

## **From teen salesclerk to retail success: Durbanite the force behind top Shoprite and Checkers brands**

Durbanite Renaldo Phillips is helping to put the Shoprite Group at the forefront of product innovation. Recently promoted to General Manager for Private Label and Imports (Foods), Phillips' creative ingenuity and unwavering customer centricity is the driving force behind private label brands such as Forage and Feast, Simple Truth, Homegrown and Lovies.

As a teen, Phillips juggled jobs as a salesman, a service clerk and a driver as well as doing in-store promotions on weekends. "I've never shied away from hard work. I always wanted to make my parents proud and help them in whichever way I could." As a university student, he continued to work part-time to support himself. His resilience and tenacity led to his first job as a trainee buyer for the Group in 2010.

Phillips rose through the ranks, working in various business units as a buyer, and was involved in the company's acquisition of new stores in Mauritius. In 2015, he shifted his focus onto private labels and imports and, in 2019, at the cusp of the pandemic, became Head Buyer for this business division. While the subsequent years were a time of great global distress that brought major changes in consumer buying habits and the retail industry, Phillips' division grew by over 80% under his leadership.

Since then, he has stamped an indelible mark on the retail industry with a knack for brands that resonate with customers and credits his commitment to customer-centricity as the cornerstone of his success.

### **Building brands that matter**

The 2021 launch of Forage and Feast was one of Phillips' most memorable projects. Since its introduction, the brand, which is endorsed by South Africa's Michelin-starred chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen, has collected numerous local and international accolades, including the coveted [NielsenIQ BASES Breakthrough Innovation Award](#) in the food category for 2023. "It was the first time we ventured into unknown territory, focusing more on the customer experience and value rather than competing with any other brand. It was a hard pitch and not everyone was convinced. It's a proud moment when you see how customers relate to the brand and how far it's grown," he says.

### **When hard work pays off**

Phillips believes hard work can help anyone achieve even the impossible. Coming from one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, he believes where you come from shouldn't determine your future. "My background gave me resilience and instilled values that are still with me today. I encourage young people to be courageous enough to follow their dreams even when they come from nothing. Grab opportunities, no matter how small, because they may lead to greater things. Look at the people who inspire you and borrow from their strengths.

"Seeing how hard my parents worked to give me a chance at life, I always wanted to honour their legacy. I wanted to make them proud. This still drives my ambition today. Family is important to me and I'm grateful that the Shoprite family embraced and supported me through this journey. My leaders Pieter Engelbrecht, Willem Hunlun and Andrew Gardener are my family. My incredible team are the innovators and collaborators that create the magic and I'm immensely proud of them. My team is my greatest success."

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