

# In their own words: Wavemaker's graduates talk about GradX

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Graduate programmes are critical in helping young graduates bridge the gap between their studies and the working world. They provide an opportunity for them to put their largely theoretical backgrounds into practice and to gain essential, real-life experience and skills. These skills can be useful not only in securing full-time employment in their current jobs, but in other jobs and industries besides.

International media company GroupM is all-too aware of these advantages, and launched its graduate programme, GradX, in South Africa in early 2020 to help young graduates gain a professional foothold. Half-way through the programme's third year, it's clear that it's having a tangible impact on the recruits it has hired.

Lerato Padi, who holds her BCom Honours degree in Economics from the University of Pretoria, is among this year's cohort of graduates at Wavemaker, a division of GroupM. "I never thought of working in the media space initially," Lerato says. "I didn't know it was relevant to my degree. But working here has been really eye-opening for me. I've learnt that it's not just for creatives; there's space for numbers people like me, too."



Lerato Padi

Lerato is part of Wavemaker's analytics and insights team, where she works on a lot of the company's econometric models and reporting. "I feel like I'm putting my degree to use," she continues. "But at the same time, I'm learning new skills. My ability to present to a group of people and to communicate has improved dramatically, which has helped to boost my self-esteem and confidence."

The culture, Lerato adds, is one of the best aspects of working at Wavemaker: "Wavemaker takes its juniors seriously, and really makes sure that we feel like we're part of the family." This is a view that Lerato shares with her fellow graduates, Charles Nkuna and Kshani Reddy.



*Charles Nkuna*

Charles has his National Higher Diploma in IT Systems Development at Boston City Campus, and is currently working as a performance intern in Wavemaker's digital department. "Wavemaker is all about the people," he says. "It's a really great environment. The team really caters for graduates; they genuinely want to hear what we have to say."

With her BCom Honours in Information Management from the University of Johannesburg in hand, Kshani says that she has been made to feel very welcome at Wavemaker. "I love the organisational culture; it's very linear," she says. "When they tell you to ask questions - they mean it."



*Kshani Reddy*

Kshani is also in the analytics and insights department, where she specialises in dashboarding. While her work is tailored to what she studied, she is also improving other skill sets. "I do a lot of research now," Kshani explains. "And I've really honed my active listening and communication skills." She's also learnt how to work on new programmes and software, which will be valuable as her career progresses.

To other graduates interested in pursuing a graduate programme, Lerato recommends investing fully in the experience: "Be willing to learn, be curious, ask questions," she says. Charles's advice is to be true to yourself and be disciplined. "And remember that your work speaks for you," he adds. Kshani speaks of the advantages of keeping an open mind: "You never know what's coming your way."

"Our 2022 graduates have surpassed our expectations," says Wanita Berry, Wavemaker's head of human resources. "Lerato, Charles and Kshani have all shown an immense amount of willingness and eagerness to learn, and we are more than pleased with their progress. They have embraced our culture and are already making inroads within our teams. We are so proud of them and are looking forward to helping them grow even further over the next six months."

All three graduates have hopes of continuing their relationship with Wavemaker on a permanent basis when GradX concludes at the end of January 2023. They dream of becoming better and bolder in their fields, and carving out their own individual niches. In this way, they're ideal examples of the next generation of South African media professionals.

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