

Linda Baqwa strives for great achievements

 By [Emily Stander](#)

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Linda Baqwa is the account manager for Streamline Retail Hub. An animated young professional, she hopes to make strides in the digital and advertising industry to pave the way for young, black women to succeed



Linda Baqwa, account manager for Streamline

With a lot on her daily plate, Baqwa is determined to present her clients with creative and interesting solutions to their problems.

Here, she tells me more about herself, her future in the industry and how she hopes to make a change...

Tell us more about you - what is your role, and what does your day-to-day look like?

My role is to serve as the lead point of contact for all customer account management matters and build and maintain long-lasting client relationships. I negotiate contacts and develop trusted advisor relationships with key accounts, customer stakeholders and executive sponsors.

I also deal with negotiations of various contracts, developing new business, tracking key account metrics and collaborating with new business teams to identify new growth opportunities.

What do you love most about your work?

What I love most is how much it has challenged me over the years. Our agency is unconventional and our roles are fluid - being an account manager isn't limited to campaign or client relationship management.

We are account managers, production managers, traffic controllers, researchers and media planners all in one. These internal flexibility practices have had a positive outcome on me and my colleagues.

■ ***Could you tell us a bit more about your career path prior to your current role?***

Before joining Streamline, I worked as an account executive for one of the biggest activation companies in the country. This tied in with my background as a promoter at the beginning of my career. I wanted to understand the ins and outs of the activation business. Prior to that, I was appointed as a strategic value creator for an advertising consultancy, which allowed me to go to Zimbabwe and Zambia to conduct market research for various brands.

■ ***What are your long-term career goals?***

A key goal is to stay informed on industry developments, innovative strategies and develop my professional brand in the industry I am pursuing.

To achieve this, I plan to increase my contribution to industry journals, manage my online presence and take on leading roles in professional events and organisations. Building my network will also be crucial for the development and improvement of my skill set, staying on top of the latest industry trends and finding prospective clients.

■ ***Tell us a bit more about your career highlights.***

My greatest achievement was receiving a General Manager's Award and I-care Award for being the pioneer of excellence and leadership. I received these from Alcon Laboratories while I was working in the client service department.

■ ***What is your process when doing work for and with clients - what is most important to you?***

Our clientele is predominantly made up of retail clients. When I receive briefs from a client, I unpack them, ensure I understand what they require and how best to meet their expectations. I will also formulate questions (when some clarity is needed) and then put together a list of recommendations should I consider additional avenues to be explored. What's most important to me is being on the same page as the client and finding ways to add value.

■ ***What part do you play in supporting youth empowerment in your industry?***

I have taken it upon myself to mentor a young lady from Soweto, Lesego Mahibila, who stays near our family home. She is not in the advertising industry; she is in teaching. I set aside time to see her on weekends to chat to her about her aspirations, challenges and goals.

Many of our youth, particularly in townships, do not get adequate guidance from their parents and peers. Youth unemployment is also at a staggering 74.7%. Many young South Africans feel demoralised about their future - mainly young, black women. I mentor her to see the hope inside herself, upskill herself, and guide her in the right direction. This has been an incredibly fulfilling journey for me and I hope to be in a position to mentor many more young girls in the future.

■ ***What kind of impact would you like to make in the digital and advertising industry?***

My biggest drive is continuing to add value to the organisation I am in and the clients in my portfolio. There are not enough black women in positions of influence and power in the advertising and marketing spaces in terms of the industry. Many of us remain in operational roles. I would like to be a pioneer of transformation and start discussions that address diversity in advertising. The largest constituency in South Africa comprises black women, so it's important to have black women at the helm of advertising and marketing, particularly in spaces that seek to speak to black women.

■ ***What do you like to do in your spare time?***

I enjoy playing the piano during my spare time. I find it quite therapeutic and a way to add colour to my life, which reminds

me of one of my favourite quotes: “The piano keys are black and white, but they sound like a million colours in your mind”. This quote also ties in with my role as an account manager. No matter how black and white a client’s brief or industry may be, I strive to add colour to it with creativity.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

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

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