

African Bank Limited press release

August 2020

Celebrating August with African Bank's Women's Day warriors

CAPTION: Stronger. Better. Together - embodying a spirit of strength and collaboration. From Left to right: African Bank's Chief Information Officer, Penny Futter (left) with CEO Basani Maluleke (middle) and Group Executive: Human Capital, Lindiwe Miyambu (right)

This year corporates have had to adjust operations to a future they could not previously have imagined - and so have their leaders. During August, Women's Month, three of African Bank's top female executives - CEO Basani Maluleke; Lindiwe Miyambu, Group Executive: Human Capital; and Chief Information Officer, Penny Futter - share their insights on addressing these challenges; on surviving change; finding balance and leading exceptionally in these uncertain times.

Maluleke says that the most important asset propelling her through a career that has spanned more than 16 years in financial services is simple: a strong support structure. "I have faced many obstacles during my career, but my support structure has seen me through each time. These people are always there to provide perspective, guidance, a shoulder to cry on and anything else that may be required to overcome adversity, as well as to join me in celebrating success," she reflects.

Equally helpful is the knowledge that hard times come and go. "The outbreak of Covid -19 and its impact on the economy and our business has been the biggest test I have had to face, both personally and professionally." She is also very aware that Covid-19 will not be the last disruption that she will experience in her lifetime, so it is important for business and the Government to develop and implement solutions to help customers and communities become resilient, so that they can be less vulnerable during the bad times. "As a sector we need to find ways of advancing lives through the provision of financial and related services. We need to create opportunities for customers, employees, suppliers and other stakeholders to improve their lives so they can build resilience to survive the next

disruption.”

To survive the current pandemic she often draws on the vision she has for her life - to leave the world better than she found it. This means that giving up is not an option. She has learned to accept that failure is not only inevitable from time to time; but is a necessary condition of achieving success in the future. “I hope that when the pandemic finally leaves us we will have been left with a lasting sense of our interconnectedness and the need to create value not just for ourselves and those closest to us, but also for those who need it most. Never before has the importance of doing well, while doing good, been more relevant.”

Miyambu says that she also understands hard times are inevitable; an insight her parents ensured she accepted during childhood. However, her grandmother also inculcated an acknowledgement that any challenge could be overcome with hard work. “I still believe that there is no substitute for working hard, but I also think that there is a lot of truth in the saying ‘If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.’”

This manifests in her passion for people; indeed, she says that people - from her family to her children and her colleagues - are her greatest source of inspiration. “I’ve found that these people create a support structure that really helps to keep you on track when you face a challenge - especially since women encounter countless obstacles as they try to raise kids while succeeding in the corporate world.” Covid has really highlighted the importance of staying connected with people, of hyper-collaborating across divisions and geographical areas to solve problems; of learning new relevant ways of doing things; of showing respect and value for all people and of showing conscious and intentional leadership. We realised that everyone is experiencing this struggle differently. “In a difficult time like this it always helps to remember who you are and what you stand for, so that you can stay true to that person and remind yourself not to respond unthinkingly to external triggers.”

“There has never been a more important time for women to love themselves. This makes you a better partner, mother, friend and colleague. There is nothing wrong with investing time and care in yourself. At the same time, invest in your relationships. One of the

greatest lessons I have learnt through my career is that such time is invaluable; the investment pays back many times over.” She draws on a Bruce Lee quote saying “Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the ability to act in the presence of fear.”

Like Miyambu, Futter is a great proponent of the value of hard work and perseverance, describing these as the cornerstone of her career philosophy. “There are many things that I have struggled with in my career, but I know that if I keep working and refuse to give up, there is very little, given time, that I won’t be able to do.”

Covid has introduced a new challenge. Prior to this Futter believed her greatest challenge was becoming a parent and trying to figure out the right balance between work and family. She found the sweet spot with the help of her extended family structure and now works towards spending quality, rather than quantity, time with her loved ones. “This year’s challenge has been unprecedented. I have obviously found working from home very different and I miss my colleagues and the face-to-face engagement. “I am comfortable in to show my colleagues my vulnerable side. In fact, it has been a fantastic source of support when I have needed it. It is always very comforting to know that we are not alone when we are going through a difficult period. I make a point of minimising email and rather picking up earphones to have a conversation with my work colleagues.” She thrives on helping her team mates uncover their own strengths too. “Every person has something they are great at and finding and harnessing this, allowing them to do something they love and can be successful at, is a powerful building block in any team. We’ve been thrown an unprecedented curved ball and business will probably never be the same again. I have no doubt we will come out the other side stronger, more connected, more adaptable and more in touch with what we need to build a stronger more resilient community.”

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