

26^{of} 100Sphelele
Mjadu

Here to be Connected

**Shaping culture, building
influence and creating
conversations:
Redefining how brands
connect with people,
culture and communities.**

Long before influencer marketing became a billion-rand industry and cultural relevance became a boardroom priority, Sphelele Mjadu understood a simple truth: people do not connect with brands because of what they sell. They connect because of the stories they tell, the values they represent and the emotions they inspire.

It is a belief that has shaped a remarkable career spanning more than two decades in brand communications and has positioned her as one of South Africa's most respected voices in public relations, influencer marketing and culture-led storytelling.

Born and raised in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, Sphelele has built her career at the intersection of brand strategy, consumer behaviour, culture and influence. Today, as Founder and Managing Director of Defined PR, the communications agency she launched in 2023, she helps some of South Africa's most recognisable brands navigate an increasingly complex cultural landscape. Through strategic communications, creator partnerships and authentic storytelling, she is helping brands move beyond visibility to create genuine connection and lasting impact.

Her journey began in the beauty industry at M·A·C Cosmetics South Africa under The Estée Lauder Companies, where she developed a deep appreciation for brand positioning, experiential marketing and the power of storytelling. Those early experiences laid the foundation for a career that would later see her become one of the pioneering figures behind the growth of influencer marketing across Africa.

During her tenure at Unilever, Sphelele played a significant role in establishing and expanding PR, influencer marketing and social media capabilities across the company's Beauty & Wellbeing and Personal Care portfolio. At a time when many organisations still viewed communications as a supporting function, she championed a more strategic approach - one that placed culture, community and conversation at the centre of brand building.

Her influence extended beyond campaigns. She recognised early that creators and digital storytellers would become some of the most powerful voices shaping consumer behaviour. By helping brands engage authentically with

influencers and communities, she contributed to a shift that transformed how organisations communicate with audiences. In doing so, she also helped create economic opportunities for a new generation of content creators, entrepreneurs and digital innovators.

The COVID-19 pandemic provided another opportunity to innovate. When traditional brand experiences became impossible, Sphelele helped pioneer large-scale influencer-led digital experiences that enabled brands to remain relevant, connected and responsive during one of the most disruptive periods in recent history. Her ability to anticipate change and adapt quickly reinforced her reputation as a strategist capable of seeing around corners.

Today, through Defined PR, Sphelele continues to build campaigns that sit at the intersection of brand, culture, reputation and influence. Yet her impact extends beyond the brands she serves.

She is helping shape the future of communications itself, one where authenticity matters more than advertising, community matters more than reach and influence is measured by impact rather than impressions. Her story is a reminder that the most powerful brands do not simply occupy space in the market; they occupy space in people's lives. Through vision, creativity and cultural intelligence, Sphelele Mjadu is helping ensure they do exactly that.

Your
story
matters

