

THANDEKA MOKOENA

Group Chief Executive Officer

Specialty Retail · Omnichannel Transformation ·
Southern Africa

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Retail executive with 23 years of experience across merchandise, supply chain and general management in listed specialty retail, currently leading the largest division of a JSE-listed group with revenue of R18.2 billion and 14,000 employees. Proven track record of building commercial performance in low-growth trading conditions, rebuilding supply chains under currency and freight pressure, and taking a traditional store estate into a credible omnichannel position. Operates comfortably at Group Executive Committee and board level, and has held group-wide accountability across all four divisions as well as divisional profit and loss.

Combines a merchant's instinct for range and margin with the operating discipline of a supply chain executive, an unusual pairing in a sector where the two functions habitually argue. Recognised within the group for sponsoring the omnichannel platform now used by every division and for leading the Southern African store estate review that returned the group's regional footprint to profitability. Nine years on the Group Executive Committee, four on the group investment committee, and a subsidiary directorship. Seeking a group chief executive mandate in listed or private equity backed retail across Southern Africa.

SELECTED CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 01 Divisional Turnaround.** Grew apparel divisional revenue from **R4.9 billion to R6.4 billion** and lifted operating margin from **6.1% to 9.4%** across seven years, in a category that contracted by **2.3%** over the same period.
- 02 Enterprise Scope Before Enterprise Title.** Held group-wide accountability for merchandise and supply chain across all four divisions, covering **R11 billion** of annual cost of goods and a supplier base spanning **nine countries**.
- 03 Group Omnichannel Platform.** Sponsored and secured board funding for the group's omnichannel platform, delivered on budget and now serving all four divisions. Online moved from **2% to 11%** of divisional sales.
- 04 Regional Estate Recovery.** Led the group review of the Southern African store estate, closing **31 stores** across five markets and returning the regional footprint to operating profit within **18 months**.

CAREER EXPERIENCE

Managing Director, Apparel Division

Mar 2019 – Present

JSE-listed specialty retail group · R18.2bn revenue · 14,000 employees · four divisions

Scope: full profit and loss accountability for the group's largest division, comprising **R6.4 billion** in revenue, **412 stores** across South Africa and five SADC markets, and **4,800 employees**. Reporting to the Group Chief Executive Officer, with six direct reports across merchandise, stores, e-commerce, supply chain, finance and people. Member of the Group Executive Committee and the group investment committee.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Divisional Strategy:** Repositioned the division from a discount-led proposition to a quality-led one, rebuilding the range architecture, private label mix and store experience around a narrower and more profitable customer definition.
- **Commercial Performance:** Rebuilt gross margin through range rationalisation, supplier renegotiation and a disciplined markdown calendar, holding price investment on known-value lines while removing unproductive breadth.
- **Omnichannel Development:** Sponsored the group omnichannel platform from business case through to board approval and delivery, then led divisional adoption including click and collect, endless aisle and a rebuilt fulfilment model.
- **Store Estate Management:** Directed a rolling estate review balancing closures, relocations and format changes against lease exposure, protecting trading density while reducing the regional loss-making tail.
- **Executive Leadership:** Rebuilt the divisional executive team, appointing four of six directs internally, and established a succession bench now supplying candidates to other divisions of the group.
- **Board and Investor Engagement:** Present divisional performance to the group board and contribute to results presentations, analyst briefings and the annual strategy review.
- **Transformation and Employment Equity:** Chair the divisional transformation forum, moving black representation at senior management from **41% to 63%** and meeting the group's sector targets at all four upper occupational levels ahead of schedule.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Grew divisional revenue from **R4.9 billion to R6.4 billion** and operating margin from **6.1% to 9.4%**, against a category that contracted **2.3%** over the same period.
- Delivered the group omnichannel platform **on budget** and to timetable, taking online from **2% to 11%** of divisional sales.
- Reduced the divisional loss-making store tail from **47 stores to 9** without breaching lease covenants.
- Improved divisional employee turnover from **34% to 19%** and store manager retention to **91%**.

Chief Operating Officer, Apparel Division

Jan 2016 – Feb 2019

JSE-listed specialty retail group

Scope: operational accountability for stores, supply chain and store development across the apparel division, reporting to the Managing Director. Team of **3,900** across **380 stores** and two distribution centres.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Operating Model Redesign:** Restructured the store operating model around a regional cluster design, reducing management layers from five to three and shortening decision cycles.
- **Distribution Performance:** Reset both distribution centres onto a common process and measurement framework, improving on-time in-full delivery to store from **81% to 96%**.
- **Store Development:** Directed the new store and refurbishment programme, delivering **64 openings and 110 refurbishments** while holding capital cost per square metre flat.
- **Workforce Productivity:** Introduced demand-based scheduling across the estate, improving labour productivity without reducing service hours in peak trade.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Improved on-time in-full delivery to store from **81% to 96%** within **two trading seasons**.
- Reduced shrinkage from **2.8% to 1.6%** of turnover, worth approximately **R74 million** annually.

Group Executive: Merchandise and Supply Chain

Aug 2012 – Dec 2015

JSE-listed specialty retail group

Scope: group-wide accountability for merchandise planning, sourcing and supply chain across **all four divisions**, covering **R11 billion** of annual cost of goods, a supplier base across **nine countries** and three distribution centres. Reporting to the Group Chief Executive Officer. Appointed to the Group Executive Committee in this role.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Group Sourcing Strategy:** Consolidated a fragmented divisional supplier base into a group sourcing framework, establishing common terms, quality standards and compliance auditing across all four divisions.
- **Local Sourcing Programme:** Built the group's local sourcing programme in response to currency volatility and freight exposure, working with domestic manufacturers on capacity, lead time and quality development.
- **Planning Systems:** Led the group merchandise planning system implementation, replacing four divisional approaches with one, and rebuilt the forecasting and allocation disciplines around it.
- **Supply Chain Risk:** Established the group's supply chain risk framework covering concentration, geopolitical and climate exposure, reported quarterly to the group board's risk committee.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Delivered **R430 million** in annualised savings across the group within **three years**.
- Reduced average supplier lead time from **118 days to 74 days** and raised local sourcing from **34% to 51%** of units.

- Cut group inventory holding by **R620 million** while improving in-stock availability by **6 percentage points**.

Head of Buying, Homeware Division

Apr 2008 – Jul 2012

JSE-listed specialty retail group

Scope: buying and range accountability for the homeware division, **R2.1 billion** in revenue across **190 stores**, leading a team of **34** buyers, planners and technologists.

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

- **Range Architecture:** Rebuilt the divisional range architecture around good, better and best tiering, improving mix and reducing option count by **22%**.
- **Private Label Development:** Grew private label participation from **19% to 38%** of divisional sales, materially improving category margin.
- **Supplier Development:** Established the division's first structured supplier development programme, focused on small and medium domestic manufacturers.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENT

- Grew private label participation from **19% to 38%** and divisional gross margin by **4.1 percentage points**.

Early Career

Feb 2003 – Mar 2008

National fashion retail chain · 240 stores

Senior Buyer (2006 – 2008) · Buyer (2004 – 2006) · Assistant Buyer, graduate programme (2003 – 2004)

Progressed through the buying function across ladieswear and accessories, completing the group's merchant graduate programme and taking first full category accountability in 2006.

EDUCATION

Master of Business Administration · 2014

Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria

Bachelor of Commerce (Honours), Marketing Management · 2003

University of Cape Town

Bachelor of Commerce, Business Management · 2001

University of KwaZulu-Natal

DIRECTORSHIPS AND GOVERNANCE

- **Director**, group retail services subsidiary (wholly owned), 2020 – Present
- **Member**, Group Executive Committee, 2012 – Present
- **Member**, group investment committee, 2021 – Present
- **Chair**, divisional transformation forum, 2019 – Present

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Advanced Management Programme, INSEAD, 2021
- Board Leadership Programme, Institute of Directors South Africa, 2019
- Retail Leadership Programme, University of Stellenbosch Business School, 2015

CORE COMPETENCIES

Enterprise Leadership

Group strategy · Profit and loss ownership · Executive committee leadership · Board and investor engagement · Capital allocation · Succession planning

Retail and Commercial

Range architecture · Margin management · Private label development · Pricing and promotion strategy · Store estate strategy · Format development

Supply Chain and Sourcing

Group sourcing frameworks · Local sourcing development · Supplier negotiation · Distribution network design · Inventory optimisation · Supply chain risk

Digital and Customer

Omnichannel strategy · E-commerce operations · Fulfilment models · Customer segmentation · Loyalty and data

Governance and People

Employment Equity and sector targets · Transformation leadership · Organisational design · Talent development · Risk and compliance reporting

MEMBERSHIPS

Institute of Directors South Africa · Consumer Goods Council of South Africa

REFERENCES

Available on request.