



**Nelson Mandela
Metropolitan
University**

for tomorrow



mechanical shape symbolises engineering, while the organic flow
evolution of younger women, moulded by their mentors to grow
an idea from the initial concept stages to the actual realisation of
initiative to change the engineering sector and establish a support
system from mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical
tower-like shape represents femininity. The logo symbolises
for mentors to grow into successful engineers. It also represents
concept stages to the actual realisation of an idea to change
the engineering sector and establish a support system from
mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical tower-like
shape represents femininity. The logo symbolises for
mentors to grow into successful

INSPIRATIONAL women

Second edition

*A woman must not depend
upon the protection of anyone, but
must be taught to protect herself.*

Susan B. Anthony, women's activist



wela – growing women in the engineering field

The women in engineering leadership association (wela) was initiated with the purpose of assisting and encouraging female students and women to excel in the traditionally male-dominated field of engineering. This has resulted in wela being a multi-cultural and diverse group of young women who are aspiring engineers and working women.

wela's mission is to offer a diverse range of support and developmental services. This is a unique developmental and support programme. Typically, those joining the programme want to make a difference in their community and this can be done through the drive these women have to succeed and conquer the engineering field.

wela focuses solely on the empowerment of young women who are aspiring engineers and working women. From the feedback received from our initial cohort of wela girls and industry partners, it is evident that wela is making a difference in the lives of women by inspiring, motivating and developing them.

The programme is structured to develop female students and women engineers on an academic, personal and professional level. Throughout the year we make it our aim to assist and guide the wela students through their studies by hosting various workshops, interventions and discussion panels.

wela was proud to welcome 15 dedicated and motivated students into their 2011 programme. These students participated in a number of workshops, namely the "7 Choices for Successful women" as well as a Chata Romano workshop. The students also participated in student counselling workshops focusing on their strengths and weaknesses, assertiveness and conflict management. All were useful tools that they may need when working in a typically male-dominated environment.

This year we are proud to incorporate a leadership development programme for the senior wela group, including a number of more technically orientated workshops and a technical project. The activities planned provide a more holistic approach to the field of engineering.

wela continues to grow from strength to strength and it is through partnerships with the women featured in this booklet that we are able to continue growing. We are proud to present the second edition of "inspirational women" in the engineering field of the Eastern Cape and trust you will enjoy reading it and find it as inspirational as we do.

Dr Ann Lourens
HOD: Industrial Engineering
Project Leader wela



Ashley Kleinhans

Think Blue Engineer

Volkswagen South Africa

What do you do?

I work as a Think Blue Engineer at Volkswagen South Africa. I have just completed my masters in Neuromorphic Engineering at the University of Cape Town and am now doing my doctorate through the Mechatronics Department at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

What is most challenging about your job?

I work with projects that will increase efficiency and decrease our effect on the environment (closed loop cycles). This means a change of thinking and not very many people change their thinking easily.

Every day is different, starting a task and finishing it is the most challenging thing. I work hard not to lose focus because there is so much happening. Another tough side of this work is putting your heart and soul into a requested project, only to be told that the budget is no longer available or has been reallocated.

Describe a typical day

It is very hard to describe a typical day as they are never the same. Every project is different and every task is different – whether it be sorting out a blocked drain, designing a facility or ensuring a supplier makes it through our legal and financial requirements. I guess a “typical day” begins at 7.30am when I plug in my laptop and look at the items on my to-do list from the previous day (it normally piles up as the week goes on); I follow up with projects and their current positions, I fight for budget or sign off concepts and book and attend meetings concerned with plant issues.

What advice would you give to women entering a male dominated career environment?

Don't think about the fact that you are a girl. Sure, you might not be able to pick up heavy stuff but that doesn't mean you

can't do what any other man can. Our tools are computers, not mallets and don't let anyone make you believe otherwise.

Men and woman are not in competition. If they can figure that out and start working as teams, there is so very much they can accomplish.

Keep it professional! Don't flirt, dress your part, wear pretty things and make up (you are a girl) but do it discreetly. This is work environment so leave the tight-fitting clothes and low-cut necklines for other occasions.

Learn to understand that the men in the room will probably not hear your voice the first time. Speak clearly and directly and have faith in your words. DO NOT mix business and pleasure. DO NOT take things personally as women tend to get so uptight. The working world is tough, but you're in the position because people believe you can do it. Now show them that they have made the best choice.

When it comes to pay, know your worth and ask for it. Women contribute 46% towards individual tax in this country and are a force to be reckoned with.

Finally, try not to gossip or talk too much. Instead, listen more.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I like off-road motorcycling, surfing, walking the dogs, reading books, watching movies and series. I recently took up ballroom dancing, which is awesome!

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

You need a thick skin and technical skills. I would have loved to have had more technical skills when I started fresh out of

university. In an academic environment you need to be able to think logically but, being a woman, you can think out of the box so use it. You need to be organised. Every person should understand their rights and what legal matters apply to them. A business law course I took at varsity has worked wonders.

You need a degree (BTech / BSc / BEng) in engineering (civil / mechanical / electrical and, in my particular case, mechatronics).

What are your goals for the future?

To get my PrEng and CEM, PhD, lecture at NMMU, do my bit for the environment (through my job), supervise students and maybe have a family one day.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

It has its days, and is sometimes frustrating. I have learnt to find the guys who do not discriminate and, if it's important, ask them to talk on my behalf. Sometimes your voice is lost.

I used to take it personally, now I just think it's funny because every important man has a secretary (who tends to be a woman) who they couldn't live without.

We still have a long way to go with gender inequality ie income, positions, voice etc. Either way, without women who are willing to work and make a difference, this will never change.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

I was a paramedic at one point, and have always wanted to be a trauma doctor so I think that's what I would be doing.

*Men and woman
are not in
competition.*





Sarisha Hurrisunker

Civil Technician

Aurecon

What do you do?

I work at Aurecon in Port Elizabeth where I am a junior civil engineering technician. I am responsible for assisting my project leaders in the design of civil engineering services. I also produce drawings and measure quantities for cost estimates on different projects together with administration duties that accompany the design tasks.

What is most challenging about your job?

The most challenging part of my job is being able to take what I learnt at university and apply it to find design solutions that are practical enough for the field. I also find site work challenging as I am not accustomed to the weather conditions. However, I do understand it is a vital part of my learning and will aid my growth and experience in the office in completing designs.

Describe a typical day

A typical day begins with reporting to my line manager/engineer whom I am working for on a particular project. He briefs me on the tasks I need to complete and gives me a deadline to meet. These tasks may be design calculations, cost estimations, drawings or administration for the project. If there are any questions or uncertainties I return to the engineer

to clarify the work. I am also a member of our company's social committee where we plan and organise team building activities for the staff to enjoy. This is done during lunch or after hours.

What advice would you give to women entering a male dominated career environment?

There's no need to be afraid or feel intimidated; know your worth and be confident yet graceful in all you do. We should not want to prove who the superior gender is but understand that both rely on each other's strengths to be successful. Balance brings harmony. I believe this thinking will create a positive and fresh environment in any work place.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I spend time relaxing with my two older sisters and parents. Family is most important to me.

I am learning how to play the piano and read music. I thoroughly enjoy cooking and watching the food network. I practise raja yoga meditation at the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University and enjoy cycling at the gym.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

You need a National Diploma in Civil Engineering. It consists of four semesters (six months each) of theory and 12 months of in-service training. After you have completed the first year of theory, you have a choice between in-service training and the second year of theory. I recommend completing the in-service training before the second year of theory as the subjects require practical insight in the work place in order

to successfully finish the course. Experience in the work place makes it easier to study and produce quality projects. I regret completing my second year theory before in-service training as it made it difficult for me to understand without being in the field.

What are your goals for the future?

I am currently completing my BTech in urban engineering at NMMU. I aim to graduate in 2013 with this qualification. My career goal for the future is to register as a professional civil engineering technologist with the Engineering Council of South Africa. I also would love to work overseas for a short period to gain experience and return to South Africa to share and grow in the civil engineering field.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

My understanding is that I am largely responsible for creating the environment I work in. My approach is that I am here to learn and gain experience from my colleagues and not to prove that a female can be a better engineer. Therefore, I enjoy working in this environment. It forces me to constantly re-assess myself and learn to control my emotions and to work together to successfully execute a task rather than competing. I must add that my colleagues help me to create this environment and allow me to be myself and help me to grow. I feel very lucky in this regard.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

I would love to develop my creative abilities and pursue a career as a florist and design floral arrangements for events and special occasions.

... rely on each other's strengths to be successful ...

Ntombi Ntuli

Project Controller
Spar Eastern Cape

What do you do?

I am project controller at Spar Eastern Cape. This means I combine my industrial engineering skills with project management in order to improve working standards in the distribution warehouse.

What is most challenging about your job?

Industrial engineering is mostly involved in improvements with a production company, e.g. line speed, line balancing, improvements in targets etc. When you get to a logistics company, where your demand changes every day, and your set standards might not be required, that becomes a challenge because you have to find a balance somewhere.

Describe a typical day

I get to work and print out reports from the previous day's work. These reports include productivity of the workforce in all different departments within the warehouse. From these stats, I ascertain trends in the overall performance and try to find ways of improving working conditions which in turn leads to improvement in performance. From the same reports I determine the number of staff required for that day. This all requires spending time on the floor and conducting time studies to set standards.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Males always have that perception that they can do a better job because they have more muscles than women. Fortunately for us, having to use your physical strength doesn't count for much

anymore, but using your intellectual ability and analytical skills counts for everything. My advice: take their remarks with a smile, and do what's required of you, show them what you're made of and make sure you always do an exceptional job.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I like spending time with friends and having a braai, if it means going to the beach to host it, then that's where I'll be the whole day.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

The minimum requirement is a National Diploma in Industrial Engineering. You need to be a person who is active because this work requires you to walk around and do investigations in order to get the best results. You need to be willing to go the extra mile and be able to spend up to six hours of your day standing on your feet doing time studies. You need to have good communication and presentation skills as people need to be able to understand what message you're bringing to them as well as the ability to convince them of whatever proposals/suggestions you might have. Don't be afraid to make suggestions just simply because you're not sure if your idea will work.

What are your goals for the future?

I would like to have my own firm of industrial engineering consultants. I believe that once you have gathered enough experience in different working environments with industrial engineering studies as your background, you can consult in

any company. I believe that all companies need industrial engineers - sometimes they just do not know it. You just need to find it and make that company believe it.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

You need to work twice as hard at first to prove that you are capable of doing what's required of you. Only then will people give you the respect you deserve.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

I'd most probably be a lawyer. Somehow I find it fascinating conducting an argument on someone's behalf.

*... physical strength
does not count
for much ...*





Alison Rademan

Industrial Engineering Manager Continental Tyre SA

What do you do?

I am the IE (Industrial Engineering) Manager at Continental Tyre. I am responsible for the following departments: IE; Safety, Health and Environment (SHE); Factory Clinic; Security, including investigations of theft and fraud; POPI (Protection of Personal Information) Act; Ethics, Medical Aid and Provident Fund Trustee

What is most challenging about your job?

Time management is hugely challenging due to the vast number of departments and variability of the work. It's also challenging ensuring that all employees in the department feel that you are aware of their problems and will assist them regardless of how busy you are. Your employees are your most important asset. They need to feel that you care and are aware of their aspirations.

Describe a typical day

Our alarm goes off at 05h15. I leave home at about 06h15. I try to commence work at 06h30 answering e-mails and catching up with all outstanding issues. At 07h30 my departments have their morning meetings. I try and attend all four to ensure any messages that are required to be relayed are taken care of. At 07h50 the department managers come to my office to discuss problems and obtain signatures of documents, invoices etc.

I then commence my other meetings. At Conti we have introduced the Mission Directed Work Teams, known as MDT. At 08h20 I attend the Mixing MDT 2 (this meeting is a cross functional meeting of all departments where problems relating to a particular department are discussed in

depth). The product manager responsible for the department is the person responsible for this meeting. I attend as their mentor.

The MDT pillars are: speed, quality, cost and morale (includes SHE).

From this meeting, the product manager and I rush to MDT 3 (this is the next level of cross functional managers) trying to resolve any issues that could not be resolved at the MDT 2. The managers from each area discuss their issues and we, as mentors, also have an opportunity to discuss issues from our departments. This meeting is coordinated by the plant manager.

The managers from each division then attend a meeting with our manager, known as MDT 4. At Conti this meeting is known as the "Boy's Club". I have been the only woman since the structure was introduced. This is the meeting where decisions are made. It normally ends at noon.

We then commence our day again. The afternoons are taken up with various meetings and once again dealing with our own departmental problems and compilation of reports. I try to leave work before 18h00.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Be extremely well organised.

Make sure that you stay ahead and do not leave work for another day as it just adds to the problems for the next day.

Make sure you meet all due dates.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I enjoy playing tennis with my husband. We also cycle and sail together. Relaxation is very important.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

A degree in industrial engineering and a qualification in safety or environment.

You require common sense, an ability to make decisions (most of which are not very popular), determination and very broad shoulders.

The position I hold does not make you very popular and this could lead to a very lonely work life.

What are your goals for the future?

Take an overseas assignment with Conti.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

It was a lot more difficult when I first started at Conti. They thought I would be a push over and my nickname was "Sweet Pea". They soon realised this was not the case. Meetings used to commence with "Good Morning gents". The only consideration I am given is that should they swear, they do apologise to me.

If you weren't in your particular career, what would you be?

I would not choose another career, but if I had to I would be a lawyer.

After my working career I am going to sail the Med and Caribbean with my husband in our yacht.

... I would not choose
another career ...

Anna-Marie Claassen

Specialist Industrial Engineer, Strategic Business Development
Schnellecke South Africa (Pty) Ltd

What do you do?

I am an industrial engineer working at Schnellecke SA, a logistics service provider. I started at the VWSA plant in May 2009 working in the planning department. I was part of the VW New Logistics Concept (NLC) team that designed and implemented a new logistics supply method for the new Polo. Since January 2011, I have been working in the Lean Department at Schnellecke as a workshop facilitator, responsible for improving the logistics processes of the company.

What is most challenging about your job?

The most challenging part of my job is changing the mindset of employees from a traditional way of thinking to Lean thinking. The biggest challenge is to get buy-in from employees who are set in their ways when implementing process improvements. Sustainability after implementation is another challenge I face daily.

Describe a typical day

The objective of the Lean Department is to educate and train the employees on Lean principles, with the aim of changing the culture in the work environment from traditional manufacturing to Lean thinking. During the workshop the employees are trained to practically apply the Lean principles and tools. The workshop itself focuses on identifying problem solving skills to eliminate waste in order to achieve process improvements. A typical day, therefore, includes training employees, guiding them to identify waste and facilitate their process improvement ideas. I apply various project management and industrial skills such as line balancing, problem solving and process design in my daily tasks as the workshop facilitator.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

The ability to perform a given job is based on your character and personal strengths, therefore, gender does not play a role in

the work place. Men can do a typically female job and in some cases they can do it even better than women, for example a male hairstylist. If women are interested in engineering and have the required characteristics, they should definitely pursue the career.

Furthermore, I believe you should be yourself, keep your feminine touch and never give up when faced with a challenge. You only have to prove that you are capable to perform the job as a colleague and not because you are a woman.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I play club hockey for Despatch, The Eagles, during the winter season. I recently started playing tennis socially. Other than my interest in various sports, I enjoy camping and hiking as I have a deep appreciation for nature and what it has to offer.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

To qualify as an industrial engineer you must obtain a National Diploma in Industrial Engineering. This is a minimum requirement. Completing a BTech in Industrial Engineering is highly recommended.

Based on my experience, I believe you need to be a good communicator. The reason is that you are dealing with all levels of employees and therefore, need to be able to converse with and persuade employees in the organisation from the shop floor to director level.

Good problem-solving skills, analytical thinking and application of logic are also fundamental characteristics of an industrial engineer. But perhaps most important of all is that you should have an interest in and an aptitude for mathematics and science.

What are your goals for the future?

During 2012 I will move to a different department, namely, the

Business Development Department that focuses specifically on acquiring new business for the company. My goal is to develop experience on the business aspects of a company. I would also like to enrol for an MBA degree in the near future.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

In my opinion, males will always be sceptical when women enter "their environment", but once you have proven that you are capable and have the ability to perform the job properly, they will accept you. I enjoy working with my male colleagues and they have accepted me as part of the team. At work, the focus is not on gender but on the job at hand and how the team with its diverse abilities and strengths can achieve the objective. Even though they consider us one of them, we are still respected as women, and they treat us like gentlemen should.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

This is a difficult question. I enjoy being an industrial engineer and currently would not change my career. However, in future, I would consider lecturing.

*... never give up
when faced with
a challenge ...*





Zukiswa Dikana

Parts Quality Engineer
Mercedes Benz South Africa

What do you do?

I am a parts quality engineer - interior trim in the Quality Department at Mercedes Benz South Africa (MBSA). Some of the tasks my job entails are analytical investigations into vehicle body and trim, management of introduction of new parts for new models, resolving problems in plant and warranty concerns, performing audits and project planning. The main part of my work is production support.

What is most challenging about your job?

Today the management of projects is key to every area of business. There are many stages, processes and applications, therefore communication and reporting is important. You can have the best team members, the finest methodology but when there is lack of communication all the pieces can fall down. For me, all the challenges I encounter are learning points. The greater the challenges (in terms of people, systems and processes), the more interesting the job becomes.

Describe a typical day

The day starts very early by reviewing the previous day's challenges and investigating problem components and processes. We monitor production volumes and what affects the output and targets. The main part of the job is to ensure that production runs effectively with zero or minimal problems. This means we must be available at all the times to support.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Women have to work extra hard to prove that they are able. We not only have to prove that we know what we are doing, but that we can do it as well as our male counterparts. And because of this, we are open to more learning and great opportunities because of our enthusiasm and effort. Women are gaining ground in these environments and the percentages are gradually increasing.

If anyone, male or female, is passionate about a certain field, they will do whatever it takes to be successful. But women also have more to their lives than a career like managing the home and family i.e. being a mother and a wife. My advice is to mentally drop the male/female stereotype. No customer ever bought a car because it was female or male manufactured.

It's advisable to be absolutely great at what you do, totally professional, trustworthy, honest and confident. Keep your "eye on the prize", whatever you want to achieve, and go for it.

What do you do when you are not at work?

I take time to relax and enjoy my family. I love to cook and spend a great deal of time trying out new recipes. I would also like to travel more this year and learn about our beautiful country.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

I did a National Diploma in Polymer Technology and furthered my studies with a BTech in Quality at NMMU. To drive yourself

further in the field you can do a project management or business management course.

You need to be very confident and focused and believe in yourself all the time because you are the only person who is responsible for your success and achievements. Equip yourself with additional skills such as Power Point presentation, interpersonal skills and time management. Remember that we all start somewhere; even the most successful people started somewhere and worked their way up. Do not be afraid to start new things, change normal ways and suggest new ideas.

What are your goals for the future?

My goal is to study further in my field and to learn another language which will help me deal more effectively with overseas counterparts. Eventually I want a business that will help empower young people and give them the opportunity to start somewhere.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

It feels very powerful and challenging. One thing that is important is to remain a proud woman and never try to blend in to feel accepted or able. I do not compromise my intellect by making someone else feel manly.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

I would still be in a spontaneous, challenging and interesting environment. Whether it is public, private or business, as long as I am passionate about it and it makes me happy, I would be there.

“ ... remain a
proud woman ... ”

Lindsay Botha

Project Engineer
Eveready(Pty) Ltd

What do you do?

I am a project engineer at Eveready.

What is most challenging about your job?

I would have to say playing devil's advocate. Often you are given a project to run with which you may not agree with but you have to take ownership and run with it as if it were your own. This can be very difficult. Remember you are hired to do a specific job and need to act on the instructions given. I am not saying that you can't question why, but at the end of the day if the decision is made to go ahead with a project, the job needs to be done.

Describe a typical day

Meeting – action plans for the day; plant walk; address issues/ problem solving; administration; planning; wrapping up.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Don't be intimidated by male colleagues; they will be more intimidated by a female entering their field. Actions speak louder than words; show them what you are capable of and they will give you the respect you deserve.

What do you do when you are not at work?

Scrapbooking, quad biking, water skiing and outdoor activities.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

An engineering degree, preferably mechanical or electrical. A project management course would be beneficial but not essential. You need to be a person who can work in a team while leading it. You need to be a people's person, as you deal with people all day.

Other characteristics needed:

- ▶ Discipline
- ▶ Attention to detail
- ▶ Organised
- ▶ Quick thinker
- ▶ Multi-task – be able to co-ordinate a number of projects/jobs at the same time
- ▶ Rational and logical

What are your goals for the future?

I would like to broaden my experience in other aspects of engineering and use this knowledge to move up in the engineering field.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

This depends a great deal on the type of person you are. I am used to being around guys and their different sense of humour. As long as you can take a joke and laugh with them, you'll get along fine. There is no reason why working with males should be any different to working with females. It is all about different cultures, races and personalities getting along with each other and working through the dynamics of the group.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

I have always enjoyed Maths and Physics and had I not studied engineering, I would still have done something along those lines.

*...show them
what you are
capable of ...*





Laverne Louis

Industrial Engineer
Haldan Consulting

What do you do?

I am an industrial engineer working as a consultant for Haldan Consulting, a company focused on the provision of solutions and training for shop floor effectiveness. My responsibilities involve project management, stock control, hardware and software installations, training and consulting.

What is most challenging about your job?

Training is the most challenging part of my job, having to connect and communicate effectively with different people of different ages and languages.

Describe a typical day

For me a typical day does not exist, and that is what I love most about my job.

It varies from building panels to excel spread sheets of budgets, to stock control, support calls, consulting, productivity studies, reports, training and meetings.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Watch your attitude: Some woman can be overly aggressive, as if to prove that they are just as worthy as a male co-worker. If you are a smart, confident woman in a male-dominated industry, your intelligence and work product should speak for itself.

Dress the part: It's okay to wear cute dresses and skirts, just don't show too much skin. You will already stand out by being a woman; hence you don't want to stand out by dressing inappropriately.

Find a mentor: Seek a mentor within the organisation. Don't be afraid to reach out to females/males in senior positions.

Always do your best: Women in male-dominated fields typically have to work harder to prove themselves. You should remain positive and confident in who you are and what you stand for and the work you do.

Don't give up: Gender discrimination can happen in any workplace, how you deal with it will help your future success. I have been there - doubting my ability, performance and potential all because of one or two particularly harsh conversations where I was discriminated against. Keep things positive and reflect upon all of the positive projects you've worked on.

What do you do when you are not at work?

Besides spending time in the shopping malls, I enjoy swimming, dancing and exercising. I'm also an active member of the Salem Moravian Band. I've been playing the trumpet for the past 13 years. Our band doubles up as a community band which means we are requested to perform at various occasions throughout the year. It keeps us very busy.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

A National Diploma in Industrial Engineering with the following characteristics:

- ▶ Good communication skills
- ▶ Good people skills
- ▶ Must be a team player
- ▶ Creative

- ▶ Be able to work diligently on your own
- ▶ Problem solving skills
- ▶ Initiative
- ▶ Ability to analyse and investigate reports

What are your goals for the future?

I'd like to complete my BTech in Industrial Engineering.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

I think I have been very lucky as both my employers are males and most of the project managers have been excellent mentors. Every day at work had its own challenges as a female but with their excellent leadership and guidance it was easier to overcome any challenge thrown my way.

I have been stared at, doubted and questioned with regards to my ability to do "male tasks", but I've never allowed it to get the better of me. I have proved that I have the ability and this gave me great satisfaction.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

All high school teachers ask this question: "What would you like to be when you grow up?"

For four years my answer was a chartered accountant. I have been an industrial engineer for seven years, and do not regret the career path I have chosen.

*Find
a mentor ...*

Susan Piron

Quality Control Manager
Fresenius Kabi Manufacturing SA (Pty) Ltd

What do you do?

I am currently employed as a quality control manager for a pharmaceutical company that manufactures sterile products.

What is most challenging about your job? Or, what is the most challenging part of your job?

Time management and the ability to prioritise is the most challenging part of my job. Quality control encompasses a number of disciplines and that is part of what makes it so exciting.

Describe a typical day

Busy, busy, busy! The day normally starts with planning for the day with regards to work output, staff and production. There are at least two other meetings during the day, assisting with problems encountered in the various areas of responsibility. I always try to make a "to do" list as soon as I get to work as this keeps me focused on important issues that must get attention. I also try to set at least one to two hours aside during the day to work on projects and improvements in my areas.

What advice would you give to women entering a male-dominated career environment?

Do what you enjoy and what you are passionate about first. If you then happen to go into an environment where males dominate, be yourself, be committed and prove that you are equal, if not better, in what you do. Never hesitate to ask questions. Absorb information, actions and learning like a sponge. Always keep in mind that ultimately you and your male colleagues are working towards the same goals for your organisation.

What do you do when you are not at work?

When I get time, I like scuba diving, tennis and road running.

What characteristics and qualifications do you need for your current position?

At the very least, you need a degree in Science, with further studies and experience in Quality Management and Lead Auditing. You also need a passion for quality in all spheres, from ensuring compliance to specifications using statistical

methodologies, through to the human aspect of teamwork, encouraging learning and continuous improvement.

What are your goals for the future?

To complete my PhD / DTech and to do my first half-marathon. I just don't know which one will come first.

What is it like being a female in a typically male-dominated environment?

In many ways it is much easier than you would think. There is less emotion involved and much more clinical and critical thinking and action. Being female does give an additional perspective on issues that men often tend not to think about and this adds positively to team dynamics.

If you weren't in your particular career what would you be?

A geologist.

*... equal
if not better ...*



2012 wela activities

Bronze passport members

- ▶ Launch
- ▶ Student counselling developmental workshops
 - True colours
 - Strengths and weaknesses
 - Assertiveness
 - Portfolio development
- ▶ Chata Romano workshop
- ▶ 7 Choices workshop

Silver passport members

- ▶ Portfolio presentation/prize giving
- ▶ Mentorship
- ▶ Leadership
- ▶ Technical project
- ▶ Lean workshop
- ▶ Project management

Formal planned activities for all wela participants

- ▶ Self defence
- ▶ Panel discussion
- ▶ Personal care

Working wela

- ▶ 7 Choices for successful women
- ▶ Being a women in the workplace
- ▶ Dialogue with your purse
- ▶ Project Management
- ▶ Lean Workshop

Bursaries are also made available to wela students.



THE LOGO: A metamorphosis from mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical shape symbolises engineering, while the organic flower-like shape represents femininity. The logo symbolises the evolution of younger women, moulded by their mentors to grow into successful engineers. It also represents the evolution of an idea from the initial concept stages to the actual realisation of an engineering project. The logo radiates the association's initiative to change the engineering sector and establish a support structure for women in engineering.

Wela is the Xhosa word for change/transition.

(logo design: Milla Theron, NMMU Graphic Design student)

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