

Leading the Pack

Wendy Luhabe – social entrepreneur, businesswoman and visionary – shares her personal career strategy

Luhabe's social initiatives include Baobab Mobile, a range of colourful, attractive mobile phones which come standard with two or three SIM cards, TV and Internet connection at very favourable prices and electronic cards, a selection of unique, exquisite African ecards for special occasions on a subscription basis of R300 per year for unlimited usage. Of this amount, 25% goes towards a charity for education and social entrepreneurship. Another of her initiatives is SABC3's *The Big Break* reality TV show.

You started out as a social entrepreneur in 1991 during the apartheid era. Where did your personal motivation come from to succeed in this difficult time?

In my early 20s, my father gave me the book *Your Erroneous Zones* by Wayne Dyer [Avon Books], which teaches that you can either live a life blaming the world, your parents and everything, or you can take responsibility for yourself. It taught me that if something didn't resonate with me, I needed to take action. In order to remain true to myself, I can close chapters and open new ones seamlessly. It's an anxiety for many people, but not for me.

What are the most important

lessons from your early career?

You need to know what your worth is in the world and you have to be prepared to fight for it because if you start out compromising, you can never snap out of it. That's what shapes your life. If you compromise on self-worth – and many women do, especially in relationships – it's very hard to recover. It becomes a vicious cycle.

How can women differentiate themselves in business?

Value yourself and have a clear understanding of your worth as a professional. If you don't, others will define it for you.

Many ambitious women still struggle to achieve a life-work balance. What advice would you give them?

Remember the big picture you have for your life. Have a game plan and set priorities throughout your career to further it. Feeling fulfilled isn't about time management, but about energy management. Commit energy – personally and professionally – only to those things that contribute to your big picture.

Which is more important, talent or drive?

Drive, absolutely. At a certain level,



talent and skill become a given. That's when drive and passion make all the difference; they take us beyond the realms of the ordinary.

What are the biggest mistakes you see women making in business?

All too often, women believe that hard work and dedication alone will help them get what they want. This isn't the case. We need to be explicit about what we want, understand the forces at play and know how to navigate them and network – both within the company and outside.

What advice would you give female leaders?

Empower people around you so they can empower you. You have a responsibility towards other women. When it comes to championing gender equality, our responsibilities start with what we do at home and carry through to what we do as business leaders.

What advice can you offer South African businesswomen and entrepreneurs?

Don't sell yourself short. Don't give your power away. Find the right fit, as opposed to fitting in. Never be afraid to dream big. Give fear a long-term sabbatical! **D**