

'It is our time now!' - Thando Ntsinde

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Thando Ntsinde, account manager at Edelman South Africa, specialises in marketing communications and has over 13 years' experience covering communications for corporate in mergers and acquisitions and stakeholder relations both internally and externally.



Thando Ntsinde, senior account manager at Edelman South Africa. Image supplied.

Here, Ntsinde elaborates on the state of marketing communications in South Africa, the challenges females are facing in the industry and also shares some advice on how women can empower themselves to move forward.

■ Tell us more about yourself and what it is you do?

I am currently an account manager at Edelman South Africa working in a team of 55 individuals comprised of former journalists, client strategists, communication specialists as well as design and editorial experts.

As a leading reputation and brand communications consultancy with a clientele spanning the telecommunications, media, energy, technology, professional services and fast-moving consumer goods sectors we help organisations enter markets throughout Africa, as well as establish and enhance their presence while sustaining communications and supporting stakeholder relations.

As part of the collective Edelman team, I do my best to deliver the best in marketing communications to our clients so that they can reach their business goals.

“PR is more than a set of tactics and tools, It's a mindset” – meet [@thando243](https://twitter.com/thando243) pic.twitter.com/6T5xWJ3iFC—
Edelman Africa (@EdelmanAfrica) [June 29, 2017](#) ”

■ Comment on the state of marketing communications in South Africa.

We are truly in exciting times where brands are increasingly beginning to understand and appreciate the value of brand reputation management and having a sustained presence in the market that will get them through times of crisis.

Industry 4.0 has meant that digital communications have taken centre stage and as a result, marketing communications is evolving at an unprecedented rapid pace. The demand for our offering is high and our clients want a communications partner that they can trust to represent their brands truthfully. It is about keeping abreast of developments and ahead of the curve to remain on the cutting edge of marketing communications. We need to keep up to remain relevant.

■ **What are some of the highlights of your career?**

I am a sucker for humanitarian causes and PR that brings awareness to them is always a highlight for me. Through Edelman, I have been so fortunate to have worked on such iconic brands doing amazing work aimed at changing and positively impacting the lives of millions. Such brands include The Rockefeller Foundation that supports work that expands opportunity and strengthens resilience to social, economic, health and environmental challenges.



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The Elders, an independent group of global leaders such as Richard Branson and Graca Machel, who are working together for peace and human rights. I was fortunate to see the late Kofi Anan for the last time before he passed on Mandela Day when he was in Johannesburg through this initiative.



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I am also enjoying work that I am doing with a contact centre that has partnered with NGO Harambee as part of their initiative to deal with youth unemployment in South Africa. Through this contact centre, many South African youth with little to no experience have been employed and their lives have been changed.

“ These organisations remind me of why I chose to be in the marketing communications industry in the first place – to tell the story of the voiceless, the hidden gems. ”

■ **Is it difficult being female in your industry and how do you deal with the challenges?**

I am in a very fortunate position in that this industry does not have the male dominance that you would find in others. Women own PR and marketing agencies, there is representation of females in executive levels. It's all about hard work.

“ The only real challenge in this industry is about remaining relevant. Things are changing at such a rapid pace such that what is in today, may not be in tomorrow. And to stay on the cutting edge, you have to keep up or you will work yourself out of a job. ”

■ **Who's your female role models/business mentors – women you respect and admire?**

My mother. As a working woman all her life and a business owner, I learned all the fundamentals of hard work,

perseverance and understanding that things will not be given to you on a silver platter – you have to work for them.

Thuli Madonsela: Having the courage to do what is right when all odds are stacked up against you is something that is not easy to accomplish. Thuli Madonsela truly inspired me whilst she was the Public Protector. I do not think that it was an easy feat for her, she sacrificed so much for the greater good.

Dr Judi Dlamini: As a pioneer in many aspects, I have learned through Dr Dlamini's example that I can be a career woman and still have a family. She has achieved such amazing things and continues to do so. Through her example I am encouraged to reach for all of my dreams, the only limits are the ones that I set for myself.

“ **#Congratulations** Dr Judy Dlamini on being appointed Wits University Chancellor. Can't imagine a more capable pair of hands. Blessings on the road ahead pic.twitter.com/DzZz2BDF1Z— Prof Thuli Madonsela (@ThuliMadonsela3) August 5, 2018 ”

Dr Esther Mahlangu: She has been honoured for being authentic. I don't know anyone that is as real as this woman. She makes me so proud to be part of a country that is so unique and rich in its diversity that is matched by no other nation. Her example reminds me constantly that African beauty is something to be proud of.



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■ **This Women's Month, what is your word of encouragement to aspiring women in business?**

“ Many women have made sacrifices for us to be here today to speak and live freely. Let's not allow their sacrifices to have been in vain. We need to remember them and why they fought so hard for women to have equal representation in society. We all have a role to play and charity begins at home. We need to find that contribution we are here to make and make it. ”

■ **What's next for you?**

The plight of women in South Africa is alarmingly bad. We do not believe enough in ourselves and we need to support each other. We need to love ourselves and each other more so that we will not tolerate violence and abuse against women. I want to inspire and encourage other women who are struggling to realise their purpose to come out of their shells and not be shy about their dreams. It is our time now.

I will be participating in a series of speaking opportunities in previously disadvantaged communities and education institutions focusing on empowering women and helping them to realise the potential in them to be great. It is my turn to pay it forward.

For updates on these events and more, follow Ntsinde on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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