

Be strong, even when it's not easy

"Where there is resistance, I will always have persistence," is a mantra that drives Kwandokuhle Nkosi, the manager of Engen Honeydew Convenience Centre, who has defied stereotypes to earn the respect of her majority male staff at the popular service station located on Beyers Naude Drive in Gauteng.



Kwandokuhle Nkosi, manager of Engen Honeydew Convenience Centre

A firm believer that gender bias falls away over time as we function as our best selves and allow our natural personalities to shine through, Nkosi cannot however hide her irritation at society's binary rules around gender and the mixed messages that continue to be fed to women.

"We tell young girls to be fearless and brave and then as soon as they become young women, we urge them to get married, and warn them about their ticking biological clock."

Her message to the sisters of South Africa this Women's Day is simple.

“ Be strong ... especially when it's not easy. Just be whoever you want to be whenever you want to be. Your name is not sweetheart, or baby and you don't have to answer to that. ”

The ambitious 32-year-old loves her job managing an Engen service station because she gets to be herself. “At work I’m not a gender...I’m a person,” she says.

Like most South Africans, Nkosi's resolve has really been tested over the course of the national lockdown, with the Covid-19 pandemic presenting her toughest career challenge to date.

“We have had to stick firmly to our brand promise and commitment to service excellence because it is imperative that everyone that enters, and leaves Engen Honeydew Convenience Centre is protected. As the site manager, I ensure that my entire team's priority is focused on looking after our customers,” says Kwando.

The health and safety of customers and staff at all 1 000+ Engen service station across South Africa is always paramount. Since the outbreak of the pandemic heightened focus has been placed on consistently implementing stringent hygiene measures at all sites.

This includes limiting the number of customers in the Quickshop, regular sanitising of all equipment, services and surfaces, as well as strict adherence to personal hygiene measures, including: social distancing, hand washing, sanitising and the non-negotiable wearing of face masks.

“We have also launched our new Engen 1App,” says Nkosi, “which I encourage all motorists to download because it offers a safer customer service experience, with no touching of devices, cards or cash required.”



Engen goes contactless with 1app

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Nkosi feels a sense of achievement from the little smiles she gets from her many delighted customers; happy as she is to have impacted on their life in a small way. “If you leave the station feeling better or lighter or more focused, then I’ve done my job.”

Her motivation however does not end at the door of offering seamless customer service.

“I’m passionate about growth and learning, not only for myself but for my team, who I try and inspire to achieve all that they can out of life,” she says.

“My dream is to use the Engen Honeydew Convenience Centre as a workplace training ground for young people so that they can get some work experience, especially young ladies, who I encourage to be brave, to study, learn and be independent.”

As a manager, she has learnt how to really listen to her colleagues.

"I'm an empathetic person, I feel what you feel and grow by assisting you, but the trick is not to dwell on or carry the weight of yesterday, as you navigate today.

"It's not easy to achieve but at the end of the day, I ask myself if I tried my best, and if the answer no, I try again."

This Women's Month, Engen salutes Kwando and all the women of South Africa.

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