

Feminism, mentors, heroines and Women's Month



By [Robyn Campbell](#)

29 Aug 2018

Did you know that there are more CEOs called 'John' on America's Highest Paid 100 CEO list than there are women? And locally, there are more people called 'Stephen' than there are women on the country's Top 50 Richest CEOs list? In fact, there is only one woman on that list, Magda Wierzycka, but don't worry, we have three Stephens.



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In terms of landing top leadership positions both locally and globally, women don't seem to be doing that well in that most of the positions of power and prestige are occupied by men. This is especially sad considering that 52% of the world's population is female.

Equality is much more than just hiring women

Also sad is this pretty dismal paper published in *Psychological Science* by the CEO of the South African Institution of Civil Engineering, Manglin Pillay. Pillay wrote: "The fact that more men occupy high profile executive posts is tremendous not because of gender, but because of appetite for work load and extreme performance requirements at that level, choosing what is important and where to allocate time.

"The reason why women do not occupy these positions is that women choose to have the flexibility to dedicate themselves to more important enterprises like family and raising of children than to be at the beck and call of shareholders who will wake you up in the middle of the night to attend to shareholder aspirations."

In my opinion, it's absolutely shocking that there is an expectation to choose between children or chasing a senior career. We have a lot of work to do if we are to change mindsets like the one on show in *Psychological Science*.

Equality is so much more than just hiring women so that the company can say it employs an equal number of men and women. It isn't as simple as giving 'like for like'. Consider bathroom designs. Women take on average twice as long as men in the bathroom, but rarely is this taken into account in the planning when building, so, we wait and wait in queues. Ladies, that's straight up sexism.

Women play vital role in marketing and advertising

It goes without saying that women play a vital role in the marketing and advertising arena, globally and in South Africa. In terms of pure economic power, women make up at least 65% of the global spending. Therefore, by having women participate in the ideation of marketing campaigns, the industry is ensuring that the work it produces for its clients converts and delivers a more layered and authentic messaging.

When it comes to women in management positions in the industry, they have more often than not experienced a struggle in working their way to the top through a very loud and impetuous industry. However, we are seeing a change in the ways departments are being run, with a focus on equal opportunity, fairness and a drive to make the industry more accessible to mothers or employees with personal circumstances that need support.

I set about calculating what the agency I work for can boast about in terms of recognising women and employing them in positions where they can contribute to the agency's success, its clients' success and influence society as a whole.

While we have figures we can be proud of, we realise that we need to improve, and to improve we need to continually discuss and address many issues that raise themselves on an almost daily basis.

Internal bias

Bias, for example, is one such issue. Something that surprises women is their own internal bias, based on how we have been raised and moulded, particularly in a patriarchal society like South Africa. We all have varying levels of bias about not wanting to hire someone who is married, pregnant, has children or believes that men have a better leadership style.

Lack of support for fellow women is another issue. Society has raised us to compete. We raise girls to see each other as competitors—not for jobs or accomplishments—but on a personal level. For instance, what clothing she wears, how she looks and other nasty gossip. In a time that we need each other's support more than ever, we drag each other down, reinforcing men's inherent bias that women aren't natural leaders and focus on petty, shallow issues that stand in the way for excellent work.

I challenge every woman in the industry to review how you approach your job, your seniors, your juniors and yourself. We have made such headway, our mothers and grandmothers fought for this, we need to be part of continuing the change our society needs for us to all flourish in this industry and to pave the way for more women leaders.

ABOUT ROBYN CAMPBELL

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