

PHELADI MAKGERU

Marketing, Brand and Communications Leader

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The most creative marketing outcomes tend to rest on the most disciplined foundations. Most of my work over the past nine years has been the quieter business of building the systems, governance and cultural infrastructure that let an organisation deliver well over time, on the conviction that how an organisation looks on the outside depends a great deal on how aligned it is on the inside. I am drawn to new frontiers and to the discomfort of building something that has not been built before. I have also learnt to hold a real respect for the legacy systems and the people who built them, since they usually have more to teach than they are given credit for. When the underlying structure is sound and the past is honoured properly, the growth tends to look after itself.

EXPERIENCE

Head of Marketing and Communications

2025 to Present | Johannesburg

Sourceworx | Managed IT, Cybersecurity, Network Infrastructure and Software | Level 1 B-BBEE | ISO 9001, 27001, 20000

I joined Sourceworx to build the marketing function from inception, with no team, strategy or processes in place when I arrived. The early months went to the governance the function would need to stand on, since the structure has to be in place before there is much point asking what the work should look like. Risk management, the policy cycles, MANCO membership and budget controls came first, and the marketing was layered on once the foundation could carry it. The function now sits at the senior commercial table, treated as a partner to bids, partnerships and the executive rather than as a service line, which is the level at which I have always believed marketing should operate.

Focus areas: Function building | Executive committee reporting | Partnership commercialisation | Executive positioning | AI integration and efficiency modelling | CRM architecture | Governance | Government vertical | In-housing of agency work

- Built and now lead a three-pillar Marketing and Communications department spanning brand, content and partnership operations, with the Brand and Creative Lead and the Marketing Operations function reporting to me, and the department reporting into the Managing Director.
- Own the four-quarter ExCo marketing strategy and set the direction for how the function pursues demand across the commercial verticals. The discipline is holding the line between long-term positioning and what the business needs delivered each quarter, and being able to defend both in the same conversation.
- Architected and now own the Partnership Operating Model, and led the commercial and governance work behind the Sourceworx and Sizwe Africa IT Group alliance. This included the strategic partnership agreement, the partner evaluation framework that moved Sizwe into Tier 1 Priority and the supporting executive engagement. The model treats partnership as a commercial discipline, with clear gates, themes and accountability sitting underneath it, and a board-ready reporting structure on top.
- Built the Managing Director's executive presence from a standing start to national broadcast and G20 platforms, and shaped the full thought leadership programme around the Nedbank Top Empowerment Conference. The keynote, the stand presence, the delegate engagement and the surrounding content were treated as a single body of work, and the post-conference lead conversion process was run through to the sales and executive teams on a prioritised tracker.
- Developed the SMME go-to-market strategy across the five service lines, working through the positioning, the commercial logic and the supporting content as a single body of work. This included the recommendation on which lines to pursue commercially and which to hold back for the year, which tied marketing directly to the revenue model rather than treating it as a separate conversation.

- Set the strategic direction for the team's adoption of AI and automation, designing operational automations through Microsoft workflows and Power Automate and embedding current AI tools into how we research, plan and produce. The practical outcome is a deliberate offloading of external agency dependency, with creative, research and content production now sitting in-house. Sprints are shorter, the expertise sits closer to the brief and the cost line has come down materially. A three-person lead team carries the workload of a much larger one as a result, and the efficiency gain is structural rather than situational.
- Architected the CRM infrastructure from first principles and established ExCo-grade performance reporting in the language of the business, so that decisions are made on evidence rather than instinct, and the function is held to the same operational and financial standard as any other commercial unit.
- Opened a government vertical addressing e-Government digitisation and municipal procurement, building the strategic case and the supporting platform thinking off a deep read of the public sector reporting landscape, alongside live municipal tender work.
- Created Kudo's, an enterprise peer recognition programme that staff took up on their own initiative, and led the wider culture work that has helped bring the teams closer together.

Digital Brand and Communications Manager

2024 to 2025 | United Kingdom

Sumer Group | Financial Services | 13 Subsidiaries

A strategic communications role at the centre of a large and complex financial services group, which asked for a real understanding of both the sector and the difficulty of communicating across a federated organisation. I was brought in for external communications, but the more pressing problem sat inside the group, where thirteen subsidiaries each held a different sense of who they were and how they should sound. I took it to leadership and asked to widen the remit so the underlying issue could be addressed properly rather than worked around at the surface.

Focus areas: Strategic communications | Communications architecture | Multi-entity stakeholder management | Financial services governance | Roadmap and budget ownership | Agency rationalisation and in-housing | Change management

- Built the communications architecture the group still works from today, setting out how the parent and its subsidiaries relate to one another in voice, message and identity. The work asked for careful stakeholder management across thirteen subsidiary leadership teams, each with their own commercial pressures and brand histories that had to be honoured rather than overridden.
- Developed the communications roadmap that sequenced how change was introduced across the group, pacing the messaging so that people had time to absorb it, and so that the regulatory and reputational sensitivities of the financial services sector were respected throughout.
- Held responsibility for the communications budget and managed it against a roadmap of competing priorities. As part of a wider efficiency programme, I moved a portion of agency-led production back in-house, which gave the team a tighter grip on quality and pace without losing scope, and let us run shorter delivery cycles with deeper expertise sitting closer to the work.
- Put the governing protocols in place that held the brand together at group level while leaving room for the individual cultures that made each entity worth having. That balance was the most demanding part of the brief and the part I am most proud of.
- Senior stakeholder management ran through the role, across the Managing Director, subsidiary CEOs and group functions. I learnt how to carry an unpopular position respectfully when the strategic case asked for it.

Operations Director

2023 to 2025 | Johannesburg

Traffic Hub | Digital Agency | Clients: Telkom, Standard Bank

I held full profit and loss accountability for an agency delivering to enterprise clients, where the strategy and the day-to-day operations had to live in the same role. It taught me to carry both at once and to be honest about the trade-offs when one of them was under pressure.

Focus areas: Agency P&L | Customer retention | Reputation management | Community partnerships | Financial forecasting

- Led Telkom's annual social strategy around conversation, culture and community, and designed a full-funnel customer retention methodology that the agency could apply across accounts.
- Took a less conventional approach to reputation, choosing to enter complaint groups and the more hostile online spaces and to show up there as people rather than behind a corporate front, and over time several of those spaces became some of our most reliable touchpoints.
- Built community partnerships across sport, business and lifestyle groups, with financial forecasting holding the commercial line throughout.

Product Marketing Manager

2021 to 2024 | Johannesburg / SADC

DNI Group | ICT and Telco Distribution | 7 SADC Markets

Much of how I think about building for African audiences on their own terms took shape here, working within the dense and fast-moving reality of telco distribution. Product and pricing shifted constantly and the marketing had to adapt at the same pace without losing its footing. The customer base was largely expatriate and operating within informal economies, and there were very few existing playbooks to lean on, so a good deal of the work began with deep research and close stakeholder engagement before anything was built.

Focus areas: Go-to-market development | Customer value management | Channel partnership | Distributor incentive design | Proprietary data | Multi-market operations

- Led go-to-market development and customer value management rollout in partnership with the telcos, working closely with major channel managers to keep a clear line running from product through to promotion, so that what was launched was actually carried through the distribution network.
- Designed the rewards mechanics for distributors, building the incentives around regional usage patterns and the telcos' priorities for the year, so that the programme pulled in the direction the business and its partners most needed.
- Owned customer value management input drawn from the proprietary data our distribution network generated, turning a source of information few others had access to into a basis for sharper segmentation and decisions.
- Built customer journey frameworks across social, web, SMS and app in seven markets and managed the Vuka Rewards loyalty programme, designing training ecosystems that held up across jurisdictions with different regulatory environments and cultural expectations.

Communications and Fundraising Coordinator

2025 to Present | Volunteer

MicroLoan Foundation | Financial Inclusion NPO | Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa

I took this on because it brings together two things I care about, financial inclusion for people the mainstream tends to leave out, and building for African audiences from a place of understanding rather than assumption. It has been some of the most grounding work I have done.

- Developed the 'Ripples of Possibility' campaign for the South Africa expansion and designed tiered stakeholder engagement across corporate sponsors, philanthropists and diaspora leaders.
 - Coordinated a matched funding campaign and built partnership proposals connecting MicroLoan with Agenda Women and Momentum's #SheOwnsHerSuccess platform.
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EARLIER FOUNDATIONS

Campaign Strategist, Nfinity Media | 2020

Where the analytical foundation of how I work was laid. Structured and managed programmatic campaigns for brands across FMCG, telecommunications, public health and beverage, learning to read performance data closely and optimise in flight.

Subject Matter Expert, Google Academy / Upskill

Universe | 2024 to Present

Digital analytics training across Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa.

Digital Associate, RED Marketing | 2018 to 2019

Worked across a wide portfolio of brand accounts including Sandton City, Fiat Alfa Romeo, MINISO and Clarks, developing operational discipline across WordPress, Shopify and Wix.

Millennium Magazine, SA Department of Health | 2020

Editor-in-chief and head designer for a student health publication, and the first government project I worked on.

WHAT I BRING

Strategy and Commercial Design

I build functions from inception, with phased strategy, gated outcomes, governance frameworks and ExCo reporting carrying the structure. The work has moved steadily towards tying the function directly to the commercial model, so that marketing is held to the same operational and financial standard as any other revenue-adjacent unit. That accountability is where I think the function belongs.

Stakeholder and Commercial Engagement

Senior stakeholder management has run through most of my recent work, across executive committees, subsidiary leadership, channel partners and government counterparts. Marketing earns its seat at the commercial table by reporting in the language of the business, not by asking for it.

African Market Intelligence

My work spans seven markets across SADC and the UK, with a steady thread of deep research, cross-cultural consumer work, informal sector marketing and multi-jurisdictional regulatory navigation. Most of the work begins with proper field research rather than borrowed playbooks.

AI Integration and Efficiency Modelling

I set the strategic direction for how my team adopts AI and automation, designing process automations through Microsoft workflows and Power Automate, and embedding current AI tools into how we research, plan and produce. The practical outcome is shorter delivery cycles, deeper expertise sitting closer to the brief and a cost line that has come down without quality giving way.

Brand, Communications and Campaign Delivery

Brand architecture, integrated campaigns, executive positioning, content ecosystems, and crisis and reputation management. I have shaped a wide range of brands across agency, in-house and consulting settings, with work ranging from AI-assisted personalisation through to cultural localisation in Setswana.

Data, Customer Value and Engagement

I have built CRM infrastructure from first principles, led customer value management off proprietary data, developed customer journey matrices across seven markets and set up Power BI dashboards for ExCo reporting, alongside a full-funnel retention methodology refined over several roles.

WHERE I AM HEADING

I am putting my energy into the areas I think matter most for where I am going next. The Chartered Marketer CPD is helping me deepen my evidence-based practice and advanced segmentation. MicroLoan Foundation is giving me direct NPO, fundraising and financial inclusion experience. The Sourceworx government vertical is teaching me how public procurement and municipal dynamics really operate. These are not things I am only aspiring to. They are where my time, my own money and my volunteer hours are going right now.

I am also putting deliberate study into how AI changes the marketing function from the inside, since the implications for how teams are sized, how work is sequenced and what skills sit at the senior level still seem to be working themselves out. I would rather be ahead of that conversation than catching up to it.

CREDENTIALS

PGDip Management Practice

Henley Business School Africa | AACSB, EQUIS, AMBA | Completed

An NQF Level 8 postgraduate qualification built around strategy and innovation as its core pillars, alongside external environment analysis, systems thinking, strategic foresight and financial modelling.

Chartered Marketer CM(SA)

Marketing Association of South Africa | CM25008

The highest professional marketing designation in South Africa, with strategic-level competency verified against SAQA standards and an ongoing CPD requirement that keeps the practice current and evidence-based.

SKILLS

Marketing Strategy, Brand Strategy, Communications Strategy, Go-to-Market Strategy, Strategic Planning, Function Building, Governance Frameworks, ExCo Reporting, Commercialisation, Partnership Strategy, Executive Positioning, Thought Leadership, Senior Stakeholder Management, Change Management, Team Leadership, Brand Architecture, Integrated Campaigns, Content Strategy, Crisis Communications, Reputation Management, Internal Communications, SEO, ASO, AEO, Search Strategy, Digital Platform Performance Management, Google Ads, Paid Media Strategy, Programmatic Campaign Strategy, Full-Funnel Marketing, Customer Retention, Customer Value Management, Customer Journey Mapping, Loyalty Programme Design, CRM Architecture, Marketing Operations, Marketing Automation, AI Integration, Efficiency Modelling, Agency Rationalisation, Power Automate, Performance Reporting, Power BI, Marketing Analytics, Social Listening, Market Research, African Market Intelligence, SADC Market Operations, Financial Services Communications, FinTech Communications, NPO Communications, Fundraising Coordination, Government Vertical Development, P&L Accountability, Budget Ownership, Financial Forecasting, Vendor and Agency Management.

SECTORS, MARKETS AND SELECTED PROJECTS

Sectors: Technology | Telecommunications | Financial Services | FMCG | FinTech | NPO and Financial Inclusion | Education | Government (Emerging) | Beauty and DTC | Public Health

Markets: South Africa | United Kingdom | Botswana | Nigeria | Kenya | Malawi | Zambia | Zimbabwe | SADC Region

Selected projects: FaceJunkie (UK beauty brand from concept to market) | St Louis and Kgalagadi Breweries (Setswana cultural localisation, Botswana) | PeuEntle (FinTech for gig workers) | The Red Project (NPO, sports-based community development, Eastern Cape) | THING. Africa (service operations and brand) | Connect The Dots (executive education brand refresh) | Millennium Magazine (Dept of Health) | GCIS COVID-19 Campaign

TOOLS

Strategy and reporting: Power BI | Tableau | Cascade Strategy | MS Project | Salesforce | HubSpot | Marketo

Automation and AI: Power Automate | Microsoft workflows | Current AI tooling across research and production

Analytics and listening: Google Analytics | SEMrush | Brandwatch | Meltwater

Campaign and paid media: Google Ads | Meta Ads | LinkedIn Ads | Mailchimp | Adobe Experience Cloud

Delivery and collaboration: Jira | ClickUp | Notion | MS 365 | Viva Engage | Teamflect | WordPress | Shopify

REFERENCES

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