

Ross Adami's *Uber-cool* job

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

10 Mar 2017

“One of the many things I love about working at Uber is that no two days are the same. New challenges, tasks and projects arise all the time, and this means you're always on your toes, pre-empting these challenges and tackling them head-on,” says Ross Adami, marketing manager at Uber South Africa, who recently returned from Uber's nomad programme, a three-month learning and development programme that matches candidates to teams around the globe where their unique skills and experience are best suited to help tackle some of the most interesting and challenging issues facing Uber today.

“This programme has undoubtedly been one of the most beneficial and exciting experiences I've had at Uber thus far, not to mention a really amazing opportunity that Uber makes available to their staff.”

He began the programme in Taiwan, working with the team in Taipei to help optimise their marketing efforts and grow demand in their remote cities. After that, he moved to Singapore to work with the team there on sourcing and scaling global best practice in marketing. He then spent his last month in Thailand, developing the UberEATS brand in Bangkok.

His key takeouts include the importance of knowledge sharing, gaining an outside perspective on seemingly impossible challenges, and having the confidence to speak up when you believe in an alternative and possibly better approach. “These three things are key to success and growth, both personal and within the organisation,” he adds.

Speaking of growth, he says scalability, local relevance, user experience and big bold bets are some of the common themes that guide his day-to-day projects, but perhaps what he loves most about working at Uber is the openness to express one's individuality.

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Weekend Chill *A post shared by Ross Adami (@ross.adami) on Feb 4, 2017 at 12:44am PST*

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■ **Talk us through your Uber journey. Why did you decide to work for Uber? Why do you believe in the brand?**

My journey at Uber began in October 2014 when I was hired as an intern on the marketing team. Towards the end of my final year, a lecturer at my university had mentioned that Uber had contacted them looking for summer interns, and having heard about Uber and read numerous articles about the brand during my studies, I jumped at the opportunity! I was excited by the prospect of working at such a young, dynamic startup that was so evidently going to influence and shape the future of the world as we know it. I look back on the internship with fond memories and many late nights! Six weeks after it began, I was offered a position in the Marketing Department in Cape Town.

Fast forward just over two years later and I'm now working on the Sub-Saharan Africa central marketing team in Johannesburg, focusing on regional brand and marketing initiatives that span six countries and 12 cities. At Uber, I have been able to express my individuality through my work, the company welcomes original thinking and we are appreciated for the input and dedication we give in return. While Uber is an organisation that has a global footprint, every employee is appreciated for their unique local contribution and their individual perspective of the brand.

■ **Tell us about your work experience: what did you study, where did you work, and what did you do before joining Uber?**

Before I joined Uber, I studied a BBA degree in Brand Building & Management at Vega School in Cape Town. My experience at Vega was crucial. I loved every minute of the course and it was at that stage that I fell in love with the industry and set my sights on working at one of the largest tech companies we so often read about.

Paying for the costly tuition fees in my personal capacity, I held countless jobs while completing my studies. From waiting at a restaurant, to managing an art gallery, to showing houses on a Sunday afternoon – these experiences all contributed to my development and growth, and working hard for my degree ensured I made the most of my time at Vega.

■ **What was the number one lesson you learnt during your course at Vega, or through experience, about branding?**

Every experience and interaction we have with a brand matters. You really need to fully and completely understand how every decision will impact your customer's experience. It's one of Vega's founding principles and something that's stuck with me ever since, which I have been able to apply to Uber, as customer obsession is one of our organisation's core values. We need to always think about what we can do better to ensure that customers (drivers and riders) have the best possible experience when using the Uber app.



■ **Comment on your role as brand manager at Uber. What does that mean exactly on a day-to-day basis?**

One of the many things I love about working at Uber is that no two days are the same! New challenges, tasks and projects arise all the time, and this means you're always on your toes, pre-empting these challenges and tackling them head-on! Scalability, local relevance, user experience and big bold bets are some of the common themes that guide my day-to-day projects. This is where individuality comes in again. The team are always open to different ideas and the strongest idea wins! Being exposed to so many facets of the company (ops, marketing, growth, launch, policy, comms) offers an invaluable experience that is not very likely to be offered at other very structured and tiered corporate companies.

■ **What have been your biggest challenges with regard to managing the Uber brand in SA (and how did you overcome them)?**

A challenge that is faced in South Africa is that we are in a country of car owners. South Africans are so used to driving their own car everywhere they go – be it to work, a restaurant or a friend's place for an afternoon braai. The reality is that more cars on the road equates to more congestion and CO2 emissions. We are working hard to educate consumers on the cost effectiveness of Uber. If you are travelling less than 50km to work daily, Uber is a very real cost-efficient alternative to owning a car. I myself do not own a car. The lifestyle of not owning a car and commuting with Uber is simply a preference, but one I highly recommend, sitting in traffic is now time I can use productively (not to mention my environmental contribution towards less CO2 emissions). This is a challenge that I would put to all young professionals. Dare to rethink your daily routines. Add the simplicity of an Uber ride to work.

■ **Why are you proud to be the brand manager of such an innovative company that's leading the on-demand movement across the globe?**

Uber really is leading an entirely new movement – changing the way we think about products, technology and the future! I'm so proud to be a part of it all and seeing the positive difference we're making to thousands of driver-partners' lives, both in Africa and the rest of the world – it makes it all so much more rewarding!

■ **How do you plan to build the brand going forward?**

I mentioned earlier that scalability is one of the key focus areas on any project I pursue. I believe that an important ingredient to further grow and develop the brand across Sub-Saharan Africa is the ability to implement scalable initiatives that remain true and authentic. If something works in South Africa, we need to ensure it works in Uganda, Nigeria or Ghana and still resonates well with the people that live there.

■ **Any exciting developments/innovations that SA can expect in the near future?**

Uber is always looking at new innovative ideas to develop into concepts. One of our more recent launches, the [UberEATS](#) app, has really taken off in Johannesburg and Cape Town, so much so that we are looking at expanding to new cities and might even be launching in a new city in Gauteng soon (watch this space)! We're also excited as we hope to soon announce a new pilot that will see the launch of a vehicle option geared at assisting a particular segment of consumers (more on that soon).

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💎💎 This place *A post shared by Ross Adami (@ross.adami) on Mar 4, 2017 at 7:23am PST*

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■ **A bit more about you. How do you spend your free time?**

I enjoy spending my free time with friends or colleagues, exploring the city or trying out new restaurants and bars in

downtown Joburg! When in Cape Town, I enjoy being outdoors, travelling to the neighbouring wine farms and spending time with family. Another passion of mine is photography. Being able to visit these new cities and countries, I've been able to explore beautiful places and capture all my special moments.

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ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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