

The women behind Standard Bank's 'It Can Be' campaign

Repositioning a major brand with decades of heritage and familiarity is not easy. Throw in a global pandemic which has changed the way we work, and you are left with a task which many would say is insurmountable.

We spoke to some of the creative, strategic and business brains who drove Standard Bank's brand repositioning about what the bank's new tagline, 'It Can Be' means to them as women living and working in South Africa and about some of the challenges they faced putting the campaign together.



WATCH: Thulani Sibeko on Standard Bank's new brand repositioning

Jessica Tennant 23 Jul 2020



Angie Burton, head of Brand at Standard Bank was the driving force behind the rollout. For her, creating a space where she can be creative was an important part of the process.



Angie Burton, head of Brand at Standard Bank

"In the first week of lockdown I cleared out my study and turned it into a very personal and creative space. I brought in things that you couldn't have in a normal 'hot-desking' working environment and I now sit facing a window with a beautiful view so I can see the change of the seasons. When you are working long hours, it's important to remember that there is an outside world out there and that you're connected to something."

For Burton, 'It Can Be' brought hope at a time when people were facing such difficult odds. "The cornerstone of 'It Can Be' is about hope and belief, and I felt that through all of this we had such a unique opportunity to say something that was positive. If ever there was a time that It Can Be was relevant, it was as lockdown was happening and during Covid. Africans needed hope and belief more than ever before."

Cindy Lee, from Star Films, directed the 'It Can Be' television commercials and it was her vision which helped to highlight how Standard Bank can play a role in helping even the smallest of dreams come true.

"It's been an extraordinary process because we all understood how important these stories were in terms of making these tiny little moments count."

Lee is the daughter of legendary casting director Moonyeenn Lee and describes her late mother as a trailblazer. She says Moonyeenn brought her up to believe that she can achieve anything because she is a woman, not in spite of being a woman.

"As women, we must lead by example. I do feel a lot of responsibility as a successful woman in a position of power to try and enable as many women as possible and to show them that there are no barriers or restrictions to what we can do. Women just need the opportunity to shine. Like the Standard Bank spots, it just takes one moment to change everything. We just need our moment."

Alexa Wilson, commercials director at Arcade Content directed the social media ads for the 'It Can Be' campaign.

"When Standard Bank contacted me, and we started working on this campaign, it became a process of me adding my own ideas. As a women it's particularly pertinent. For me it became about this idea that if you have a thought or a dream, you can put it into practice."

She has some wise words for the next generation of pioneering women: "What I would say to young women is, with the stuff going these days, we are not guaranteed to be around tomorrow, so embrace all the stuff that scares you. If you rush towards the things that scare you, they often shrink back because often these things are much bigger in our minds."

Nonhlanhla Khanye, a producer at M&C Saatchi Abel, was part of the team charged with conceptualising much of the creative around 'It Can Be'. Being creative in the new normal we all face has been tough, she says.

"It has been difficult and challenging but what has worked for me is realising that everything around me is an inspiration to be creative, be it my kids shouting 'mama' 90 times a day, or be it the cooking, cleaning and working. While working on a brand repositioning is already stressful, doing it during a pandemic is on another level, but we managed."

For Nadine Govender, business partner at M&C Saatchi Abel, 'It Can Be' has a very personal message.

"I unfortunately did not have the opportunity to go to university and started working straight out of school. My father helped me buy my first car and I worked two jobs to help my family financially. I thought a lot of things were out of my reach for the longest time, as I didn't have the confidence or courage to think I could surpass my family's disadvantages and I would never own a home of my own or be successful without a degree or further education. 'It Can Be' for me has been a validation of those dreams and thoughts we keep locked inside our hearts and heads, where we're often afraid of taking the step to achieve what we want."



Moirra-Gene Gous, digital strategist at M&C Saatchi Abel, was responsible for the digital rollout of the campaign in a way that tells a beautiful brand story and engages the South African public.

She says it was a privilege to work on a campaign, which she personally felt very inspired by.

“As a woman I am very cognisant of the fact that the liberties that I have and the advantages that I am currently enjoying have been built by the efforts of those who came before me. I almost view that both as opportunity and a responsibility. 'It Can Be' is not only about living up to the potential that you have been given, grabbing opportunities and making things happen for yourself and partnering with like-minded energies who do the same, but it is also the responsibility to live up to what to I expect of myself and what others expect of me because of what has come before.”

Lynette Naidoo, client business lead for Standard Bank at Mindshare South Africa started working on the 'It Can Be' campaign when lockdown was already in full swing.

For her it's about unlocking possibilities. “As a woman in South Africa we understand the pressures of being a female trying to work your way up. Something like this really ignites inspiration. For me it is so personal because this inspires young women to believe and build opportunities. My hope is that most young girls who are exposed to the campaign will believe that and will see it.”

Tamara Bethwana, a media planner at Mindshare, says young women in South Africa should focus on the opportunities that exist for women.

“We are living in a time where we have the platform and the voice to do whatever we want to do and I think it's important for me, because I am living in a time where there are more girl bosses. It gives me hope and I am inspired. It's very important for girls to know that you can be the boss too. It doesn't have to be the boys. You don't have to be defined by someone else and if you want to speak out about something that affects you, there are platforms to do this.”

Developing an impactful campaign which inspires hope in a time when there is very little was an honour and a privilege, concludes Burton.

“Being able to work with a group of amazing women on a campaign which sends a message of hope to women across the continent was an incredible experience. The circumstances meant we had to adopt new ways of working and I believe that by rising to meet this challenge they were able to raise the bar in their industry and through their actions truly capture the essence of 'It Can Be'.”

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