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Why is "Why she leads" important?

It's important, because as leaders, particularly women leaders, we are ambassadors for a future generation of women who look to us to know that "It Can Be".

What are the biggest contributors to your success?

Authenticity and hard work. It's too exhausting to be someone you're not and you only allow people to see what really drives you and what you are passionate about when you are being you. Be prepared to put in time and effort. Success doesn't come without putting in the work, pushing the boundaries, sleep deprivation, failure, uncomfortable conversations and an eagerness to learn – all of this has played a part in getting me to where I am now.

What are challenges that women leaders face, especially in financial services?

Sadly, there are still a number of barriers, most notably gender bias and stereotypes, prevalent in the workplace. Even if barriers are unconscious ones, they hinder effective women leadership.

Why is women leadership so important?

Diverse perspectives in any organisation are critical for remaining relevant, profitable and adaptable. Women bring a different energy, perspective and emotion to an organisation that should be embraced, rather than shut down. Women were created differently, not inferior to men.

What role can male corporate leaders play to foster and grow women leaders?

We need more men as advocates, mentors and sponsors of women in organisations. Men need to visibly show their support. Men who are more inclusive and proactively collaborate with women have the opportunity to see a different perspective or a different solution to a problem.

Have you ever experienced imposter syndrome?

I think most women do, because we are our own worst enemies – we constantly question our ability or inability to do things. In my career, I've suffered such severe imposter syndrome that it completely disabled me from functioning optimally. I realised I needed support to work through the overwhelming feelings with the help of a life coach. I wasn't aware that imposter syndrome can manifest in different ways – it includes the pursuit of unattainable perfectionism, working all the time, not being able to accept a compliment, always doubting your ability and/or the solution you put forward. It can lead to burnout, so my advice is: don't let the imposter in!

What is the connection between leadership and mentorship?

I see them as being closely linked. Leadership naturally manifests into mentorship and vice versa. Leaders guide individuals as well as organisations and strategy. Mentors assist mentees to understand the bigger picture and how organisations work.

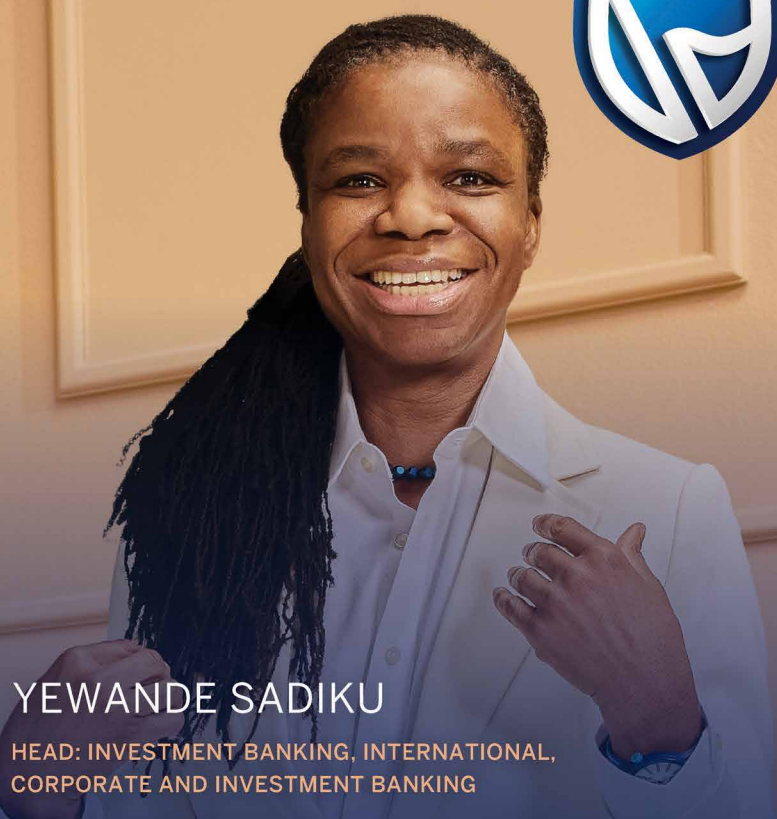
How should women show up for and support each other in the work environment?

As women in leadership positions, it's incumbent upon us to promote and uplift others. Women often aren't advocates for other women and they can be quite judgemental. We should stop this and refuse to engage in destructive behaviour.

"Every woman should be the network, the mentor, or the sponsor for other women. We cannot rely solely on men."

What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders?

I would say: be yourself and believe in yourself. You know what you are capable of, so go out and do just that. Work hard, find a network, learn the culture of your organisation and always act with integrity.



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Why is "Why she leads" important?

You can't open somebody's mind unless the person has examples of what is possible. "Why she leads" gives the role models. I also like the concept: She leads because she's been judged based on her age, gender and looks – rather than her ability and role. She knows the harm that unconscious biases can cause. That's why she leads.

What has been the value of mentorship in your life?

Formal programmes are useful for professional structure and objectives, but informal mentoring also works. I've even been mentored by many people I've never met, such as Nelson Mandela. I like the way he comported himself and I learnt from the way he dealt with difficult situations.

How do we focus on women leadership without alienating men?

We can't have more women leaders if we don't have men actively championing, supporting and sponsoring us. Men have more representation at almost every table, so we need them to address the imbalance. It doesn't need to be formal, but it does need to be done deliberately. We need men.

What are the biggest contributors to your success?

My support network of family and close friends, my tribe of fellow working mothers and the staff I have been lucky to have. The role models I've had in my career, both male and female, senior and junior to me – they have shown different admirable qualities. And the life skills that I have acquired along the way – they've given me options and kept me grounded; I think it is impossible to be truly successful as a woman if you aren't grounded.

What challenges do women face in the workplace?

A recent study shows while 29% of women now earn the same as their

spouses (up from 11% in 1972), women still do more for the home and family. We don't call it work because it's unpaid, but it is work. It's not easy to do more than one job and do both well. Many women just make it look that way.

Have you ever experienced imposter syndrome?

I battle with it more often than I admit. I also worry that people expect more of me than I'm capable of. These thoughts push me to spend a lot of time preparing, even for subjects that I know well. Then I push the thoughts of inadequacy out of my mind and face the task head on.

How do you handle negative feedback?

I ask myself how much preparation I really did, if I put in the right quality of effort, find out where I got it wrong, so I know what to do differently next time. I come away from negative feedback happy that I know, because I will work to ensure I never get that feedback again.

What are your thoughts on sponsorship in the workplace?

If you demonstrate ability and raise your hand, you'll find sponsors, even if it's not as part of a formal programme – bosses like people who deliver good quality, work well with others, and make their teams look good.

What advice would you give to the next generation of female leaders?

Balance is elusive. You'll drop some balls but try not to drop the most important balls. Stand up to be counted. You can't win the lottery without buying a ticket. Take some risks.

"Experience and skill always come in disguise, not on a platter of gold with a ribbon around it. If you want skills and experience, you must be ready to put in the work."

Stay grounded and be shameless about the high standard that you set for yourself and the output that you are known for.