

Nelson Mandela Bay advertising agency ups the ante, takes aim at metro's high youth unemployment

Issued by [Boomtown](#)

23 Mar 2021

Boomtown, an advertising and marketing communications agency based in Nelson Mandela Bay, has taken aim at the city's high youth unemployment rates by more than doubling the intake for its graduate internship programme, Bayeza.



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After its experience with its first graphic design intern Pola Maneli in 2012, Boomtown has assisted 22 – or two or three a year – talented young graduates enter the industry. In 2021, however, it is upping the ante with an intake of 10 interns.

The intention, according to Boomtown CEO Glen Meier, is not only to equip these graduates with suitable work experience but also to foster a passion for the industry in the Eastern Cape so that they help build Nelson Mandela Bay's reputation as a strategic and creative hub to grow its share of the marketing spend by South Africa's brands.

South Africa's unemployment rate was 36.989% in December 2020 (International Monetary Fund) while youth unemployment, also in December 2020, was 55.75% (Statista.com). The Eastern Cape is at the wrong end of the unemployment bell curve. Outside of the metro municipalities of Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Bay nearly 60% of people have no work (Institute of Race Relations).

Meaning 'they are coming' in isiXhosa, Bayeza is an integral part of the agency's business transformation strategy and its commitment to the industry in Nelson Mandela Bay and elsewhere, said Meier.

"The word 'Bayeza' can also be interpreted as 'from the Bay to ZA' and so, from Nelson Mandela Bay to the rest of South Africa, the Bayeza Programme seeks to produce graduates to go out into South Africa, and the world, and make an impact," he said.

Unlike other graduate internships, which mostly regard interns as junior staff who simply shadow other employees without being given any responsibility, Boomtown runs a specific year-long programme with month-by month-modules to fast-tracked its interns. This effectively turns them into highly sought-after employees and Bayeza has, to date, achieved a 100% success rate in post-programme employment.

"Boomtown is a proudly Eastern Cape-born company with a strong belief in the talent and drive of all its people," Meier said. "Our initial goal for Bayeza, which was to assist young graduates attain the work experience they needed thereby boosting their employment opportunities, was laudable back in 2013.

"Given the challenges facing the Eastern Cape as a business hub and its youth when it comes to employment, has meant we've had to up the ante. And so we've more than doubled our commitment to the metro and its youth.

"We look forward to the impact 2021's graduate intake will have on our home's future, and then there'll be the 10 the year after, and the year after, and potentially many more after that," he said.



The 10 graduate interns who joined Boomtown Bayeza last month include Anelisiwe Manana (social media), Karabo Mamabolo (strategy), Craigh Jonas (client service), Temba Mkosi (conceptual copywriting), Michelle Stockwell (graphic design), Caitlin Morgan (digital copywriting), Tameron Karelse (design/art direction), Tanya Chinamasa (art director/designer), Jose Pyladh (videographer/content creator) and Nande Gubevu (market research).

Manana, who hails from Idutywa was drawn to the advertising business because of the challenges it throws up on a daily basis, allowing you to explore your creative abilities.

She is looking to Boomtown to help her grow as a creative “and I’m already seeing the difference from when I walked in here fresh out of varsity with no experience at all. I’m continuing to learn from my colleagues as everyone here is insanely talented and good at what they do” and has strong views on brands and their place on social media.

“I do not believe that brands are inanimate objects that do not fit the description of ‘social’ because they work with the consumer truth to be able to sell something to them. That means they get to study the consumer so that the consumer trusts them. Today, more and more consumers like brands with purpose, and so that forces brands to be personal when communicating a message with them,” she said.

Mamabolo, who grew up in Johannesburg, considers himself a person who is truly passionate about brands and the industry. He aspired to become a leading brand strategist, and make an impact in the community by touching on relevant topics and solving those issues through brand campaigns.

“I am also a musician at heart and a producer. My goal is to be able to influence campaigns through the art I have and through the strategies I can offer for the industry. I have always wanted to join the Boomtown family (even went as far as applying more than 10 times) and now I finally got my shot. At this point I am pretty sure that the sky is the limit!”

Jonas – a telecommunications veteran, Madibaz Radio host and rugby journalist – is hoping his time at Boomtown adds additional layers and texture to his skills base and personality: “Good luck to anyone who ever tries to read me, because I’m an open book with blank pages.”

Gubevu has been both challenged and fulfilled by the programme, and looks forward to growing a little every day. “It has been a great privilege to be exposed to such talented people in the company, it has been home away from home for me.”

Creative thinker and copywriter Morgan is captivated by the digital world because it is constantly evolving. “Choosing a career surrounded by that concept means I have to be constantly evolving and learning and that’s what sparks my passion

and excites me every day,” she said.

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