

# Females at the fore of FIA

The Financial Intermediaries Association (FIA) is brimming with female talent. Not only have a number of ladies made their mark on financial services – they are actively contributing towards the future sustainability and credibility of the industry. The five outstanding women in financial service the FIA has highlighted are Leanne van Wyk, Linza van Aswegen, Nan MacLennan, Susan le Roux and Tetiwa Jawuna.

Just how far women have come in financial services is highlighted by Nan MacLennan. "The role of women in the South African financial services industry has evolved over the last 30 years. Previously, women were employed in the industry in clerical and administration type positions and were rarely allowed into the realms of management.

Women are now leading in so many areas and in these uncertain and tough times, I believe that they have proved their ability to succeed, not only in business but as home executives as well. They have had to juggle the stress of the boardroom together with the pressures of running a home and trying to raise well-balanced children. They have the resilience needed to

deal with whatever the world throws at them and they continue to function with calm efficiency and flexibility. This enables them to create strategic and tactical options that can be proactively used as and when conditions change." Nan is executive director, PWV Insurance Brokers and chairperson of the personal lines committee for the Financial Intermediaries Association (FIA).

Maintaining and building on the presence of women in the industry is no easy task going forward. We have been hit with a far tougher economic outlook than expected. Susan le Roux, general manager Nedbank Financial Planning says that in these challenging times, clients need financial planning and advice more than ever before.

"Women are inherently caring, people-centered and empathetic and we should use these strengths to understand our clients' frame of mind and concerns. Now more than ever, we should keep in touch with them through regular contact and communication. By keeping our clients informed and showing that we care about their well-being, we will add value to them and their lives.

Tetiwa Jawuna, director of embedded products at Standard Bank Insurance Brokers comments that we need the best creative minds and talents to revive economic growth – minds and talents of both men and women.

Linza, chairperson of the healthcare executive committee of the Financial Intermediaries Association (FIA), says that women intermediaries seem to have more empathy, and when partnered with other skills they can earn the trust of their clients.

For Leanne van Wyk, the best way that women can add value to the industry is to "love what you do." She says that if you are not enjoying what you do and growing, look for a way around it to make it happen – and that doesn't always mean changing employers. Leanne is head of special legal projects at Alexander Forbes and chairperson of the employee benefits executive committee of the FIA. (She has numerous other industry and professional roles including editor of the international Pension And Employee Benefit Lawyers Journal)

So how do we achieve success and how do we nurture and encourage the young upcoming talent? First up is

promoting financial stability from a young age – "Women who are in charge of their own financial futures must inspire others to do the same", says Linza.

Many speak of the value of mentoring – but don't ignore the value of an informal conversation. Leanne says that we come into contact with people everyday who ask for advice – "so sharing what you know as an extension of everyday work life can be more valuable than a structured mentoring programme."

How does each of these high achievers define success? Nan says that defining success is not simple and that each one of us should define our own goals, mission and vision. Leanne advises that success cannot be defined by a title or money – "it's doing what makes you fulfilled." The best definition of success for Tetiwa is from a Booker T Washington quote: "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed." Susan adds in the team element, "I define success based on how successful my staff is – I am successful

because of the people around me."

Susan subscribes to Jack Welch's philosophy that to achieve success you need to display the 4 E's. "You have to be ethical in all you do; display a high level of energy and the ability to energise other people; ability to execute whatever task you take on and lastly be able to take those edge decisions which are usually difficult decisions I added a 5th E namely "energy" which will eliminate procrastination."

## As they say:

**Tetiwa Jawuna:** Women need to develop networking and negotiation skills and identify the right mentors in order to achieve their career

## advancement

**Nan MacLennan:** Achieving success requires dedication, determination and character

**Leanne van Wyk:** Be assertive and get noticed. Not arrogant or aggressive. Never think you are indispensable, because that's often when you become dispensable

**Linza van Aswegen:** You need to stay focused, maintain a positive and creative attitude and develop a mechanism to overcome obstacles in such a way that your mind overrides any negativity

**Susan le Roux:** It is imperative that women realize they have a responsibility to ensure they have made adequate provision for retirement and are covered for unforeseen events.



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