

Ally Nezar says 'fintech was a natural fit'

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

30 Aug 2019

Ally Nezar is the marketing executive for Sureswipe, an independent card payment acceptance company in South Africa. Part of her leadership role includes managing the marketing team to offer them guidance and researching new trends to always stay on top of the game. She is a proven solution wizard; troubleshooting current issues and planning ahead. She holds a Bachelor of Business Science degree from the University of Cape Town.



We chat to Ally Nezar to find out why she says, 'fintech was a natural fit'...

■ ***Could you describe a typical day in your job?***

I am the marketing executive for Sureswipe, an independent card payment acceptance company. I start my day by checking lead volumes and how our campaigns performed the previous day, then it's time for my first coffee of the day.

Part of my leadership role includes managing the marketing team to offer them guidance, and then I make time in my day to research new trends to always stay on top of my game. I spend most of my time looking at new solutions to any problems we may face, troubleshooting current issues and planning ahead. Every day is different and I love this dynamism in my scope of work.

■ ***How did you get into the tech space?***

I like to think of myself more in the innovation industry than just technology. My career saw me move through financial

institutions and strategy consulting. I have a passion for making a difference and great experience in the finance sector so fintech was a natural fit. I love that through the innovations in the market we are helping more South Africans be financially included and entrepreneurs to grow their businesses.

■ ***What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?***

I got two conflicting pieces of advice and they have both served me well in different situations.

1. Be patient, sometimes things take time. Sometimes a moment's pause is just what is needed to make the right decision.
2. Push harder. There are so many opportunities for you to add value you just need to be courageous enough to take them.

■ ***What advice do you have for the future generation of women wanting to get into the tech space?***

Make sure you have a rounded understanding of both tech and business. These are no longer separate industries. Even if you plan to specialise in more technical roles, the way you can add real value is by understanding what impact this has on your business and the market.

■ ***Who or what is your biggest motivation?***

I was told once when I was younger that I wasn't cut out to be a 'businesswoman'. This could have undermined me, but I used it to fuel my journey. You can do almost anything you put your mind to, only you can decide what is or isn't for you

■ ***Are South African women getting enough of a chance to shine in the tech industry?***

It is much easier for women to shine in any industry these days but it still has its challenges. I see women challenging the 'tech is for men' stereotype every day and winning. Although the number of women filling technological roles is still lower than men, I believe it is on us to make sure we are taken seriously in this space.

■ ***As a female business leader, what's the least and most exciting aspect of your workday?***

The most exciting aspect of my job is having the ability to solve real problems that impact not just my organisation but the market. The world looks a little bit different every day and you have the ability to help shape it. I also love the aspect of working with my teams. I'm passionate about people development and make a special effort to mentor women.

In every job, there are some aspects that don't excite you, but I have very few of those. My team knows my least favourite thing to do is sign off invoices. It's a necessary part of the job but certainly not something I get excited about.

■ ***Women are considered to be natural problem solvers. Why do you think this is perfect for the tech industry?***

Being a problem solver is imperative. You will be faced with new challenges every day and the ability to take these and figure out the best way to solve them is the way you stay alive in this industry.

Research from the Peterson Institute for International Economics showed that "a profitable firm at which 30% of leaders are women could expect to add more than one percentage point to its net margin compared with an otherwise similar firm with no female leaders", we add value!

■ ***Could you list a few, if any, specific challenges females face in this industry?***

The biggest challenge I have seen is an organisations adaption to a woman's style. It is naturally easier to work with people who have a similar style and thinking to you. Women challenge that. We look at problems differently, we have different ways of managing people. We add just as much value just in a slightly different way.

On the flip side of that, it can be assumed that women are similar to each other. Every woman I know has her own style.

None of which is more masculine or more feminine but rather just the unique attributes that make up each person.

■ ***What is your advice for overcoming these challenges?***

I have three key recommendations;

Firstly, follow Sheryl Sandberg's concept of 'lean in'. Get yourself a seat at the table, have a well thought through opinion and believe you can add value. It is often our perceptions of ourselves that hold us back and not those of others surrounding us.

Secondly, in contradiction to Sheryl's book, I believe it is helpful to find a mentor or a sponsor. There are many people, both men and women, passionate about helping women succeed. Find one of those people, learn from them. Don't be afraid to ask for support, not everyone will say yes but that shouldn't be viewed as a personal rejection, just a reason to find someone else.

And lastly, keep going because adversity breeds resilience.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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