

Unati Moalusi, new chief people officer at VML SA

By  Karabo Ledwaba

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We catch up with Unati Moalusi who was recently named the new chief people officer (CPO) at VML South Africa. In her new position she leads the People portfolio within the recently merged business, driving initiatives to support the company's workforce and organisational culture.



Unati Moalusi speaks to us about what keeps her inspired. Source: Supplied.

 **Tell me about yourself.**

I am a child of the African soil. I am deeply rooted in our continent and deeply passionate about its people. A courageous and people-centric woman, I am intentional and present in my connections with people, whether it be friends, family, colleagues or even strangers.

I am a psychologist by profession, a creative in my heart and mindset, a warm energy friend and colleague, and a believer in being our most authentic selves. I am a compassionate leader both in my personal and professional spheres – a lover of summer days, delicious food and dining. Crazy about textiles, I return with beautiful fabrics wherever I travel. A mother, a wife and an overall amazing human being!

▣ ***What is IN and what is OUT for 2024?***

IN: Affirming healthy boundaries.

OUT: Out with 'the fast and the furious' - Let's slow things down, allow ourselves the time to let our thinking percolate before we take action.

▣ ***Biggest lesson of 2023?***

Personally: Normalise pressing pause whilst the rest of the world continues in the rat race.

The months leading up to my father's death were the most difficult. I was reminded of life lessons:

1. Give myself grace
2. Take time to deal with trauma or setbacks
3. Acknowledge my emotions and give room for them to be expressed
4. Release that which is not in my control

Professionally: Vulnerability is actually a strength. The compassion I have demonstrated as a leader was shown to me in return in a tumultuous year and time of need.

▣ ***Describe yourself in one word.***

A catalyst for connections. Not quite one word, but my ability to facilitate meaningful interactions and foster a sense of belonging, plays a crucial role in creating a vibrant and inclusive environment.

▣ ***What are you listening/reading/watching?***

Reading: *Time to Think* by Nancy Kline.

Listening to: I oscillate between my 'Peaceful Meditation' and 'Feel the Burn' playlist depending on whether I want to be in a deep solitude space or have a killer workout at the gym! My gym playlist is a combination of Burna Boy, Beyonce, Cardi B,



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Watching: Nothing recently. I just haven't had screen time, but I do catch a glimpse of *Pepper Pig* when I am subjected to it by my three year old son!

▀ **What did you want to be when you were a child?**

I wanted to be a singer. I loved Aretha Franklin and Natalie Cole. Music has always been a beautiful escape for me.

▀ **Who inspires you?**

Caroline Wanga, also fondly known as Wanga Woman, is such an inspiration. She challenges the status quo in our society, is an advocate for positive change, and gives us permission to live our most authentic lives. Notwithstanding that she is a woman of colour whom I look up to and see myself in her. Representation is key, and will always be. Her courage to speak her truth and share authentic energy with the world reminds me that I too am possible. Three take-aways from her many pearls of wisdom:

1. Pursue your purpose
2. Be your authentic self – change the 'where you are' not 'who you are'
3. Change your relationship with failure (build a threshold for failure/ embrace it)

▀ **Any advice for newbies in the industry?**

Irrespective of your career journey, work on yourself and build your emotional quotient (EQ) – this is an underrated yet crucial leadership competency. Your ability to understand, use and manage your own emotions in positive ways to communicate effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges and resolve conflict is a powerful skill set that will set you apart.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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