

# Agility, the hallmark of responding to challenges inherent in the small business arena

Issued by [The Marketing Kraal](#)

29 Mar 2022

For small and medium sized businesses, every day is filled with high and lows, ups and downs and adventures and opportunities.



While SMEs provide platforms that make economic growth possible and play a crucial role in addressing poverty, inequality and unemployment, the majority of SMEs struggle to outgrow their operating environment or internal capacity deficits.

Lebona Moleli, who spent a total of 16 years in operations and marketing at South African Breweries, Coca-Cola Southern Africa, South African Airways and Uthingo Management (the first SA Lottery operator) prior to venturing on the entrepreneurship journey and forming The Marketing Kraal (TMK) talks about how the company grew its business and aggressively diversified its roster of clients and service offerings.

**Question: When was The Marketing Kraal (TMK) formed, and what are its offerings?**

**Answer:** TMK was formed 15 years ago on 1 April 2007. We assist clients with creating brand awareness, launching new products and building brands especially brands that transact in the highly competitive township market. Our key out-of-home (OOH) media platforms are wall murals, billboards, containers, building wraps, taxi branding and digital platforms. The company is one of the first to introduce artistic wall murals as a media platform for OOH advertising.

The company has also included marketing services such as brand development and marketing planning to its bouquet of services.

We are very excited to be celebrating 15 years of successful partnership with our clients and suppliers. Our clients and employee relationships are the foundation for this success and will continue to be our value in the future. We are committed to staying on the cutting edge of our clients' industries.

We are passionate about the work we render to our clients, and they consistently give us feedback on our services. Without this sense of partnership, we would have never been able to reach this milestone.

The company's commitment to service, matched by its commitment to the township communities, have been at the heart of our 15 years.





**Q: In which sectors do you offer services?**

**A:** The company has worked with clients in the fast-moving consumer goods, media, information communication technology, healthcare, education, public sector and many other relevant industries. Because our sites are spread across all major townships in South Africa, clients are spoiled for choice when it comes to strategically positioned sites.

We have also partnered with various advertising and media agencies in South Africa. TMK generates income for site owners thus contributing to socio-economic upliftment and community development. At least 10% of income from our advertisers is paid to site-owners as site rental fee with many using the funds to refurbish their houses, improve their small businesses and pay for their children's education.

**Q: What is your involvement in job creation and corporate social investment?**

**A:** We have developed our employees and employed skilled township artists and have provided employment to many artists we work with especially with our wall murals. We have also implemented many corporate social investment projects including painting clinics in Tembisa, adopting a school in Diepsloot, running feeding schemes in Soweto, sponsoring youth entrepreneurship boot camps, and supporting Mandela Day initiatives.

**Q: How did you develop the love and passion for advertising and marketing?**

**A:** I developed the love for this sector at a young age when growing up but was encouraged to study natural science by my teachers. I excelled in chemistry in high school. My love for billboards was inspired by a beautiful Lux Soap billboard I saw as a young man growing up in my hometown of Bloemfontein featuring the late Marina Maponya, wife of the late Soweto

business mogul, Richard Maponya.

**Q: Where and what did you study?**

**A:** I hold a BSc from the National University of Lesotho and an MSc from Atlanta University in the United States. I later pursued and completed a Master of Business Administration degree at Wits Business School and became hooked to marketing and business.

When my last employer, Uthingo Management closed in 2007, my entrepreneurial pursuit to contribute to socio-economic development and my innate creative talent drove me to start The Marketing Kraal.

**Q: What have you done to diversify your business?**

**A:** Relying on a single income stream is very risky these days. In 2010 I founded a marketing mentorship agency called Lesaka Marketing which mentors small micro and medium enterprises, and in 2018 I started a craft beer company called Mohope Brewing Company which launched its first craft beer, Mohope Premium Lager, in 2019.

I am very passionate about entrepreneurship, and that is why I formed the Jala Foundation in 2019, a non-governmental organisation that focuses on youth entrepreneurship development. All these ventures were created with my own savings and investments and no external funding was used.





**Q: What are your plans for the next 12–18 months?**

**A:** My plan in the next 12 months is to identify and mentor a young entrepreneur that can take TMK to the next level. The time has come for me to take it easy and focus on my new passion of brewing craft beer and livestock investment.

**Q: What were your challenges during the last 15 years?**

**A:** During the last decade and half, I had to navigate many challenges experienced by the majority of SMEs: Lack of access to market, lack of funding, slow payment or settlement of invoices by clients, relying on one income stream, and of course the Covid-19 lockdown.

**Q: How have you dealt with digitisation?**

**A:** The pandemic has emphasised the importance of digital inclusion and being part of the digital economy as a critical factor in the battle for SME survival. TMK has utilised digital platforms to run B2B campaigns to create awareness about its offering. The company plans to introduce digital screens on its container billboards.

**Q: What are the hallmarks of successful small business entrepreneurs?**

**A:** Agility in responding to the various challenges inherent in the small business arena. This agility mindset has been instrumental in the resilience of many small businesses, enabling them to survive challenges.

**About The Marketing Kraal**

The Marketing Kraal offers out of home advertising, marketing strategy planning and marketing services. Visit [www.themarketingkraal.co.za](http://www.themarketingkraal.co.za) and email us at [lebona@themarketingkraal.co.za](mailto:lebona@themarketingkraal.co.za).

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