

Press Release – Sandton Convention Centre – 07/31/2019

Sandton Convention Centre is strong on women empowerment

[Sandton Convention Centre](#) is a gender balanced workplace, with 26 women in the staff of 44 – and the business is committed to women empowerment, according to nine of the women in leadership positions.

Janine Baltensberger, SCC's Events Manager, who joined the company in August 2001 as Events Coordinator and was nominated for the 2017 Women in MICE Awards, says SCC boosts women's confidence and self-esteem. "SCC allows women employees the responsibility to create and maintain an environment that is open, where support for each other is encouraged, and it empowers them to grow and develop in their careers."

Dhirasha Mahabeer, Operations Duty Manager, who has been with TsoGo Sun for seven years and at SCC since 2016, adds that the women empowerment at SCC "is strongly influenced by the leadership skills of the heads of department and the General Manager – good skills which ensure that we all interact respectfully with one another and we're open to positive criticism and change."

Their colleagues in leadership positions include Maggie Kruger, Deputy GM; Kelli Mthembu, Operations Manager; Deirdre Caine Van Staden, Marketing Manager; Tracy Montano, Sales Manager; Daksha Vallabh, Sales – Exhibitions; Michelle Bingham, Sales – Corporate & Associations; and Tamryn Moni, G&C Nodal Manager, Reservations.

At the heart of what women empowerment means to the SCC team is the statement by past Secretary-General of the UN, the late Kofi Annan, that, "There is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole than the one which involves women as central players."

The SCC women variously state that women empowerment means that the fair and equal progress that was previously denied is now accessible and attainable; that women are now respected within the organisation and the industry and are recognised for their talent, achievements and hard work; that women can use their 'superpower' of womanhood to be a driving force in the industry without having to keep proving that they are capable of great things.

Tamryn says, "We are strong, powerful and independent women who are not afraid to step up to the plate and take action, regardless of the situation. My entire events team consists of women – because we work well under pressure, we support each other, we care, and we get the job done."

No short cuts or special favours were part of being empowered women for any member of the team, with hard work emphasised. Maggie, who has been in the hospitality industry for 17 years and with SCC since 2017, says, "I have worked very hard to get where I am – and I've been empowered by people who have recognised my hard work throughout my career, who challenged me and gave me opportunities to grow."

Crucial to real women empowerment for all the nine women is empowering others along the way. Tracy, who joined Southern Sun in 1988 in a secretarial position and within six months was promoted to sales, believes that part of empowering others is "allowing them to make mistakes and learn from them".

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Kelli, who has been in the hospitality industry since she started training at Cape Town Hotel School in 2007 and joined SCC in 2018, says upliftment and development is key in any industry or role – and it is integral to empowerment. “I empower people by ensuring that they are equipped to perform their best and by holding them accountable for their performance. Where failure occurs, I offer support and encouragement to enable improvement.” Tamryn echoes that and says, “To me the best empowerment is to ensure you empower others and appreciate them and all they do.”

The MICE industry was overall declared to be on the right track in terms of improving women empowerment. Deirdre cites as an example, the annual Women in MICE celebration which recognises the contributions and achievements of the top 40 women in the industry and Michelle adds, “The industry could do more for women empowerment with, for example, mentorship programmes for high school girls and possibly bursaries for tertiary education.”

The nine women cite women of different strengths and backgrounds as their role models – their moms, a sister, Michelle Obama, Princess Diana, Maya Angelou, Malala Yousafzai, Oprah Winfrey, and women leaders in the industry – and they all had inspiring advice for younger women entering the industry. Daksha: “Believe in yourself and your abilities. We don’t all have the same strengths, so find out what yours is and pursue a career that will complement it. And have fun doing it.” Deirdre: “Stay true to yourself and ensure that whatever you do, you do with pride.” Maggie: “Work hard, always go the extra mile, focus on your strengths and learn from the people around you.” Tracy: “Always ask questions – you’re never too old to learn.” Kelli: “Know that the work we do in this industry is not easy, but it’s worth it if you have passion and are fully dedicated to your trade.” Janine: “It’s not a sit-at-your-desk-during-business-hours kind of role. Event professionals crave the adrenaline rush that comes from co-ordinating and managing an extraordinary experience for attendees.” Tamryn: “Whatever you do, do it with integrity and with respect for yourself and others you work with.” Michelle: There is no such word as can’t – you can be successful in this industry and be all you want to be.”

Dhirasha sums it all up for all women in MICE, “Never give up – it’s a challenging industry.”