



Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa boosts black women to leadership roles



Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa (CCBSA) has announced that it has increased black women representation in leadership roles and senior management, from 89% in 2020 to 94% representation in 2021. This is reflective of CCBSA's commitment to real transformation at board level and in its operations, as well as making a sustainable economic contribution to the country's broader developmental agenda.

CCBSA has retained its level 1 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) status. The company attributes this achievement to women empowerment, as well as strategic investments in procurement which saw an increased spend with black-owned suppliers from 50% to just over 61% of its total adjusted procurement

spend — of which 34% is with black females.

CCBSA launched Women@CCBSA in 2018, a women-led network which creates a space for women to engage, coach and mentor each other and ensure they reach their full potential. CCBSA further provides bursaries and other learning opportunities for women and disadvantaged young people within the communities it serves.

Two women leaders at Africa's largest soft-drink bottler, Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa, reflect on what it means to experience South Africa's path to gender equality and empower the future leaders of tomorrow.



Nozicelo Ngcobo

The Director of Public Affairs, Communication and Sustainability at CCBSA is organised, dedicated and committed. Ngcobo believes in building a strong foundation from which anything is possible.

Growing up in KwaZulu-Natal, Nozicelo Ngcobo always thought she would become a medical doctor. Instead, the field of marketing and strategy piqued her curiosity and she has gone on to have an incredible 27-year corporate career with companies like Sasol, Telkom, SAB, Philip Morris International and Tiger Brands, before joining CCBSA in 2020 as Director of Public Affairs, Communication and Sustainability.

She believes in setting goals and being focused. Ngcobo says going to boarding school at the age of 12 was a defining moment in her life.

"I learnt at an early age about the importance of having a plan, of having a goal, of prioritising, pursuing your dreams and allowing nothing to distract you. No matter how difficult things got, no matter how much I missed my family — I had a goal of getting good grades, excelling in school, passing and becoming a doctor.

"I like getting the foundation right. I believe that if you get the basics right, the options are endless," says Ngcobo. "In my view it's better to control your destiny rather than to be responding to things and always being reactive."

With an MBA, BCom and numerous qualifications to her name, some friends refer to Ngcobo as a "serial academic". She credits this to her insatiable curiosity.

"I have a very curious mind. I constantly seek answers and I find learning to be extremely stimulating mentally. The idea of unpacking a topic and bringing it back

together or solving a problem is fascinating to me."

Ngcobo joined CCBSA in March 2020, just weeks before the country went into Covid-19 lockdown on March 27.

"I had to learn a lot, and very quickly, so I could be effective in my job. This time allowed me to appreciate my resilience and my agility. Being new in the business, and in a very senior role, in the middle of Covid-19 and the lockdown felt like being thrown in the deep end," she says.

Ngcobo is driven by finding real impact solutions, especially when it comes to real community problems which align with her personal values.

"It's about that sweet spot where as a corporate we can address challenges and help communities. Sometimes we are in a position to deliver and provide a solution. As businesses we cannot win if our communities are not successful and striving."

She says the work CCBSA does in addressing water issues, given that South Africa is a water-stressed country, is a source of pride for her. Establishing boreholes to support communities is a good example of this. CCBSA boreholes support over 10,000 families, and more are being drilled to reach even more communities.

Addressing plastic pollution is another significant project that CCBSA works on in partnership with organisations such as the African Reclaimers Organisations (ARO), which has Ngcobo's full support.



Agatha Masemola

The Strategy and Performance Director at CCBSA believes that everyone has a role to play in creating positive change and to build a more sustainable future.

Agatha Masemola joined CCBSA in April 2020 from Absa Corporate and Investment Bank (CIB) Africa, where she held various roles over the past nine years as a Strategy Consultant and Chief of Staff within the Corporate Banking business.

She was a key figure in the build-out of the corporate banking business across Africa. Masemola holds a PhD in Medical Biochemistry from the University of Cape Town and has completed post-doctoral research in South Africa and the US.

Masemola believes that all have a role to play in creating positive change and to build a more sustainable future. This includes a strong emphasis on economic inclusion, driven by procurement and enterprise development to develop women and youth-owned businesses. According to Masemola, the South African landscape is rapidly changing.

Masemola said that some of the shifts in the business in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic ensured that she could provide clarity for her team and offer assurance about organisation-wide plans to manage the business during the uncertain times.

"With that clarity, it was also important to empower my team to focus on delivering their objectives," she says. "I always maintain that the role of a leader is to transmit clarity to teams, empower the team by removing execution roadblocks and unlock organisational networks to help emerging leaders build relationships with their peers and senior executives."

Agatha leads a team of specialist consultants who work from various

locations, and in the past relied on travel for physical interactions when necessary. While the team is accustomed to working in an office environment, the nature of their work means they could successfully work remotely and still deliver exceptional performance.

"With extended lockdowns, they very swiftly adapted to working from home and established routines to ensure they remain connected and proactively sought to build relationships with other people in the business," she says. "The good news is that my team led a piece of work to understand how megatrends will shape the operating environment. One of those trends is the New Ways of Working project, and the Covid-19 pandemic offered an opportunity to fast-track the migration of work from a physical office to the virtual office," she says.

Her team partnered with the human resources department to shape the New Ways of Work for CCBSA, premised on the idea that remote working will be a long-term feature, especially considering the multi-generational diversity of workplaces.

"To retain and attract millennials and Gen Z, it is important that organisations embrace flexible work arrangements," she adds. "That's exactly the recommendation that the team made to the leadership team, and after 15 months since the first lockdown, I am confident that we have embraced the new ways of working across all generations and have created a work environment that is agile, embraces change but, most importantly, considers the views of all employees and acts on those," Masemola says.



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