

# Chase. the experience

Coming from a line of strong women, chartered accountant Gugu Dingaan followed the Executive Development Programme at USB Executive Development (USB-ED) in 2009 to “develop into a holistic individual”. **AMANDA MATTHEE** talked to her.



Gugu Dingaan



**D**ON'T CHASE THE money, chase the experience and the rest will come.

This, according to Gugu Dingaan, is the best career advice she has ever received. She is an investment executive at WIPCAPITAL (Pty) Ltd – an investment and operating company owned and managed by black women and based in Houghton, Johannesburg.

What motivates her is creating a better

life for her family. And what she likes about her job is the fact that no two days are ever the same. Her days are filled with reviewing investment proposals, structuring transactions, performing valuations, negotiating deals and managing relationships with stakeholders.

“I like my job because it is versatile and challenging. I like seeing a deal come together and establishing mutually beneficial relationships between my company and the investee company. I get my sense of

achievement from completing deals that are fair to all parties.”

However, the worst part of her job is “when a good deal doesn’t go through because the banks just won’t provide the funding”.

Various people played a role in shaping Gugu’s life. But the one person that stands out most is her mother.

“My mother worked very hard to support us. She is a very strong woman. At the time I didn’t know that we didn’t have >



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much compared to other families because she always made us feel that we had enough. I love her for her strong character and personality. She’s able to draw people to her, I think because of her generosity and her ability always to help people in the community. I can say that she has the ability to make things happen, no matter what. And that I love. You can always depend on her.”

Prompted to say what gifts she brings to the corporate table, Gugu said: “Integrity in dealing with others, analytical ability and paying attention to detail.”

It seems that the saying *once a student,*

*always a student* applies to Gugu. “It’s important to add onto your qualifications and to do courses that will not only help you with your work, but will also develop you into a holistic individual.”

After matric, she studied BCom Accounting at the University of Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal). This was followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Accounting also at the University of Natal and serving her articles with PricewaterhouseCoopers. She qualified as a chartered accountant in 2001.

So what made her do an executive development programme when she was already established in a successful career and had a full-time job and family to attend to?

“I wanted to differentiate myself from my peers,” said Gugu. “I wanted to widen my sphere of knowledge and exposure beyond just finance. Also, I wanted to equip myself with skills to operate at strategic level.” She says USB-ED’s Executive Development Programme (EDP) also made her “more aware of who I am as a person”. She also values the networks that she established with her classmates and singles out Leadership Management and Systems Thinking as her favourite subjects.

She once again emphasises experience as one of the best ways to learn. “I wanted to learn from the diverse experiences of my classmates, because I knew for sure that my fellow students were substantially more experienced in operating at leadership level. So, sharing practical experiences with others in my class has been invaluable.” <sup>a</sup>

## MORE ABOUT GUGU

**Where did she grow up?** Gugu was born on the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal and grew up at Esikhawini. She went to the Sacred Heart Secondary School also known as Oakford Girls School – a boarding school run by the Dominican nuns.

**Family life?** Gugu and her husband have a son. They live in Johannesburg.

**What advice would she offer to others at the start of their careers?** “You need to research your career path and talk to people who’ve walked the same road before for advice. You need to have a ‘bigger sister or brother’, like a mentor; someone to act as your sounding board and sanity check.”

**What would she do if she had R50 000 to invest in other people?**

“Put a deserving child through university.”

**What would she do if she had R50 000 to start up a new business?**

“Let’s face it, there isn’t much one can do with R50 000 these days. But I think I would use it to provide seed capital to form a maintenance or services company. I’ll consolidate all the contacts I have for plumbers, builders and electricians and create a company co-owned with these guys and take their businesses from being a one-man show to a serious corporation.”

**What leadership abilities does she admire?** “A leader must have the ability to ignite passion in the people that she leads and make them want to follow her. Also humility and integrity.”

**What does she dislike in people?** “I dislike two-faced and pretentious people. I believe that people should be just who they are and not pretend to be someone else to you just to buy face.”

**Her dreams?** “To rise up the ranks into a leadership position that will have a positive impact in business and society”.

**What book is she currently reading?**

*The winner stands alone* by Paulo Coelho.

**What makes her happy?** “A big hug and kiss from my son!”