

# MY BRILLIANT CAREER

## Punting bling across Africa

Anina Malherbe told MARGARET HARRIS about the fun of promoting some of the world's most famous luxury brands

**How did you get into the field you work in?**

I've always been passionate about luxury brands and fashion. It has been quite an interesting journey for me, starting out on the creative side — jewellery design — then moving into the merchandise buying side — mass retail with clothing store Truworths — then high-end retail — jewellery seller Shimansky — where I also got into marketing and public relations. I've got quite a wide range of experience, which I think is important when you're responsible for the bottom line of your clients' businesses: this is a huge responsibility which requires a thorough understanding of their business.

**What qualifications do you have and how do they relate to the work you do?**

I have a BA in fine art, specialising in jewellery design. This may seem quite far removed from where I am now, but it actually gave me an excellent understanding of high-end product design, the detail that goes into it, and how that ties in with the marketing and consumer strategies for those products. I've also completed a few short courses in marketing and public relations. The rest I learned on the job.

**You market luxury brands in South Africa and other African countries. How does your strategy differ from place to place?**

Each country has its own culture, so the consumer psychology differs in each. Most established luxury brands have a strict brand guidelines, but you have to slightly adjust the market-entry strategy for each country. Africa also has different levels of luxury consumers — from "mature" luxury consumers to "less mature" luxury consumers. For example, consumption is driven by "new money" — luxury brands are

**What luxury brands are easiest to promote in South Africa?**

Globally recognised brands with strong brand/logo elements are easier at present — brands such as Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Most & Chandon do well here. Many people have only recently started making good money because of BEE deals, for example, and many of them are new family able to afford luxury brands. Showing off your new-found status is important. Wearing and consuming brands that are instantly recognisable by your peers becomes a key factor in which brands are chosen.

**Which brands do you struggle with locally?**

Newer luxury brands — some of them South African — sometimes struggle, as they do not offer the same status as the globally known ones. Also, certain more subtle luxury brands, for example, fashion house Bottega Veneta, are still less popular because they don't have obvious branding and logos, especially accessories.

**How has your strategy changed with the economic crisis?**

Clients are looking for more value these days and they spend carefully before they spend. But South Africa still has a rapidly growing middle and upper-middle class, with 71,000 also getting richer, in 2011, top dollar millionaires in 2011, up from 51,000 in 2009. This total is expected to rise to 240,000 in the next five years, according to Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report, so there is still money to be spent on marketing strategies for new luxury brands entering the market, and existing brands wanting to grow their footprint.

**What is your favourite brand? It's difficult to choose one, but the brand and what it stands for is nothing less than inspirational.**

**What luxury item would you most want to own?**

A private jet I really dislike the time wasted and the inconvenience that goes with commercial travel. My own jet would give me the gift of time and calmness, which I seem to lack in my life at the moment.

**What is the best part of your job?**

Being able to work with fantastic brands every day. I always vowed that I would never work on a brand that I didn't or couldn't feel passionate about. I'm lucky: I don't have to.

Do you have a brilliant career? Write to letters@business-times.co.za

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**JEWELL:** Anina Malherbe began her career with a BA in fine art, but now promotes top luxury brands Africa and elsewhere on the continent. **PICTURE:** SPURLET/GETTY IMAGES

Sunday Times  
**HOW TO...**  
**dress for the office**

It's not just the weather that's dictating what you wear to work. The office environment is also a factor. If you're in a hot office, you'll want to wear something that's both professional and comfortable. If you're in a cold office, you'll want to wear something that's both professional and warm. The key is to find a balance between the two. Here are some tips to help you dress for the office. 1. Choose a neutral color palette. 2. Invest in quality basics. 3. Add a pop of color. 4. Pay attention to fit. 5. Consider the fabric. 6. Accessorize wisely. 7. Keep your shoes in good condition. 8. Don't forget your hair and makeup. 9. Be confident. 10. Have fun with it.