

Red Cherry's Pheladi Mphahlele shares powerful advice for women in marketing

By  Juanita Pienaar

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Red Cherry Interactive, a level one BBBEE female-owned company, [recently celebrated](#) its silver anniversary with a fresh new positioning as a full-service advertising agency.

At the helm is Pheladi Mphahlele, who acquired majority shareholding of Red Cherry Interactive in August 2018.

She has been in the events and brand activations industry since 2003 spearheading the most prestigious and high-profile government events and has a magnitude of experience in event compliance.

For Women's Month, we caught up with Mphahlele who spoke to us about the challenges she has witnessed and experienced as a female in the marketing and advertising industry and gives practical advice on how women can overcome these barriers and break the proverbial glass ceiling. She also provides some insights into the future of marketing and advertising, looking at skills young marketers will need to hone now to get ahead.



Pheladi Mphahlele, Red Cherry Interactive CEO. Image supplied.

■ ***You have been in the events and brand activations industry since 2003. Take us through some of the career highlights that you're particularly proud of.***

- Coordinating and organising the funeral of one of the iconic stalwart of our revolution and woman of note, Mme Winnie Madikizela Mandela
- Coordinating the inauguration of President Cyril Ramaphosa

■ ***List a few of challenges for women in the marketing and advertising and some that you might have personally faced in your career.***

- ***Being treated equally***

One of the biggest challenge females are currently facing is equality in the workplace.

My advice for women leaders everywhere is to go for what they want in their careers and not to give up. Hone the skills necessary to give you those opportunities, such as your communication skills, leadership development and emotional intelligence. Raise your hand in meetings. Speak up and be heard.

- ***Building a sisterhood***

The biggest challenge my female clients face today is garnering support from other women.

My advice to women worldwide is to support and empower each other, starting with our basic principles of who we are — our morals, values, integrity. We must be just. Be humbled, show togetherness, passion, excellence and enthusiasm toward laying the foundation for our progress through our work.

- ***Generating revenue***

One of the biggest challenges my female clients currently face is growing their revenues. Money solves everything; it gives you freedom and choices.

My advice is to focus on what generates revenue wherever you are. After all, if you don't have revenue, you don't have a business.

- ***Being confident***

One of the biggest challenges I see when I speak with females is their confidence.

My advice is that they need to get comfortable knowing that people will always try to take you off "your game" or dislike you for no apparent reason. But if you go in knowing this, if you are clear on your purpose and on what you are trying to achieve, then you will be successful in getting what you want.

- ***Speaking up***

It's not enough to be in a role or to sit at the table. One must also speak confidently, regardless of the odds faced. Women leaders fear being ostracised or rejected; however, respect comes when one's voice is heard.

My advice to woman leaders is to share their voice and perspective because it can help shape policy, the workforce and perspective. Make your presence known as a leader and collaborator for good.

- ***Building alliances with decision-makers***

A lot of woman feels that they've been put down, pushed aside, or told they don't belong at the table. It's not easy to be bullied, but there is a way to get past it.

My advice to women is to build healthy relationships with decision-makers, create a strong personal brand, establish guidelines before each project, position themselves as experts in their field, and communicate with confidence.

- ***Asking for money***

The challenge is sales, and anything related to income – not charging enough, being afraid to ask, under-pricing, marketing, promoting, "bragging" to establish authority and giving away services for free.

My advice is to learn to master sales and get confident in your skills, so you price properly and gain respect.

- ***Standing in their success***

Some women leaders shy away from speaking on their accomplishments for fear of being boastful or conceited. Women tend to think that it's needed to shrink themselves to seem non-intimidating.

My advice to clients is to gain the confidence to know that if they're in the room, that means they deserve to be there. Shrinking does nothing but delay your voice from being heard and taken seriously.

- ***Tackling imposter syndrome***

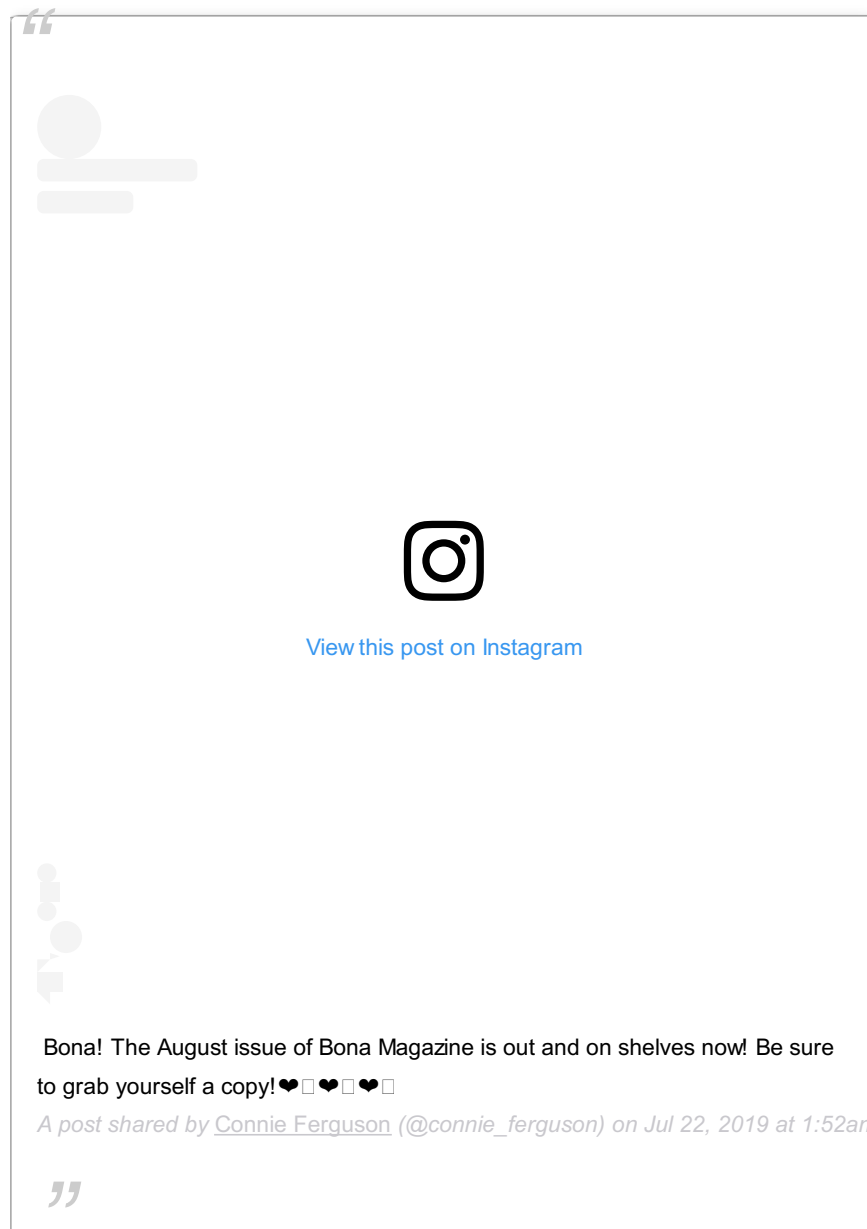
The biggest challenge woman face is an inability to internalise their accomplishments.

My advice is to first get to the root of why this belief exists, then adjust their locus of control by making accurate

assessments of their performance, then get feedback from other leaders to confirm their strengths. By tackling imposter syndrome, they can better develop their leadership.

📌 **Do you have any female role models/women you look up to in the industry?**

- Connie Masilo-Ferguson
- Oprah Winfrey
- Ava DuVernay
- Issa Rae
- Basetsana Kumalo
- Michelle Obama



📌 **Can you provide some insights into the future of marketing and advertising and the skills marketers of the future will need to hone now to get ahead?**

Trying to predict the future is always tricky but what we can see from changes in our own business is that:

“ It's not about winning awards, it's about meeting sales and customer awareness objectives. We need the consumer to take action. Awards do not automatically = success. ”

Yes, a correlation between awards and sales/clients can be seen but not always and often it's at a very high cost - higher

than a client would like to pay per customer.

This doesn't mean less creative campaigns though but different ways of getting the consumers interest is key. One of the opportunities, that we at Red Cherry see as the future and where we have put a lot into building the skills of our people, is branded content.

Branded content has become a very important part of the marketing mix – being what people are interested in, is what brands want, not interrupting what people are interested in. Content should be related to your target market and related to what the brand stands for.

In that way, your consumer will want to engage with your content and share it. Consumers are already sharing 27 million pieces of content every day so getting consumers to share *your* content is key.



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Competition between brands has forced advertising to evolve – it's no longer about pushing product onto the consumers but rather influencing their purchasing decision through an emotional connection they have with the brand and establishing a brand personality.

Consumers want the story – let the brand have a story to tell and the consumer will engage.

Some of the skills/knowledge that are needed are:

- Artificial intelligence
- Understanding the 4IR
- Understanding the impact of social media on the advertising industry

📌 As it is Women's Month, what is your advice or encouragement to other women in business?

- Be authentic, stand your truth, pioneer, own your power, be inspiring.
- Surround yourself with other supportive women that encourage you, share ideas and get you motivated.

“ Pray, work and slay! No matter how you feel, get up, dress up, show up and never give up! ”

For Red Cherry Interactive news, visit the agency's press office [here](#) and follow it on the following social media platforms: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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