

Sorbet-Prenuer citizen comes full circle: once employed as a therapist, now Sorbet franchise owner

Issued by [OnPoint PR](#)

11 Aug 2023

Under this year's theme of "Accelerating socio-economic opportunities for empowerment of women", Women's Month could not have had a better start. On 1 August, Sharon Dikgale, the first of four Sorbet-Preneur winners, was handed the keys to her own Sorbet franchise, located at the L'Corro Shopping Centre in Northcliff, Johannesburg.



Sorbet partnered with Bidvest Bank for the Sorbet-Preneur initiative designed to give aspiring entrepreneurs – like Dikgale - an opportunity to own their own Sorbet Salon franchise. As a new franchise owner of a Sorbet Salon, Dikgale received 50% of the investment required to set up her business, in the form of a grant from Bidvest Bank. Sorbet waived the initial franchise fee, resulting in her injecting this portion of the funding to setting up and equipping the salon. Bidvest Bank also provided a business loan to cover the balance of the funding needed, which catered for initial operating costs.

Dikgale's story of being a Sorbet franchise owner started off with her letting go of one dream, to pursue and have faith in another. After she matriculated, she aimed to go into a more traditional career like medicine or bio-medical technology.

“It was by pure luck that I happened to be accompanying a friend of mine when she was also going to register at a tertiary institution in Florida. I noticed a beauty school very close and it piqued my interest. After consulting with my parents, I enrolled and subsequently graduated as a Somatologist, after three years of studying,” she said.

That was a challenging time in her journey as there were very few black female somatologists in South Africa. In order to improve her craft, she provided complimentary beauty and grooming services such as waxing, facials, Indian head massages, pedicures and manicures to her friends and family, often receiving constructive criticism.

She used these formative years in order to hone her skills to such a point that she was employed as a therapist at the very same L’Corro Sorbet Salon she now owns, 18 years later.



“Having also worked at other Sorbet salons in Hyde Park and Bryanston, I learnt about the different clientele in various regions. But one of my biggest lessons is that I changed how I viewed the beauty industry. I learnt that the purpose of what I do is to serve and improve the lives of our guests, and that was a huge paradigm shift for me. That filled me with such satisfaction and inner drive which I have kept ever since,” says Sharon, wife and mother of two.

As a franchise owner, one of Dikgale’s goals is to pass it forward by assisting as many young women as she can. She is also aiming to change the perception of Somatology as a career.

“I want to elevate my chosen career and highlight just how specialised it really is. I had to study the very same anatomy that medical students undergo for their first three years. This is so that we know how to handle every part of our guests’ bodies without inflicting any pain or damage. For example, we have to understand the structure of the skin in order to know how certain ingredients will make it react,” she says.

Linda Sinclair, CEO of the **Sorbet Group** says, “Sorbet is a business that is deeply committed to socio-economic development, entrepreneurship and empowerment. Aligned to this commitment, it was with great pleasure that we handed over the keys to Sharon Dikgale, who is our very first Sorbet-Preneur winner. We are incredibly proud of what Sharon has achieved. Her passion, commitment, and leadership ability will serve her well in becoming a successful Sorbet franchise partner. She is an inspiration to all citizens. Her Sorbet family wishes her the best of luck on this amazing journey!”

Hannah Sadiki, **Bidvest Bank** CEO, added: “Entrepreneurial drive and ambition are essential to building a prosperous future in South Africa, and it is very important that finance providers are able to respond to this need. At Bidvest Bank, we

know that access to finance is a key driver in the creation, survival and growth of innovative new ventures. We are very encouraged by the response and the quality of the finalists who took part in this initiative. Words cannot express how proud I was to stand next to Sharon Dikgale when she received the keys to her new salon, bringing her career full circle. We wish her the very best and hope she continues to flourish on her entrepreneurial journey.”

With the personal services industry contributing more than R9,1bn to South Africa’s Gross Domestic Product on an annual basis, it is promising to know that women like Dikgale are being empowered to reap some of the benefits.

“It feels amazing that out of the 85 Sorbet citizens who applied for the Sorbet-Preneur initiative that I was shortlisted as one of the final 14. Now, to know that I am one of four who own a Sorbet salon is very exciting – it is a dream come true! Thanks to the business acumen training, including lessons on franchising, accounting, human resources, marketing, leadership and a whole lot more, I have grown so much from first being a therapist to now being a franchise owner!” she concluded.

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