

Entrepreneur, writer and TV producer Sibulele Siko-Shosha

By  Jessica Tennant

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Entrepreneur, writer and TV producer Sibulele Siko-Shosha tells us that what's *really* behind her mask is Rouge Dior 999 Matte. Figuratively speaking though, a cocktail of optimism and fear. "I have been doing this long enough to want to focus on leaving a legacy that makes sense. I do not know what that looks like right now, but I want to actively work towards it. As an entrepreneur I have made all the mistakes and stupid decisions to give me the perfect insight on how I can best move forward with the legacy I want to leave. So, I am constantly trying to connect with that emotionally and through the work that I choose to do. My mind is currently on a constant churn trying to link those pieces."



Sibulele Siko-Shosha

■ So, Sibulele, tell us what it is do exactly on a day-to-day basis; tell us more about your various roles and how you juggle them all.

Honestly, I don't know how I juggle it all, but things move. Isn't that the art of being woman? Lol. For now, we don't have any active TV productions so I am busy with the ideation stages of the various concepts I am planning on presenting and pitching to broadcasters.

My day-to-day is currently comprised of managing clients under Dumile Brand Boutique. I'm also in the process of developing the business and brand positioning. I am busy growing a phenomenal team who are helping me focus on what matters, but most importantly where the business strengths lie, which is in ideation, creating and writing.

Due to Covid, we meet in the office on Mondays and the rest of the week the team works remotely from home. My job in all my different roles is to create the ideas and plan which "direction" we are going to take with them. The rest is up to my great team comprised of awesome full-time staff, consultants and freelancers.

In between all of that I need to make sure that I am available for my 11-year-old son Uzile for his after-school activities. All of this leaves me with so little time for taking selfies ;)

■ ***What motivated you to start your own company, Dumile Brand Boutique?***

Owning a business was a plan that my late father, Dumile Siko and I had for after I graduated. Unfortunately, he passed away while I was still in university so he was not able to see that come into fruition. There are three reasons that motivated me to start my business.

Firstly, it was my passion for storytelling and wanting to do work that can change how the South African creative industry is viewed and embrace transformation and diversity.

Secondly, honouring my father.

Thirdly, was my desire to be responsible for my own time while having the freedom to flex my creative muscle as much as I can.

■ ***Tell us more about the agency and some of the challenges or barriers you had to overcome to get it to where it is today.***

Dumile Brand Boutique is multifaceted and has seen growth and development since we started in 2008. I started my business when I was 23 years old. I am now 35. The only thing I knew then was that I wanted to contribute towards change and diversity within the industry. That has evolved into me being settled into who I am as an entrepreneur and what my business' function is within this ecosystem.

Dumile Group is a creative group of companies with its pulse centred on creative authentic stories for brands and people. We do this through The Narrators Africa; the production arm of the business that produces content for broadcasters.

Dumile Brand Boutique is the advertising arm of the business that provides through-the-line creative services. Our focus as a business is to ideate and execute brand narratives with no guessed culture, but rather insight and lived experiences.

The first challenge I can say we had was defining ourselves articulately. When I started out, my view of the creative economy was different to my experience trying to navigate it as a business person. In such a saturated industry, uniqueness is very difficult, but what I have learnt over the years is that “trouble shooting” your way to knowing who you are as a business is the best way to learn and “fail forward”.

■ ***Perhaps you'd like to share some highlights, over the years or any recent wins.***

Our first commissioning by Multichoice for the production of our drama series *Nkululeko* was a great win for us. It helped us get into an industry which we struggled to get to. The work we did for MTN powered APPs MusicTime and Ayoba was also great because it gave our work exposure of and to the African market, which we are still excited about. Lastly, being chosen to be a part of the Sanlam Enterprise Development Programme. This changed how I view my business and role within it greatly. We have now shifted from being survivalist to growth focused.

■ ***How has the pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns affected your work?***

The pandemic was scary! We had such great projects lined up including a whole festival which was our own IP, which were all cancelled due to the pandemic. Most of the clients we were building relationships with were within the lifestyle and alcohol markets and the work that we secured was within the experiential marketing space. I have mild anxiety thinking about how much we lost in years of relationship building and pitching, but this caused us to be resilient and “pivot” as they all say. The waters are still murky, but we move forward.

■ ***Growing up, what did you want to be?***

Being an economist was my first option, but what I am right now (a creative entrepreneur) was a close second.

■ ***You studied Radio Broadcasting and did a BA in International Relations, Politics and Media Studies. Where did you expect your career to take you and how does this measure up to your current reality?***

Besides wanting to be an economist or where I am now - I always wanted to have my own talk show. In high school I saw myself as the future Gideon Mkhari (well my dad did, but I agree). Talk radio is a passion I would really like to explore before I hit 40. I firmly believe that I am where I need to be based on the lessons I needed to learn before I get to where I am meant to be. I also plan to pen down a book which I hope will provide enough insights for young entrepreneurs to skip some of the avoidable mistakes I have made on my journey.

■ ***What is your 'secret' to success?***

Allowing myself to fail. I do not come from a family where taking such a leap was viewed as being normal. With that said though I was lucky enough to have a family who support and believe in me regardless. Failure is frowned upon, yet it is the greatest teacher of them all.

■ ***What do you love most about the creative industry?***

The magic behind imagining something and seeing it come to life. That feeling is extremely addictive to me. Also, the endless opportunities and possibilities available in the sense of the industry is constantly evolving so as a practitioner within, you are always learning as you are going.

■ ***What's your typical workday routine?***

I am usually up by 6am latest (I prefer 4:30 as I can meditate and get to emails before the day starts) to get my son ready for school. If I do not have meetings before 10, I go to gym - my active workday usually starts around 10 and ends before 7pm. After my son's bedtime around 8, I'm back on finishing what I need to for the day and sleep between 10 and 11 or

later - this determines when I wake up the next day. This is also dependent on whether I am in production and what phase of production I am in, but the above is my typical utopian workday routine. I have been wise enough to get an au pair this year who picks up or drops off my son for school. Now I get to sleep in when I have worked late, making me a happier person...

■ ***When you're not busy working, what do you do? How do you socialise these days?***

My circle is pretty tiny and I have recently quit drinking alcohol so I'm adjusting to the kind of life and definition of socialising I would like to live. For now, when I am not working, I am Netflix binging, spending some time with my mom or kids-related activities with friends who have kids. I love cooking, but only really have time to do that on Sundays and I am getting into hikes and more outdoorsy activities.

■ ***What are you reading/listening to/watching at the moment?***

Reading: *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle.

Listening to: Look I might be late but Amapiano are pulling at my heart strings. My current jam is Umsebenzi Wethu by Busta 929 & Mpura (Feat. Zuma, Mr. JazziQ, Lady Du and Reece Madlisa).

Watching: Loved the Tiger Woods three-part series; and *The One* on Netflix is growing on me. *Deadly Illusions* on Netflix as well. I am looking forward to *Lingashoni* on 1Magic. And I need to get into podcasts; my friends love them.

■ ***What's the first thing you plan to do when things go back to normal?***

Go on a 10-day solocation to New York and Jamaica.

■ ***2021 is here and we're already well into March! Any new year's resolutions or plans for the year?***

2020 taught me that there is no place to play small. This year I am going to shoot my shot with all the brands and broadcasters that I would like my agency to work with. We are currently developing our systems to be in line with the bigger agency. I am actively preparing for growth and award-worthy work.

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