

# ABSA, by Design Partnership

By [Dave Nemeth](#)

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If you have ventured to the brand new Mall of Africa you may have seen the new ABSA bank branch, which is creating quite a stir with the images and video that are doing the rounds on social media. This is actually an ongoing project by global design, strategy & build company, Design Partnership.

This project is headed up by creative director Yatish Narsi, who immediately explains that this is in no way an interior design project but rather a continual work in progress.



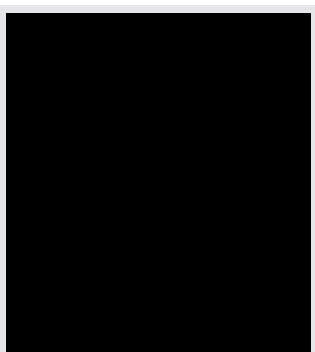
Images all courtesy of Design Partnership & ABSA.

We asked Narsi to go into more detail and explain what exactly he means by this as well as what the three key objectives are which are driving this new banking experience.

## The branch is dead. Long live the branch.

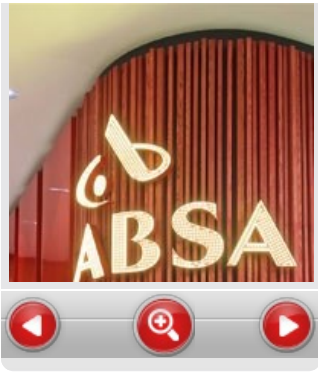
Advances in mobile banking have threatened the current use cases for the physical. However, retail globally has shown that maintaining physical presence is key to any retail strategy. Even online only-offers like Amazon, Warby Parker and Birchbox are moving aggressively into physical channels. The question we're asking at Absa is not do we need branches, but what is the step change in customer engagement and experience that we can now deliver if we free our banking halls of the mundane 'bank visit'? Mobile won't replace physical, it will enable it to evolve.

## A new approach to engaging and problem solving.



Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results. So to tackle this exciting and complex problem we knew we needed a new way to engage it. Virtual reality, 3D-printed modules and furniture pieces, animations and augment reality are all being used to engage various stakeholders in the bank, bringing the problems to life so we can all input. This helps us literally experience the environment before it's built so we can all provide meaningful input around customer experience.

## The variable outlet approach



Given the mix of customer profiles, environments and needs, this journey is best viewed as exactly that. Mall of Africa is not a solution, it's merely the start of our journey. All the furniture and engagement spaces are mobile and can be moved around virtually overnight. We can respond to customer needs quickly and proactively.

It means we can also test new ideas.

Like a foosball table and arcade machines to reduce perceived wait times and turn waiting into play time.

Queue benches as opposed to rails, so we can get our customers to stay comfortable.

Private offices on castors, so we can move them around as we need.

Nobody can say for sure what the bank of the future is, so we have built agility and flexibility into this design to help us engage customers and figure out the future together.

## ABOUT DAVE NEMETH

A leading blue chip international company recently identified Dave as one of the top creative influencers in the country. Dave Nemeth is a qualified designer who has held a variety of senior as well as executive positions with some of the countries leading retail groups, spanning a career of twenty years. Email Dave at [daven@worldonline.co.za](mailto:daven@worldonline.co.za), follow @davenemeth on Twitter and connect on Facebook.

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