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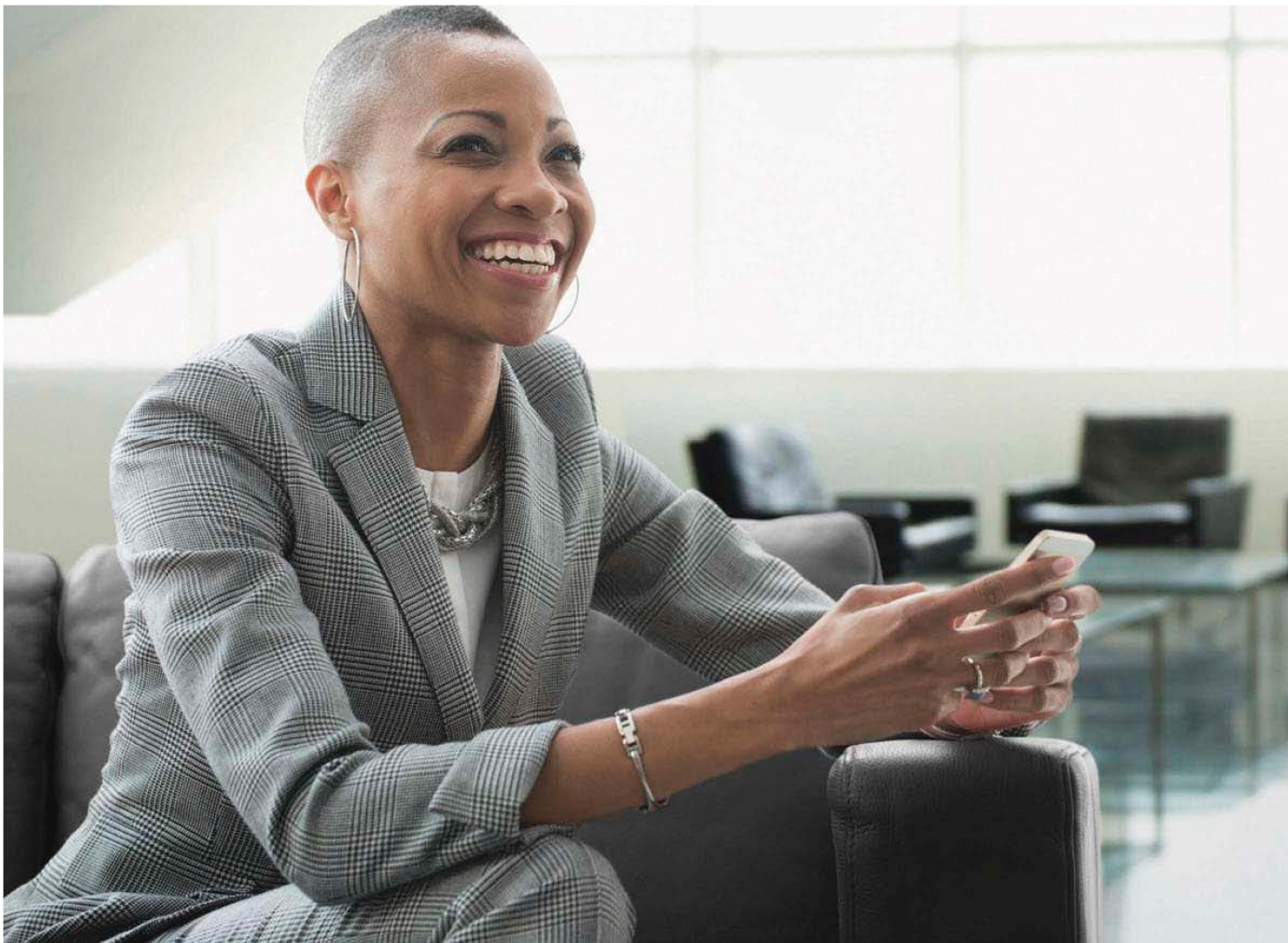


Executive intelligence

10 ways to practise CAREER EXCELLENCE

AS DECEMBER APPROACHES AND YOU EVALUATE
THE TRIUMPHS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS OF 2018,
ADOPT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES AND BELIEFS TO
ACHIEVE GREATER SUCCESS IN THE COMING YEAR

BY Kibo Ngowi



MANAGE YOUR ENERGY

Jessica Matthysen, Head of Customer Success for Alexander Forbes Empower, says learning to manage not just her time, but also her energy was invaluable in helping her climb the corporate ladder. “We each have moments of heightened energy and awareness – our peaks – as well as moments when our bodies and minds need rest. Identify when you’re most productive for specific tasks. I know I’m best at creative writing when I’m preparing to sleep and at answering emails in the morning, but I’m on auto-pilot from 3–5pm. Knowing when I’m the best me means I can be more efficient.”

CHANGE YOUR HABITS, NOT YOURSELF

“The trick to changing any habit is recognising that your identity – that elaborate mental framework you devised in your mind and labelled ‘me’ – doesn’t actually exist,” says Mark Manson, an American self-help author, blogger and entrepreneur. “It’s arbitrary. It’s a façade – and it can be raised or dropped at will. You aren’t unproductive: you’re a person who currently chooses to do things that don’t feel useful. And changing that is as simple as changing your actions, one at a time. Forget about labelling it. The quickest way to change yourself is to realise that there’s no real self to change.”

BE MINDFUL, NOT MINDLESS

“Mindfulness is the process of actively noticing new things,” says Ellen Langer, a professor of psychology at Harvard University, USA, who’s renowned for her pioneering work in mindfulness theory. “When you do that, it puts you in the present. It makes you more sensitive to context and perspective. It’s the essence of engagement and it’s energy-begetting, not energy-consuming. The mistake most people make is assuming that it’s stressful and exhausting doing all this thinking. But what’s really stressful are all the mindless, negative evaluations we make and the worry that we’ll encounter problems and not be able to solve them.”

DON’T UNDERRATE SOFT SKILLS

A report by the McKinsey Global Institute predicts that by 2030, as many as 800 million jobs could be lost worldwide to automation. Daniel Schwartzkopff, co-founder of machine learning company DataProphet, says careers which won’t be replaced anytime soon are those which involve dealing with people and require emotional intelligence, such as psychology. Jobs that require thinking and planning, such as management, are also less vulnerable. “About 94% of executives surveyed in a recent study agreed that when administrative tasks are automated, the demand for jobs that require soft skills, such as creative problem-solving, collaboration and communication, will grow,” he says.

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COMMUNICATE
PROGRESS EFFICIENTLY

“Daily 15-minute stand-up sessions, also referred to as ‘scrums’, are an ‘agile’ approach that’s proving hugely beneficial for me and my teams,” says Enolicia Strever, Senior IT Project Manager at Liberty Life and a top 25 finalist in the Tammy Taylor Mrs SA 2018 competition. “This is a quick and focused session that unpacks what we achieved collectively the day before. We review what we’re doing next and assess whether there are any roadblocks to overcome. Through these sessions, my entire team’s aware of their responsibilities and it’s a perfect way to get them to talk, engage and get things done far quicker.”

BE YOUR OWN BEST ADVISOR

“I talk myself through every tough decision and challenging situation because verbalising it, rather than just playing it out in my head, makes me feel that I can find the practicalities and pitfalls,” says Dominique Pienaar, CEO of DUO Marketing + Communications. “I once turned down an offer from my current employer and decided that what I wanted was a more involved role than was available at the time. When the founding CEO of the organisation asked me why I’d declined the offer, I explained my aspirations, having already verbalised them to myself. She not only respected my decision, but came back a few weeks later with another offer that would effectively change my career path and lead to my taking over as CEO.”

FOSTER GOOD
WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Malande Tonjeni, CEO of the Makole Group, says leading a large company has taught her the value of relationships. “I can’t over-emphasise the importance of creating good relationships with colleagues. Help others when you can, engage with them and value their opinions and contributions as individuals. When delivery of exceptional results is required, you need a team of hard-working, dedicated, focused people who’ll go the extra mile. You can’t sustain an exceptional level of performance alone.”

DEVELOP SELF-AWARENESS

“Self-awareness is the foundation,” says Jeanett Modise, Chief Human Resources Officer at Sanlam Investment Group. “Without it, the pursuit of success is frustrating. At various stages my mentors have served as a mirror for me and helped me understand myself better. In my view, in order to grow, reflection is vital. What do I enjoy? What are my skills and passions? Based on that knowledge, I make decisions on how to manage my development. Self-knowledge requires reflecting on your experiences, good and bad. In addition, it helps you learn from your mistakes.”

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

“I have very strong intuition and I listen to it every time it speaks to me,” says Amanda Dambuza, founder and Director of Uyandiswa, a consulting company she launched four years ago which now employs more than 70 people.

“There were times when I ignored that gut feeling – and things didn’t go well. So I decided always to follow my instincts and left a highly successful corporate career as a senior executive in order to start my own company, without a single client on my books. I had only R180 000 to put towards my business, but I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I’d make a success of my next chapter as an entrepreneur.”

EMBRACE DIFFICULTY

“I believe that success often comes when you see no way of succeeding, but refuse to give up. This mantra’s been a driver in both my personal and working life,” says Michelle Wynne, Head of Marketing: Sub-Saharan Africa at HMD Global. “During the formative years of my career, one of the most challenging tasks I had was participating in a global secondment programme split between Geneva in Switzerland and New York over a six-week period. The schedule was gruelling and the deadlines never-ending, working with colleagues I’d never met before and far from the support structure and comforts of home. That was the first time my personal mantra was tested. At the end of it, I returned home with a job well done and a foundation of personal belief.” **D**