

Nkaroleng Matjie, strategist at Penguin

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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Being young means that the world is at your fingertips - as they say - but sometimes, this can be overwhelming, especially if you don't have much guidance to go along with youth.



Image supplied: Nkaroleng Matjie

Nkaroleng Matjie, strategist at Penguin and founder of Defining Gratitude - a marketing initiative with the aim of uplifting small businesses - understands this. As a result, he has worked to learn as much as he can, not only to become an aficionado in his field but also to help the youth of South Africa understand how they can help themselves.

We spoke with him to find out more about his work, the process of learning and the importance of understanding your journey...

■ ***Tell us a bit more about yourself.***

I like to think of myself as a calm and kind human being and a big, big, big football lover. I also like being enlightened when it comes to certain topics.

So, even though I struggle with booking reading, I enjoy watching documentaries and edutainment content so that I can learn as much as possible – specifically, there's a docuseries called *Explained* that I love.

■ ***How did you end up doing what you do?***

I was very fortunate that, soon after graduating from varsity, I landed an internship at Media24. That proved to be the start of a career journey that's seen me work across media, research and now marketing, where I currently work as an agency strategist.

■ ***What do you love most about your work?***

The learnings! When you work with brands that are spread across multiple sectors, opportunities to constantly learn are never-ending.

▣ ***Could you tell us more about some career highlights?***

My highlights are very personal to me. It's less about celebrating the work and the accolades; and more about constantly reflecting on my growth and mindfully appreciating that the growth is a result of the work.

I have personal ambitions that are tied to career growth. If I fail to reflect on how far I've come over the past few years, then it'll be difficult for me to appreciate my own achievements to date and my future ambitions will seem unattainable. So constantly reflecting on my growth, is personally important and gratifying for me. So to answer the question, my career journey is the highlight.

▣ ***What are essential skills to have as a strategist?***

An essential strategy skill would be understanding what the purpose of strategy is and applying your knowledge and skillset to work towards this purpose. One of the challenges with strategy, which, in my opinion, is a general marketing challenge, is that there are many approaches to the practice. So one has to be open to learning (unlearning and relearning), debating and compromising.

▣ ***Could you tell us a bit more about Defining Gratitude?***

I think a lot of us are in awe of our country's unemployment challenge and I, personally, believe that driving entrepreneurship should be a key focus in our effort to combat unemployment. So, I started an initiative called Defining Gratitude with the idea of using my experience in marketing, to help aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners with marketing-related assistance. It's really about helping people understand how they can use marketing as a pillar for growth.

Define Gratitude has evolved over the past few years. It has led to referrals that have opened up personal opportunities for me and today Defining Gratitude can also be seen as a freelance house, where we collaborate with brand custodians to help them achieve their desired objectives.

▣ ***What kind of impact are you hoping to and able to make in your position?***

I aim to meaningfully contribute towards achieving goals, both for our clients and our agency.

▣ ***Any advice for young people trying to enter your industry?***

Personally, I don't believe in giving advice. I believe that advice comes from personal experience - but our journeys are not the same.

All I can do is offer encouragement and empathy. The youth of our country is faced with so many challenges and we must offer support in whatever way that we can. That's why I initially founded Defining Gratitude, to empower the youth into creating their opportunities, rather than waiting for something to come along.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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