

Lerato Songelwa, deputy managing director at Hill+Knowlton

By [Emily Stander](#)

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After 14 years of working with brands the likes of Procter & Gamble, Gold Reef City and PepsiCo, Lerato Songelwa has significant experience in the world of PR.



Image supplied: Lerato Songelwa, deputy managing director at Hill+Knowlton

Before working as deputy managing director for Hill+Knowlton, Songelwa was the PR Lead for WPP Team Liquid.

With Prism Awards coming up, we talk to her to find out more about what life is like in and out of the PR field...

📺 *Tell us a bit more about what you do?*

As a deputy managing director, a huge part of what I do is being responsible for the day-to-day functioning of the agency. I lead an amazing team of brilliant minds with a key focus in providing strategic guidance and direction to them to ensure the business achieves its financial vision, mission and long term goals.

Over and above this, I play an important role in encouraging our agency culture and making sure there is a shared perception of the “H+K way” which really involves maintaining strong ethics and having a pulse on how employees are feeling.

📺 *What’s really behind your selfie?*

A compassionate, intuitive and creative being.



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📺 *Growing up, what did you want to do?*

This changed ever so often depending on the direction the wind would blow. One day I wanted to be an entertainer and actress, the next I wanted to be a social worker and help promote social change. One thing for sure though, I had always identified my great people's skills.

📊 *How did you end up doing what you do now?*

Growing up in the township in the '80s and early '90s, a girl child was only exposed to a handful of career choices that mainly involved working for the government as a nurse or teacher - neither of which I had an interest in.

It was only after seeing the great Putco Mafani (ex Kaizer Chiefs Football Club pro) that I got to know about Public Relations. I would always watch in admiration as he brought football matches to life with his dance moves and very lively media interviews. He always seemed to be having fun doing his job and that's what I wanted for myself. And as they say, the rest is history!

📊 *Tell us a bit about some highlights of your career.*

I've had incredible opportunities throughout my career, from launching household brands to meeting and working with talented personalities from all over the world.

But my current role is by far the biggest achievement of my career no doubt. To be in your 30's as deputy MD of a global PR firm with 80 offices around the world is only a dream. My destiny was always guaranteed but I hadn't thought it would happen so soon. I can only be thankful to some of the amazing mentors, sponsors and cheerleaders I've come across in my lifetime. It's true what they say that it takes someone to believe in you for you to believe in yourself.



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

When I'm not working I am busy being a mom and a wife. Depending on how you look at it, this can be a full-time job on its own - but one that I wouldn't trade for anything. Spending time with my family brings me such joy so any moment I have to be with them, I take full advantage of the situation.

📊 *What are you watching/reading/listening to right now?*

I'm currently reading *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* by Mark Manson and boy oh boy am I loving it. I'm not even done reading it, but it's already teaching me to be more realistic about life, to face it and acknowledge it...the good and more specifically the bad.

📊 *What are you hoping to achieve for the rest of the year?*

This question is very apt as generally, mid year is the perfect time to evaluate how things are going. I look forward to unlocking more business opportunities for the remainder of the year.

I've recently joined the Black Executive Leadership Programme with the McKinsey Academy and I'm enjoying building the foundation for my leadership journey through discussion and dialogue with fellow black global leaders. I'm excited to see the person who's going to emerge at the end.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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