

From grad to a GM in 11 years: The young force behind SAs best retail rewards programme

Meredith Allan leads one of Africa's most impactful rewards programmes – helping 33 million people save, stretch their budgets and feed their families.

Not many people can say their “baby” helps millions of South Africans put food on the table, but for Meredith Allan, General Manager of Strategy and Rewards at ShopriteX, it's the reason she comes to work every day.

At the age of 35, she's contributed to reshaping the country's retail rewards landscape, with Xtra Savings now saving customers over R1 billion every month.

This job is far removed from her childhood dream of becoming a Zookeeper or a vet, but clearly, she is making a huge impact on lives. Even for people she will probably never know or even meet.

Her journey with the Shoprite Group began in 2014 when, fresh out of Stellenbosch University with a masters degree in marketing but unsure of her next step, a friend suggested she apply for a graduate role. “I said yes to a small job at the biggest retailer in Africa,” she laughs. “I was young, clueless, and keen.”

At first, she worked across marketing projects, strategy and customer innovation. Fast forward 11 years and Meredith has gone from grad to a General Manager. She has worked across some of the company's most high-impact projects, ranging from partnerships with [Discovery Vitality HealthyFood](#) and [Standard Bank UCount Rewards](#) to SA's first grocery monthly subscription programme, [Xtra Savings Plus](#).

And the accolades? Plenty. The Group's Xtra Savings programme has been named [Best Retail Rewards Programme in South Africa four years running](#) and was recently awarded Best Rewards Programme in Africa at the 2024 International Loyalty Awards.

But behind the awards is a leader who values action over applause. “Strategy without execution is just theory,” she says. “At the Shoprite Group, things only matter when they show up in real people's lives, as actual money back in their pockets.”

Meredith is one of the talents in the Group's internal 40 Under 40 campaign, an initiative spotlighting young leaders shaping the business.

Her inclusion is no surprise, because not only is she always giving hundred percent and seeing the results, but she is also authentic and doesn't hide the hard stuff. “My first year nearly broke me,” she admits. “The pace. The pressure. But I stayed. I chose to dig in. That's still the best decision I've made.”

Her secret? Grit. And coffee. “Lots of coffee,” she jokes. In her words: She's scrappy, curious, and overly caffeinated. And fiercely loyal to her team and mission.

“I work to help South Africans save money on their groceries. We use data to stretch budgets.”

Meredith is also the first to say personal growth at the Group isn't linear, it's exponential. “This isn't a place that hands you comfort,” she says. “It hands you opportunity. If you want to learn fast, lead early, and make a real-world difference, this is the place.”

She speaks passionately about helping others persevere: “I believe in grit over talent. In learning by trying. In failing forward.”

What drives her most is impact. “I've seen the power of working on something bigger than yourself,” she says. “When we hit 1 million Xtra Savings signups within a week of launching, I realised this isn't a job, it's a privilege.”

She credits her parents for the quiet strength behind her success.

“They taught me perseverance, endless curiosity, and to do the work even when no one is watching.” And while her energy seems boundless, the job isn't without its challenges. “Retail never stops,” she says. “Every minute, 2 500 Xtra Savings cards are swiped in South Africa. That scale is both energising and terrifying.”

One thing's certain: Meredith's story is one of purpose, perseverance, and proof that at the Shoprite Group, hard work pays off.