

'Never lose sight of your dreams' - Kate Stubbs, Interwaste

Kate Stubbs is the business development and marketing director at Interwaste. Like other kids growing up, her ambitions changed over time, but she eventually landed in the waste management and environmental industry, a space where she's happy to be making a positive difference to people's lives and the environment.

This Women's Month, Stubbs shares a bit about herself, what she loves most about her job, and advice for other women wanting to enter the industry.

Tell us a little about yourself?

Kate Stubbs: I am proud mother two beautiful children and happily married. I live in the vibrant city of Johannesburg which is known for its gold and the largest man-made forest in the world – with an estimated number of trees sitting at around 10 million. This truly resonates with my passion of being part of the 'green' family and being an environmentalist.

I love the diversity of South African people and its environment. Our country has so much to offer which makes it a great place to belong. I am success-driven and am constantly learning to trust the journey and remembering to take care of myself along the way. There will be highs and lows but it's important to never lose sight of your dreams nor compromise on your values.

What did you want to be when you were growing up?

Stubbs: Like many children growing up, my thoughts of what I wanted to do later in life changed over time. Both my parents worked, and I think this instilled a good work ethic and created a level of independence for my brother and myself from a young age. Initially, I wanted to be an artist as my granny was one. But in high school, I started thinking about becoming a doctor, IT professional or businesswomen. By the time I matriculated, I was very focused on developing my career in the commerce arena.

Before I started my studies, an international visit opened up for me and a two-week trip turned into an eight-year journey! I ended up working in Austria and Germany for five and half years and then in the UK for another two and half years before deciding it was time to come home. During that time, I learnt fluent German, waitressed, ran a brewery and developed my direct marketing skills with a successful startup in London.

On returning to SA, I commenced a new career in Logistics. I studied a BCom degree part time and was very fortunate to participate in a wide range of training and leadership development programmes to enhance my knowledge. I worked in a variety of areas in the business before focusing my career on marketing, sales, and communication.



Kate Stubbs, business development and marketing director at Interwaste



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Describe a typical workday.

Stubbs: What is that? The industry I am in is extremely diverse and comes with many different facets and challenges each day. The broad portfolio I have on overseeing sales, business development and marketing has me engaging a variety of these aspects on any given day. I move from developing marketing strategies to corporate communication strategies and PR plans, to managing clients, dealing with business negotiations, commercial proposals, client services to team management. I am driven by my passion to make connections between people, ideas, and concepts come alive.

My job is extremely dynamic and quite pressurised, so it is never boring in my field of work as you are constantly thinking on your toes.

What do you love most about your job?

Stubbs: The opportunity to work with a variety of people across our business and to engage with a range of stakeholders. The waste management sector is extremely complex and constantly evolving which creates the opportunity to learn something new every day. I am also incredibly fortunate to work with a great team, making my role even more enjoyable.

The fact that my job makes a positive difference to people's lives and the environment makes it so much more fulfilling.



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What advice would you give to young women wanting to enter your industry?

Stubbs: It is wonderful to see more and more women entering an historically "male-dominated" industry. Women have so much value to add in the workplace and having a diverse team brings about more robust and sustainable decision-making.

The waste management and environmental industry is fascinating. It provides many opportunities for career development. My advice would be to never stop learning, be proactive and remain open to new challenges. You never know what door may open next. Resilience, adaptability, and passion for what you do are some key attributes to maintain.

I have been very fortunate to have had many mentors along my journey who have imparted lots of invaluable advice throughout my career. My advice to young women wanting to enter this career would be to seek out mentors and build your network from the start. Being able to discuss challenges or share ideas with someone enables you to expand your thinking and open your mind to new perspectives.

What are the trends in your industry?

Stubbs: The waste management industry is developing rapidly in line with new legislation and the global trends of environmental sustainability and the circular economy. These trends are not only leading to a greater awareness of the need for responsible waste management practices but also impacting how businesses design and produce their products to avoid waste throughout the value chain wherever possible, and ensuring companies take more accountability for their waste. Innovation and new technologies to process waste materials are creating new markets and a different way of working.



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What are the challenges?

Stubbs: One of the biggest challenges facing the industry going forward will be the access to talent – finding people with the skills and expertise to match the evolving industry requirements. It is a great challenge though, as it not only opens up the space for job creation and skills development but also growth opportunities for everyone in the industry.

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