's also very helpful to read up on brands and trends in this space, 24 hours can be a long time in our industry, always be at the forefront of new information.

You can never know enough.

What also really helped me in my journey was having a coach and a mentor. Nothing can beat experience, having someone in your corner who has been there and done that is invaluable.

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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