

# Women power an exclusive affair

Some of SA's hottest boardroom females share their thoughts on leadership and whether women need leadership training that is aimed exclusively at them. **SUE BLAINE** asks around.

## A SHIFT IN ATTITUDE

Women have long been seen as the tender gender, but leadership is not gender specific, says Renee Silverstone, 2007 Businesswoman's Association Businesswoman of the Year (Entrepreneur) who heads the advertising agency The Jupiter Drawing Room.



Renee Silverstone

"The only downside with women in our society positioning themselves as leaders is their lack of confidence and belief in themselves. What is required is a change of attitude and not leadership education separate from men," she says.

## CRACK OF THE WHIP

Key to leadership training is that women and men need to be taught the same subjects, but we also need to acknowledge that while women may hold the whip in some businesses, they crack it differently, says WIPHOLD CEO Louisa Mojela, who received the 2006 USB students' award for inspirational leadership, along with finance minister Trevor Manuel. "We are different in how we respond to managerial challenges: we are more compassionate and nurturing, but the core business will be the same," she says.



Louisa Mojela

## THE NETWORK CHANNEL



Khanyi Dhlomo

The more women can learn to think and work together with men the better, says Khanyi Dhlomo, SA businesswoman, founding editor of the new women's business magazine, *Destiny*, and 2001 USB Alumnus of the Year. Dhlomo's view is shared by Prof Laetitia van Dyk, USB's head of Leadership Studies and a former USB Alumnus of the Year.

"In the new world of work, diversity is extremely important and leadership development has to be done in as diverse an environment as possible to have the best advantage," says the woman who was HR director of UK Banking with the Barclays Group in London before she joined the business school.

While diversity may be the name of the game in SA's new boardrooms, Van Dyk believes SA's successful women have something good to share with their sisters.

"If successful businesswomen are prepared to share their mistakes and successes with other women, getting a group together to do this would be good," she says.

**Khanyi Dhlomo: "I think women's networking groups and courses aimed at highlighting female role models in business (aimed at women) are beneficial as they foster camaraderie, support and greater self-awareness."**

## DIGGING DEEP



Sandra Dunn

Leaders need to know themselves very well so that they can confidently head the pack, and where leadership training asks people to dig deep it can be beneficial for women to be trained alone, says Sandra Dunn, deputy CEO of the Bank Seta.

"Look at the number of women in leadership positions ... the world of work is still very male, and women can struggle with that. It's important that we work on our emotional side (and we need a safe place for that). As women, we tend to be more emotional," she says.



Prof Laetitia van Dyk

## A BRIEF TIMELINE OF SA WOMEN POWER

1921

Mary Fitzgerald is the first female city councillor of Johannesburg.

1930

White women get the vote.

1956

Women march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria on August 9 to protest against the pass laws.

1994

Louisa Mojela, Wendy Luhabe, Gloria Serobe and Nomhle Gcabashe set up the women empowerment company WIPHOLD with an initial investment of R500 000. It becomes the first company headed by women to list on the JSE.

1996

Dr Mamphela Ramphele becomes the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town, becoming the first black woman to hold this position at a South African university.

Nozala Investments (Pty) Ltd, a black-led investment group, is established by a large group of women.

Maria Ramos is appointed as director-general of Finance.

2001

Judge Jeanette Traverso, a graduate of the University of Stellenbosch, becomes the first woman to hold a leadership position in the judiciary when she is appointed deputy judge president of the Cape High Court.

2002

Nicky Newton-King becomes deputy CEO of the JSE Securities Exchange.

2003

Prof Letticia Moja becomes the first black woman dean of a medical faculty - at the University of the Free State.

2004

Maria Ramos takes up the position of Transnet chief executive.

Ferial Haffajee becomes the first woman editor of a major South African newspaper, *The Mail & Guardian*.

2006

Cynthia Carroll becomes the first woman to take up the position of CEO of a South African mining company, Anglo American.

2007

Khanyi Dhlomo, alumnus of USB, is the first woman to be elected to the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut executive.

Karen Esler, associate professor in the University of Stellenbosch Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology and core team member of the Centre for Invasion Biology, is appointed the first woman president of the SA Association of Botanists in the 33 years of its existence.