

06 *of* 100**Mphothe
Elizabeth
Mokwena**

Here to be Intentional

Breaking barriers:
Mphothe Elizabeth Mokwena is proving Africa's greatest brands are built on culture, courage and human connection.

Every great brand tells a story, but long before Mphothe Elizabeth Mokwena was entrusted with shaping some of the world's biggest consumer brands, she understood something many marketers spend their careers trying to master: people don't simply buy products, they buy meaning.

It is a philosophy that has quietly guided her remarkable journey from an ambitious young marketer to one of South Africa's most influential marketing leaders.

Today, as a senior marketing executive at Unilever, Mphothe sits at the intersection of business,

creativity and culture. Her work reaches millions of consumers across the continent, influencing how some of the world's most recognisable brands speak to African audiences. Yet, ask her about success and the conversation quickly shifts away from market share and sales figures. Instead, she speaks about people, purpose and creating work that genuinely reflects the lives and aspirations of the communities brands hope to serve.

That perspective has become her signature. Throughout her career, Mphothe has championed the idea that Africa should never be viewed as a single market with a single story. Every campaign she has led has been shaped by the understanding that culture matters. Languages matter. Traditions matter. People's lived experiences matter. It is this ability to marry global strategy with authentic African insight that has earned her recognition as one of the continent's leading marketing minds and a respected voice within the global creative industry.

Perhaps her greatest contribution has been redefining what leadership looks like. In industries where executive leadership has often lacked diversity, Mphothe has consistently shown that influence is not measured by authority alone but by the opportunities created for others. Colleagues describe her as a generous mentor, an intentional leader and someone deeply invested in developing the next generation of African talent. Whether coaching young marketers, judging industry awards or contributing to initiatives that champion inclusive creativity, she has remained committed to holding doors she once had to push open herself.

She also understands that brands carry enormous social responsibility. In an era where consumers

increasingly expect businesses to stand for something meaningful, Mphothe has advocated for marketing that reflects real people and authentic experiences. She believes creativity has the power not only to grow businesses, but also to challenge stereotypes, celebrate diversity and shape a more inclusive society.

For young women looking to build careers in marketing, her journey is both inspiring and reassuring. It proves that leadership does not require abandoning authenticity. One can lead with empathy, collaborate with humility and still deliver world-class results. Excellence and kindness, she demonstrates, are not competing qualities, they are complementary strengths.

Elizabeth reminds us that behind every iconic brand is someone shaping how people see themselves and the world around them. Through purposeful leadership, cultural intelligence and an unwavering commitment to people, she is doing far more than building successful brands, she is helping shape the story of a confident, creative and globally competitive Africa.