

Business of Design speaker Q&A: Ntsako Mokwena

By  Jessica Tennant

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Business of Design (BoD) is back with a [speaker lineup](#) of note. The two-day seminar is held annually in Cape Town and Johannesburg during October and doesn't just focus on design in itself but has a much broader vision for the field in all areas of business. Delegates include everyone from business owners and creative entrepreneurs to retailers, marketing and brand executives, trend analysts, design students and other employees from various industries.



Tracy Lynn Chemaly on Business of Design and other things

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New to the conference is 'Open Sessions', a platform for delegates to ask the BoD founders (Trevyn and Julian McGowan of The Guild Group, and Laurence Brick and Cathy O'Clery of 100% Design South Africa and Platform Creative Agency) as well as fellow delegates any questions they may have, and together overcome any barriers to growth and challenge new ways of doing business.

I asked Ntsako Mokwena, CRM and marketing analytics lead, [Uber sub-Saharan Africa](#), what she loves most about being in the 'business of design' and to let us in on what she'll be sharing during her Johannesburg session.

■ Why are you excited for Business of Design this year?

I am honoured to be a part of the Business of Design conference this year. Firstly, I must say that I admire the mission of the founders and think that it's important to constantly break barriers that prevent small businesses from flourishing in the South African economy. BoD is a great platform that brings together creative business leaders and entrepreneurs to democratise information and share knowledge that will hopefully contribute to the success of businesses in our country. I'm excited to be part of this conversation and to glean insights on the latest industry trends.



Ntsako Mokwena



Business of Design speaker Q&A: Yehuda Raff

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■ Comment on the importance of events such as this that recognise the role design plays in (and the impact it can have on) various industries?

Over the past couple of years there has been a shift in companies that are recognising that innovation is a source of true differentiation. Not just paying lip service to the term, but being sincere in creating human-centred solutions that are intuitive and pleasurable. In the same time span, design has made its way into boardroom conversations, building a case for value propositions that are not only rooted in utility but also in empathy and love. In an increasingly complex

world, simplicity is a luxury and design is our greatest mediator.

BoD facilitates this conversation beautifully and elevates the role of design by bringing together its multiple facets across different industries.

■ **Comment on the current state of design in South Africa (and internationally).**

I think that design in South Africa has reached a point of maturity and continues to grow from strength to strength. It is respected and admired by global market leaders. We can be proud as we've consistently demonstrated that the design industry in South Africa (be it fashion, furniture, graphic, product, etc.) is a force to be reckoned with, drawing upon our rich heritage and history to develop exceptional creations in all fields. African motifs continue to grace international fashion runways, mood boards, architecture and art gallery walls the world over.

■ **What is your/your company's involvement in/contribution to the local design scene?**

We currently work with a team of freelance graphic designers, illustrators, animators and copywriters who produce all design requests issued by our teams across sub-Saharan Africa. From out-of-home billboards to educational mailers, this team is responsible for compiling these and are predominantly young freelancers looking to break into the industry.



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■ **What do you love most about being in the 'business of design'?**

The ever-changing nature of the industry. At Uber, we're constantly adapting and growing to remain relevant in the markets in which we operate. No two markets are exactly the same, and being on the regional marketing team for sub-Saharan Africa, it's important that these differences shape the campaigns, communications and innovations that our teams across the region produce.

■ **What is the title/subject of your talk and/or what are you going to be sharing?**

I will be giving a talk on forging new avenues through disruptive innovation. I'll start by demystifying the term 'disruption' and looking at the innovation ecosystem and opportunities that may emerge for players in a 'disrupted' industry. I'll go on to speak about the power of inclusive, human-centered technology coupled with collaboration to ensure that every single customer comes along on the journey, leaving no wo/man behind! I'll then close off with the Uber case study and the responsibility that comes with being a 'disruptor'.

■ **What's the key takeout?**

No company is an island or self-sufficient. Even in the extreme case of disruptive innovation, businesses need to embrace partnerships and empathy, which brings to mind the old African proverb: "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

The Cape Town version takes place 11-12 October, followed by Johannesburg on 18-19 October, and our readers qualify for a R450 discount. To take up this offer, email tracy@businessofdesign.co.za with 'Bizcommunity' as the subject. In the meantime, follow #BODCT and/or #BODJHB for more pre-event speaker interviews over the next couple of weeks to get your creative juices flowing.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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