



# 100 Lionesses Playbook

## Future of Work

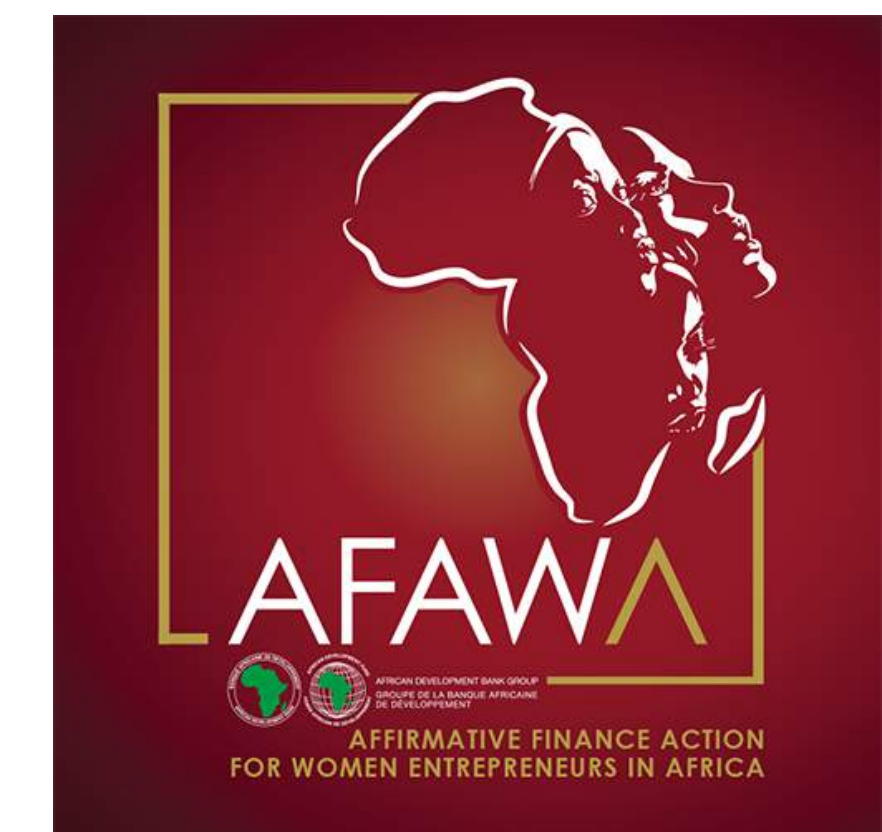
The future of work is happening now. Learn how to ensure your company is ready. 24 leading African women entrepreneurs share their own future of work playbooks.



**Lioness Data**

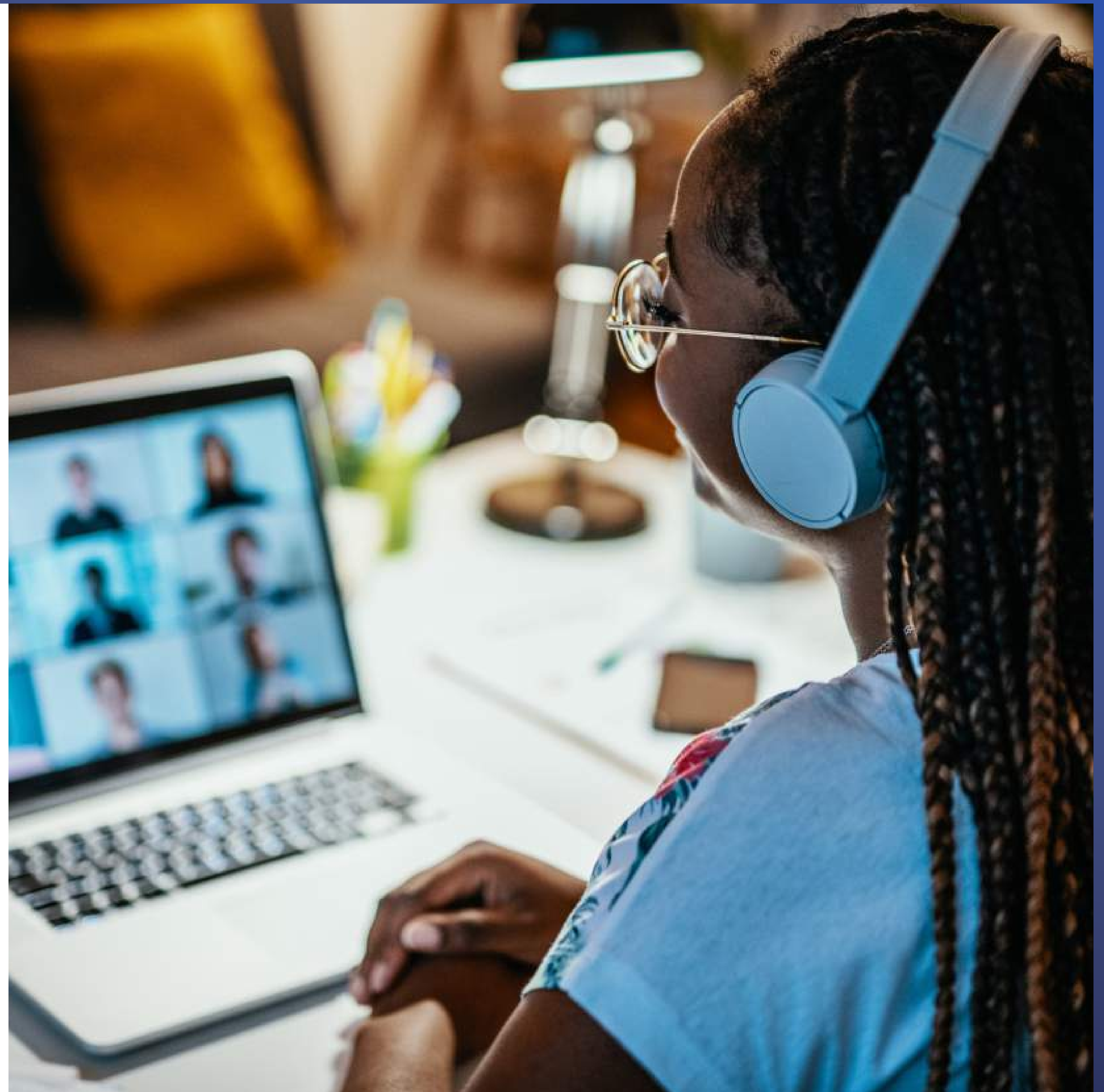
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# Introduction



**ABOUT THE**

# **100 Lionesses Playbook**

**100 Lionesses Playbook Series** provides practical business advice and insights delivered directly by leading African women entrepreneurs selected from the 100 Lionesses network. These experienced women entrepreneurs share their proven hacks, tactics and strategies for getting things done in business. Hard won, tried and tested business knowledge is presented in an easy to read format for you to learn from and apply in your own business. Relevant, agenda-free, pragmatic, advice and strategies that are sure to help drive successful change in your business and guide your personal journey as a woman entrepreneur.

**100 Lionesses** is a special Lionesses of Africa project that identifies and celebrates 100 leading African women entrepreneurs whose example serves to motivate and inspire a belief in all of us that we can pursue our personal entrepreneurial dreams and make them a reality.



## Are you future of work ready?

I am a big believer in the power of learning from the experiences of other women entrepreneurs if we want to grow and thrive in our own businesses. There is nothing quite like seeing how others have navigated their way successfully through challenging times. This is especially true in the wake of COVID-19 and its continuing impact on our business lives. Our working practices, the shift to e-commerce, the structure of our businesses, the reorganization of our workplaces, and the practical way we communicate with and engage our employees - they have changed out of all recognition, and continue to evolve at a faster pace than ever. For example, just a few years ago, who would have thought that remote working for our employees would become the norm, not just a concept? In fact, it is predicted that almost half of employees may continue to work remotely or in a hybrid working model for the foreseeable future. All of this is transforming the future of work, and there is no going back to how things were. As a result, we have to constantly open our minds to change, to innovation, to finding solutions to new challenges - and importantly, to learning from other women entrepreneurs. Welcome to the Future of Work Playbook.

*Melanie*

**Melanie Hawken**  
Founder & CEO  
Lionesses of Africa





## Sponsor Message

It's a new day, it's a new era. Gone are the days of full brick and mortar businesses, or only face-to-face interaction with customers. Moving forward the businesses getting ahead are the ones with a strong digital presence, involved in e-commerce, and having redesigned their systems to accommodate remote work. Looking at the glass half-full, this new work model provides great opportunities for women entrepreneurs as it allows them access to a much wider market, as well as increased productivity in some instances. One cannot ignore the flexibility to balance life and work. There are also opportunities to innovate around new challenges for women entrepreneurs such as service delivery, logistics and care.

As women entrepreneurs pivot and adapt to the new ways of doing business, it will be important to carry along financial institutions who are also having to change the way they carry out their business. The inputs for better financial support and financial service customization can only come from open and more frequent dialogue between women entrepreneurs and financial Institutions.

The African Development Bank through its Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA) Initiative is dedicated to closing the \$42 billion financing gap for women SMEs on the continent. For this it works closely with commercial banks, meso and microfinance institutions, equity funds and guarantee providers to develop holistic programs which include financial and non-financial services for women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses. These programs are customized based on the realities women entrepreneurs face and thus encourage dialogue and relationship building between Banks and women entrepreneurs. It is time to make our financial institutions part of our growth and pivoting process. Welcome to the New Way of Work!

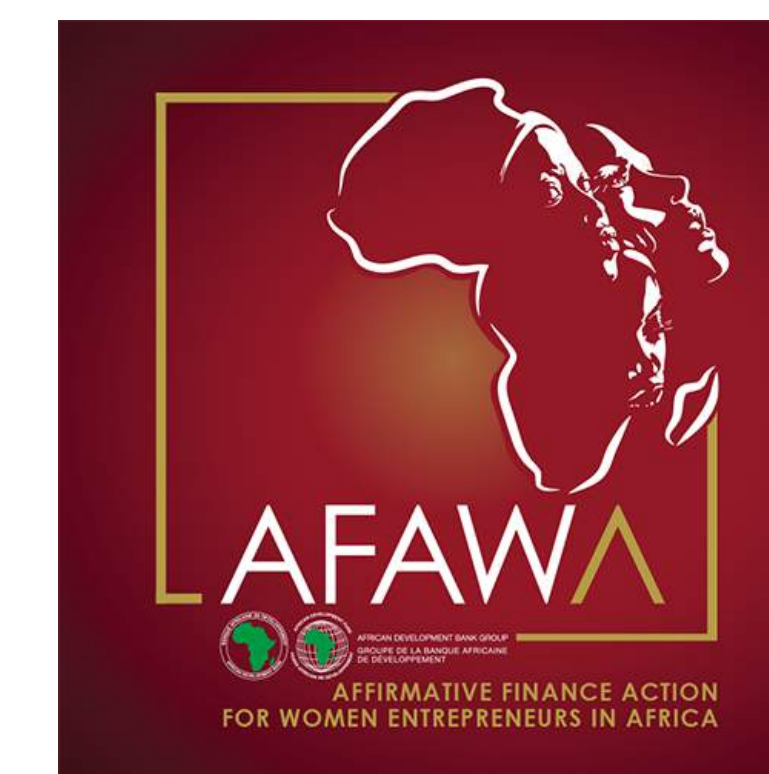
*Marieme*

**Marieme Esther Dissanou**

Manager

Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA)

African Development Bank Group



# Featured Lionesses

1. **Achenyo Idachaba**, founder, Mitimeth (Nigeria)
2. **Adèle Dejak**, founder, Adèle Dejak Group (Kenya)
3. **Dr Divine Ndhlukula**, founder, DDNS Security Operations (Pvt) Ltd (Zimbabwe)
4. **Dounia Tamri-Loeper**, founder, Dounia Home (Morocco)
5. **Eugenia Langa**, founder, Nweba (Mozambique)
6. **Filipa Oliveira**, founder, MIRA Market Research Intelligence (Angola)
7. **Flora Mutahi**, founder, Melvin's Tea (Kenya)
8. **Dr Hend El-Sherbini**, founder, IDH Integrated Diagnostic Holdings (Egypt)
9. **Joycee Awosika**, founder, Oriki Group (Nigeria)
10. **Kate Quartey Papafio**, founder, Reroy Group (Ghana)
11. **Keren Pybus**, co-founder, Ethical Apparel Africa (Ghana)
12. **Lilly Alfonso**, founder, Lilly Alfonso Group (Malawi)
13. **Lorna Rutto**, founder, EcoPost (Kenya)
14. **Margaret Hirsch**, co-founder, Hirsch's Group (South Africa)
15. **Michelle Adelman**, founder, Infinite Foods & Go Fresh (Botswana/South Africa)
16. **Monica Musonda**, founder, Java Foods (Zambia)
17. **Ngyenzi (Nunu) Mugenyi**, co-founder, Bold in Africa (Uganda)
18. **Dr Ola Brown**, founder, Flying Doctors Healthcare Investment Company (Nigeria)
19. **Samantha Skyring**, founder, Oryx Desert Salt (South Africa)
20. **Sarah Collins**, founder, Wonderbag (South Africa)
21. **Suzie Wokabi**, founder, Suzie Beauty (Kenya)
22. **Tara Fela Durotoye**, founder, House of Tara (Nigeria)
23. **Thokozile Mangwiro**, founder, Nilotiqa (South Africa)
24. **Tiguidanke Mounir Camera**, founder, Tigui Mining Group (Guinea)



# Future of Work: Defined





## What does the future of work mean to our businesses today?

There is lots of talk about the future of work right now, but what does it mean in practical terms to our businesses and our working lives? The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to smartly rethink the way we run our businesses, organize our workspaces, and manage our employees. We have had to think out-of-the-box, innovate, and pivot our existing business models to adapt to new, often restricted market realities. For many of us, the new normal in our businesses now includes remote working, increased digital business to reach and support our customers, and the introduction of a whole raft of new technology, tools and platforms to help us stay connected. The future of work is now about how we move forward and successfully adapt to new ways of working, communicating, interacting, and importantly collaborating, in consistently changing business environments.

# Smart women entrepreneurs are reimagining the future of work in their businesses

Smart women entrepreneurs have recognised that the pandemic has created a unique moment in time to reimagine the future of work in their own businesses, and they have embraced the opportunity to do things differently. Many are creating new hybrid models of flexible working, offering their employees the opportunity to work from home or in-person workspaces such as an office, factory, or similar, or perhaps a combination of the two. Such new ways of working are proving both popular and highly effective for many entrepreneurs and employees alike. The introduction of new digital tools and platforms aid both increased productivity and also ensure regular communication and engagement. The future of work is defined by the need to support employees in the business to adapt, become more agile, and to improve their overall emotional intelligence, great attributes to have in any workforce.





## What are Africa's leading women entrepreneurs saying?

“As a founder, I'm having to communicate more, because the business environment has changed and it's important to keep everyone in the loop as to what's going on.”

— **Achenyo Idachaba**

“We used to spend time with clients, going to events, conferences and meetings. Now, it's all done on Whatsapp and Zoom.”

— **Filipa Oliveira**

“We changed our HR model completely during the pandemic. We wanted our team and our people to feel that their voices were heard. We have more of an open door policy now.”

— **Joycee Awosika**

“I'm not traveling any more. I'm doing everything via Zoom or Microsoft teams and using different ways of communicating digitally.”

— **Dr Hend ElSherbini**

“Every worker is empowered to take responsibility for each stage of the procurement and logistics process digitally and must improve the available data to inform and respond to clients.”

— **Eugenia Langa**

“We are communicating better now than we were before, because I think before the pandemic we thought our communication had to be in person. Now, everybody's consuming this information differently.”

— **Flora Mutahi**

“We needed to get the mindset of our people right. They have to know that the time now is for innovation. We all have to put our heads together and think about how we move the company forward.”

— **Kate Quartey-Papafio**

“There's been a lot of movement towards technology and getting everyone to come on board. Training becomes a very key part of that, so we train people in the things that matter to the business. We try to develop people.”

— **Dr Divine Ndhlukula**

“Open communication, that's what we focused on much more and also empowering managers. Now the managers are much closer to the teams.”

— **Monica Musonda**

“Remote working is our new reality and people need to get onto the program. The life that we knew before will never be the same. From now on, we have to adapt.”

— **Tiguidanke Mounir Camera**

# Remote working is on trend

Our traditional ideas of what a work environment looks like, particularly the office, has radically shifted. Today, there isn't a single notion of what a workplace should look like, and it certainly doesn't mean everyone has to be working in the same company space at the same time any more. Remote working has changed all that, and it's now no longer simply a concept, it's an integral part of our future of work thinking. Smart businesses are transforming to meet the needs of employees and customers alike.

Even though some businesses are now bringing their employees back to work into their physical offices, stores and factories, many realize that there are still benefits for everyone by maintaining remote working as part of the mix. For example, operating costs can be reduced by downsizing expensive real-estate if a proportion of the workforce works from home for all or part of the time. Remote working also means that employees are often happier knowing that they don't have the expense and stress of having to commute from home to work for hours each day. As a result, they are more productive, happier, and able to achieve a better work/life balance.



*“Remote work is no longer simply a concept, now it’s an integral part of our future of work thinking - and that’s good for business and employees.”*



*“Every successful and efficient remote working strategy needs an operational blueprint for employees to follow.”*

## Create Your Remote Working Blueprint

Every successful remote working strategy needs an operational blueprint for employees to follow. It ensures that everyone understands their individual roles and responsibilities in delivering on key goals and outputs. The blueprint also keeps individuals on track from a productivity and quality of delivery perspective. As a result, employees feel empowered to take personal control of their productivity at home, plus the business achieves its productivity and growth targets. A remote working blueprint also provides a support framework to ensure employee wellbeing is maintained. So how do you start to prepare your remote working blueprint?

There are four key starting points to think about:

- Research best practice remote working business models, find the one that best fits your company culture, and customize it to make it work for your employees
- Look at each job function in your business and assess whether it could be undertaken in a remote working environment successfully and efficiently
- Look at each of your employees, assess their individual wellbeing needs and possible fit for remote working, also acknowledging their home environments
- Assess the role that each employee plays within the business, especially if they are part of teams or vital production lines, and evaluate if they can deliver those roles in a remote working environment or hybrid working model

# Good communication is key to the future of work

Any successful business knows that great communication is key to success. As companies prepare for the future of work, creating a strong communication strategy and employee engagement culture becomes even more important. After all, if you want your remote workforce to feel fully motivated and productive, they need to be engaged, and that starts with great communication. The first step to creating an effective remote working business model, or a hybrid alternative, starts with talking to your employees about this new strategy. It's essential to help them understand how it impacts them at a practical level, and also the necessary changes they will need to make to their work life.

Remote working employees will also need to be empowered through technology to keep them connected to the business, to customers, to colleagues, and to the leadership team. At an operational level, this means putting in place essential digital tools and guidelines. Make use of digital team meet-ups that bring employees together to work and connect. Organize digital Town-Hall meetings where as a founder you can talk to every employee, no matter where they are based. Host a webinar with a special motivational speaker and encourage employee interaction. Remember, great communication starts with you as the business founder, so engage, inspire and connect with all your employees.



*“As companies prepare for the future of work, creating a strong communication strategy and employee engagement culture becomes even more important.”*

# Future of Work: Roadmap

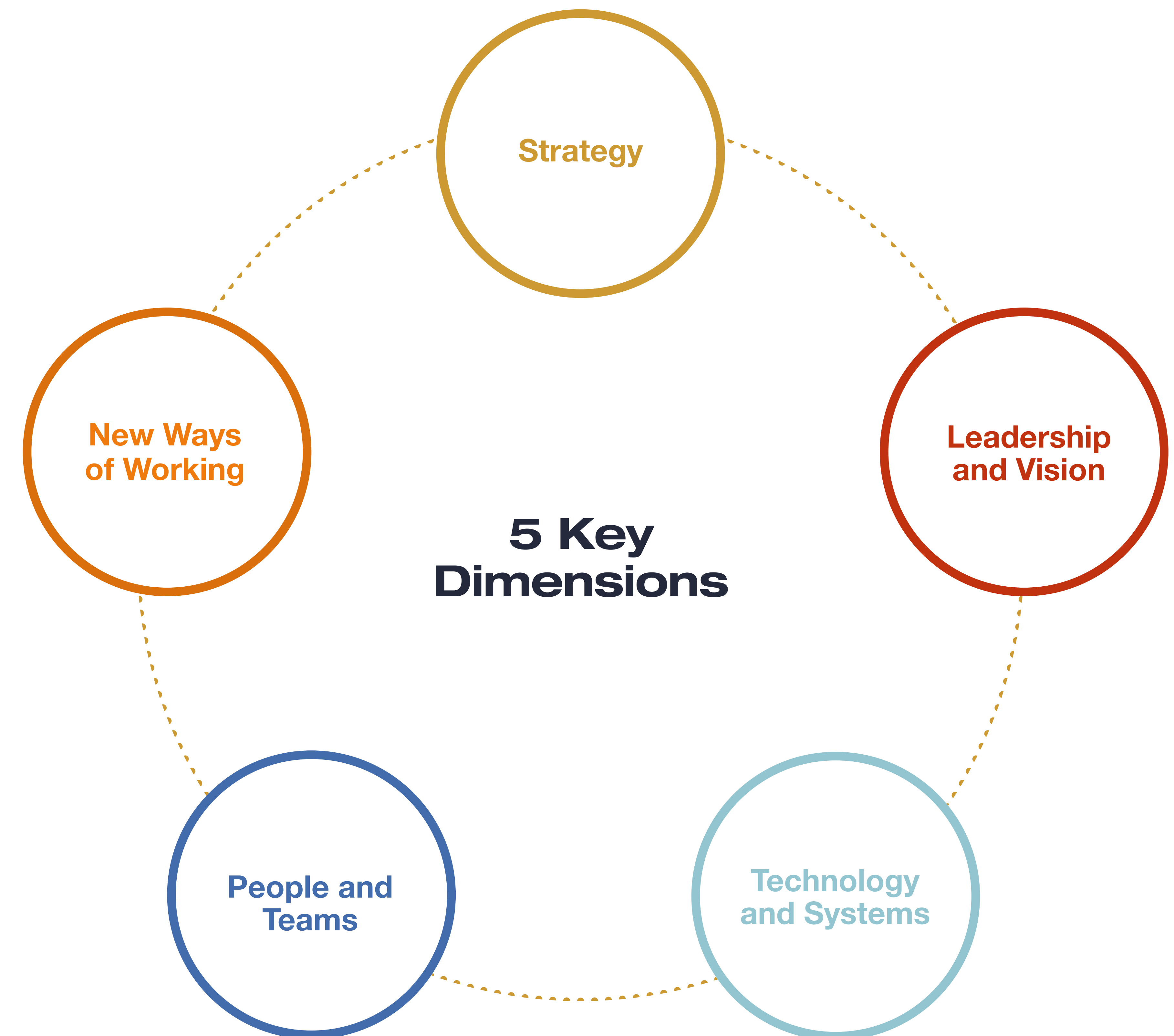
# Create your future of work roadmap

With any new journey to be taken, it starts with having a great roadmap, and it's a must-have as you navigate the future of work in your business. Remember that your roadmap is unique to you and your business. Take the time to define those areas that need the most improvement, or which will deliver the most impactful results, and focus on those as the priority. Keep your strategic goals and your vision for the business in mind at all times.

Here are 5 Key Future of Work Business Dimensions for you to consider as you create your own roadmap:

**Strategy, Leadership & Vision, Technology & Systems, People & Teams, New Ways of Working**

Use your future of work roadmap to keep your business transformation process on track, your employees motivated, and your implementation plans achievable.





# Strategy

Develop your future of work strategy by anticipating the people and process dynamics that will be needed in your future business growth.

- » **Upskill.** Create a new, proactive skills development plan that empowers employees to develop their personal digital skills to meet the new working environment and methodologies.
- » **Plan.** Create a plan of action that puts digital transformation at the forefront of the business strategy, ensuring that all employees understand their role and have the tools and training to implement.
- » **Innovate.** Put innovation at the heart of your future of work strategy, encouraging employees to be part of a continual improvement process, helping to find new and better, more efficient ways of working.
- » **Analyze.** Increase effectiveness of the strategy and decision-making results by having predictive analytics available for tracking performance.
- » **Review.** Undertake a comprehensive review of how your company's existing strategy has performed and harness those learnings going forward as you implement the new strategy.
- » **Engage.** Develop a proactive employee engagement plan that ensures everyone in the business is aligned to achieving the objectives of the strategy and has the opportunity to contribute their ideas.
- » **Incentivize.** Introduce incentivization programmes as part of the strategy to encourage employees to buy-in to new digital tools and ways of doing things.
- » **Blueprint.** Create a strategic blueprint for the business to follow, making ongoing measurable improvements easier to implement and track.
- » **Anticipate.** As ongoing insights emerge on what the future of work will look like in your company, anticipate the need to course correct where necessary and keep improving the strategy to meet changing needs.

# Leadership and Vision

Create clarity about the future of work by engaging employees and sharing a vision for the business and its people

- » **Engage.** Communicate with employees to share a vision for the future of the business. Ensure each employee is aware of their role and responsibility and instill a sense of the importance of their contribution to achieving that overall business vision.
- » **Inspire.** Instill a sense of company values that can be shared and realized by all employees. Effective leaders are future-thinking and inspire their people based on a strong set of values that are lived across the business each day, providing a strong sense of purpose and a compelling future.
- » **Future of Jobs.** Change brings uncertainty, so the role of a strong business leader is to demonstrate what the future of jobs looks like within the company. Communicate and engage employees in the type of skills required to prepare the business for the future of work, how job profiles are likely to change and adapt, and what new jobs are likely to be created in the future.
- » **Promote a learning culture.** The future of work requires a commitment on the part of all employees to keep learning, upskilling themselves to respond to changing needs and market requirements. People are more likely to commit to a business if it has a strong skills development culture. Actively develop and champion your learning agenda for your workforce.
- » **Prioritize upskilling.** Create a continuous programme of skills upliftment initiatives in the business, supported by mentors where possible, to ensure employees are inspired and motivated on their learning journeys.
- » **Flexible working.** Develop a strategy which incorporates the option of flexible working for those employees who need greater work/life balance to ensure productivity and job satisfaction and commitment.
- » **Role modelling.** Lead from the front and be a role-model for the future of work, and live the company vision and values as an example to everyone. Commit to a people first approach.

# Technology & Systems

Select technology and digital tools to improve both your workforce efficiency and business outcomes to experience maximum future of work benefits.

- » **Research.** Do your research to find the best technology solutions that specifically meet the needs of your business and teams. Get specialist advice from tech providers and practical feedback from fellow entrepreneurs on the most efficient and affordable technology solutions and tools that meet the needs of your business.
- » **Share.** Ensure your employees are informed and excited about any new technology or digital processes you introduce into the business to increase their efficiency and improve their work experiences. Communicate with employees and engage them in the formal introduction of the new technology and tools to ensure buy-in.
- » **Collaborate.** Encourage employees to start using any new technology or tools in the business by encouraging collaboration and engagement. Web-based project management tools could be useful to ensure both remote workers and in-office employees are connected and can more easily engage in and deliver on shared projects.
- » **Connectivity.** Provide the business and your employees with the best available access to internet, to ensure efficiency and communication levels are maintained.
- » **Flexible Working.** Introduce technology platforms and applications which help both remote workers and in-office employees to choose flexible working solutions that work for them and the business. Enable resilience and remote working for those choosing to work from home by adopting digital collaboration and communication software.
- » **Upskill.** To get the best results from your technology investment, everyone in the business needs to know how to use it effectively. Develop both an introductory and ongoing training programme so that your employees can fully benefit from the new digital tools and platforms, and upskill themselves to fulfill their potential.
- » **Budget.** Prepare an annual technology budget to ensure that your software, digital tools and platforms are updated regularly to assist every employee to maximize their efficiency and task management.
- » **Scaleability.** Ensure that the technology and digital processes you introduce into your business can scale as the business, its needs and your workforce grow.

# People & Teams

To thrive in the future of work, you have to focus on and support your people and help them to fulfill their potential

- » **Develop a strong people strategy.** As a business founder, appreciate that the most important asset you have is your people. Develop a people strategy that focuses on inspirational leadership, building an inclusive learning culture, talent acquisition and retention, upskilling, and all underpinned with good HR management. A business with a strong people strategy will benefit from being more agile, innovative, and better equipped to deal with an ever-changing world and marketplace.
- » **Rethink talent acquisition** If you want to build a great team equipped for the future of work, you need to take a human approach to looking for talented individuals who each bring something different to the business. When recruiting, don't just look for key skills, think about people who bring new ways of thinking, different life and work experiences, new perspectives.

- » **Think small teams.** Build your teams small enough to encourage a rapport between members and a spirit of collaboration. Large teams spend too much time discussing the challenges to be solved, and not enough time working on the solutions. So, think small team building.
- » **Hire smart people.** You need to bring smart people into your business who are good at what they do and who don't need micro-managing. Hire on experience, expertise, good team fit, and self starters who know how to get the job done.
- » **Recognize and appreciate.** Employee recognition is important for increasing productivity and reducing turnover. Develop a methodology for recognizing talent, contribution, effort and passion for the jobs your employees do. Communicate to all your employees how employee recognition works in the business.

# New Ways of Working

The future of work means creating smart and agile working cultures that genuinely empower employees

- » **Clear leadership.** By removing the traditional 'command and control' approach to leadership, and introducing a flatter structure in the business, employees will feel more empowered to take responsibility for their roles and their contribution to the business success.
- » **Agile working.** Develop a more agile approach to the future of work. Create a work culture where employees may work any time and anywhere as long as business needs are fully met and to the highest standard and productivity levels.
- » **Results oriented performance.** Create a personal work plan for every employee where performance is measured and determined by results instead of formal time and attendance records. This approach will ensure productivity levels are kept high, together with motivation and recognition for results. Performance measurement should be built into the personal work plans.
- » **Minimize travel.** Harness the power of technology and digital communication to encourage engagement virtually and minimize travel.
- » **Support agile workers.** Develop practical and digital support systems for agile workers, including training for managers, mentoring, virtual team meetings, one-on-one virtual feedback sessions and digital toolkits for agile workers.
- » **Culture change.** Lead from the front to instill and communicate that the business is committed to creating a smart and agile working culture that empowers employees to fulfill their potential and realize the business vision.
- » **Work versus Jobs.** Encourage a new way of thinking amongst employees to see the future of work in the business as empowering them to live their working lives differently and not see it as just a job.

# Future of Work: Playbooks



# Achenyo Idachaba

Founder of MitiMeth, Nigeria

[www.mitimeth.com](http://www.mitimeth.com)

Achenyo Idachaba is the founder of MitiMeth, an award-winning Social Enterprise transforming waste and building livelihoods through the transformation of invasive aquatic weeds and agricultural residues. To date, MitiMeth has trained over 400 women from communities across Nigeria and Ghana to make eco-friendly home décor and lifestyle products from these natural fibres, creating jobs and aiding the environment.



## HER CHALLENGE

Adapting to restricted manufacturing environments for employees

## HER SOLUTION

### Shifting to remote working for artisan manufacturing in The New Workplace

MitiMeth has built a global reputation for finely handcrafted products, created by experienced artisans in a highly creative workshop environment. The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdowns created a need to temporarily shut down the company's full-time production hub due to both country-wide restrictions and market uncertainty. In response, founder Achenyo Idachaba looked to innovate and provide the opportunity for her artisan workforce to continue to manufacture products, but safely in their home environments.

*“There were things that we had to do from a people standpoint, in terms of ensuring that livelihoods were not halted abruptly as a result of this pandemic.”*

Achenyo's starting point was to identify which smaller products from the company's range these artisans could actually make in their home spaces, together with the necessary tools and materials to work with.

*“We're actually going to build upon the digitization of the business that occurred as a result of the pandemic. It's a work in progress and I think it's dynamic.”*

The second challenge was to introduce new working practices and protocols to ensure the artisans would be able to deliver the products at home to existing quality standards. These included stringent health and safety practices and guidelines, ensuring that everyone understood that safety was the topmost priority.

Remote working was trialled in the first instance in a few artisan homes, to assess the efficiency of the new working practices, and the end result was a successful transition. The artisans were able to produce quality products and importantly keep working through this challenging period.

This shift to remote working represented an agile approach to adapting the business model to changing conditions, and ensured the business was able to continue production during lockdowns until it was possible to safely reopen the workshop on a full-time operating basis.

*“As a founder, I'm having to communicate more, because the business environment has changed and it's important to keep everyone in the loop as to what's going on.”*



# Shifting to remote working

## HER CHALLENGE

Adapting to restricted manufacturing environments for employees

## HER SOLUTION

Shifting to remote working for artisan manufacturing in The New Workplace

To successfully make the move to creating a remote working model for employees that is quality output focused while maintaining safe workplace protocols, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Workplace protocols** — Develop a new set of remote workplace protocols for all employees to follow, to ensure health and safety practices during remote working are maintained.

**Communication** — Develop an effective communications strategy to keep your employees engaged, informed, and motivated in their remote working environments.

**Skills development** — Train your employees and equip them with the skills they need to successfully make the transition to remote working.



# Adèle Dejak

**Founder of Adele Dejak, Kenya**

[www.adeledejak.com](http://www.adeledejak.com)

Adèle Dejak is the founder of the authentic luxury jewellery and fashion accessories brand that carries her name and which offers direct access to the true premium African experience. The Kenya-based brand is renowned for creating a wide variety of luxury handcrafted products including bracelets, earrings, necklaces and handbags. Every distinctive piece tells a story and is inspired by African cultures and traditions.

## HER CHALLENGE

The need to reshape and digitize the business strategy

## HER SOLUTION

### Accelerated digital transformation of the business model to online

The COVID-19 pandemic caused luxury jewellery and fashion accessory brand founder, Adèle Dejak, to rethink her business model and strategy in response to the impact on the retail sector. She took the tough decision to close her physical retail outlet and instead focus on her online store, taking the business completely digital. The move proved to be a good one, resulting in regular customer repeat orders each month, plus a number of big customer orders.

*“Go back to the business model and think digital. You've got to focus. You don't need a brick and mortar retail store. The key thing is online presence.”*

Adèle's strategy was to ensure high digital visibility for the brand across her online store and her social media platforms, combined with a strong focus on storytelling, to engage customers and secure sales.

*"I've learned that you've really got to push a narrative to get customers to connect with you. They want to know the story behind the business. People connect to storytelling."*

From a production perspective, Adele is now running a virtual workshop to produce her luxury goods. She has adapted working and production practices to maintain constant contact and interaction with each of her artisans individually. She uses digital communications tools to closely manage the production process.

At a practical level, Adèle sends photos and drawings of the jewellery and accessory pieces she wants to have produced via Whatsapp to each artisan. They in turn send regular production updates and photographs for checking and approval also using WhatsApp.

Once a physical sample is ready for final approval, it is sent to Adèle via courier. Final amendments or approvals are made, and then the piece can go into full production without any in-person contact having taken place.

*"Business growth is coming from the global marketplace. My brand is African luxury, and that's why most of my clients in online sales are now from the U.S."*

This shift to digital for Adèle's business is a practical response to current challenges from a production perspective, but also marks a new global marketing opportunity for the brand by moving to online retail. The Adele Dejak brand is seeing business growth coming from online sales from customers around the world.

# Moving to digital manufacturing and retail

**HER CHALLENGE**

The need to reshape and digitize the business strategy

**HER SOLUTION**

Accelerated digital transformation of the business model to online

To effectively transition from a traditional physical manufacturing and retail business model to an agile, responsive, digital production and marketing model, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Remote working** — Develop a new operational methodology for employees who are remote working, including virtual quality control and productivity measurement.

**Communication** — Develop an effective communications methodology for engaging employees in remote working environments. Harness relevant apps and mobile platforms to keep employees motivated, efficient, and quality focused.

**Leadership** — Use your voice as business founder to drive operational strategy across all internal communications channels to engage employees, contractors, and stakeholders during the shift to digital production and retail.



# Dr Divine Ndhlukula



Founder of DDNS Security Operations (Pvt) Ltd, Zimbabwe

[www.securico.co.zw](http://www.securico.co.zw)

Dr Divine Ndhlukula is the founder of DDNS Security Operations (Pvt) Ltd, the holding company under which Securico Security Services falls. Divine has built her company to become the most respected and sought-after player in the security industry in Zimbabwe and internationally. Through her leadership, the business now employs over 4,000 people and has become a multiple award-winning organisation.

## HER CHALLENGE

Keeping employees motivated, committed and mobile

## HER SOLUTION

### Improving transportation support and communication

One of the biggest challenges Divine Ndhlukula faced during the Covid pandemic was how to motivate employees to continue enjoying and giving their best at work in a difficult environment. Her employees were having to deal with challenging daily issues such as getting reliable transport to and from work because of restrictions on public transport. The implementation of social distancing measures on transport meant that employees were waiting for hours just to travel to and from work each day. It was highly disruptive for the business, and also hugely demotivating for employees.

*“As a business, we are becoming a little more data centric because it allows me to better track what happens in our business throughout the country. The data reports come onto my computer each day, I analyze them, and make decisions with the data that I'm getting.”*

As an employer, Divine needed to ensure her workforce remained motivated and committed in order for them to do their jobs efficiently and with pride. A new plan was needed to ensure her employees could travel to work more easily, and enjoy work when they arrived.

*“Our strategy has really changed our tactics towards becoming a data driven business. We are a business that is also going digital in a big way. So we have managed to digitize as much as possible the way people are deployed, the way people work.”*

Divine’s solution started with a decision to provide transport from employee residences directly to the workplace, whereas previously transport was provided for the second leg of the journey. This decision meant relieving the stress of travelling for employees and ensuring they were in a motivated and committed state when in the workplace.

The second solution was to improve employee communication and engagement, particularly around some of the big changes around digitization in the business. Divine recognised that change is a very difficult thing for employees to deal with, so communication was key. The introduction of new ways of doing things required the introduction of employee training and development programmes, combined with regular communication to get everyone on board.

*“There's been a lot of movement towards technology and getting everyone to come on board. Training becomes a very key part of that, so we train people in the things that matter to the business. We try to develop our people.”*

Having a workforce of over 4,000 people required Divine to harness the power of digital communication methods to reach everyone effectively. She successfully used a combination of social media messaging, WhatsApp messaging, and Zoom meetings to engage and motivate her workforce, all supported by in-house training programmes.

# Harness the power of communication

**HER CHALLENGE**

Keeping employees motivated, committed and mobile

**HER SOLUTION**

Improving transportation support and communication

To improve the level of communication you have with your employees, and to keep them motivated and engaged, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Communication** — Harness the power of social media and other internal communication channels to reach your employees and keep them informed.

**Engagement** — Develop an inclusive employee engagement strategy, providing effective ways of keeping staff motivated, inspired, and connected.

**Leadership** — Develop a leadership strategy that provides effective platforms and channels to engage both strategically and operationally with everyone in the business, to maintain and grow brand pride.



# Dounia Tamri-Loeper

**Founder of Dounia Home, Morocco**  
[www.douniahome.com](http://www.douniahome.com)

Dounia Tamri-Loeper is the founder of Dounia Home in Morocco, a company that produces modern Moroccan lighting. She is focused on operating ethically and helps empower the Moroccan artisan community behind her products. Dounia Home creates beautiful, statement lighting pieces that not only celebrate the centuries-old techniques and designs that are uniquely Moroccan, but also elevates them to a whole new level.

## HER CHALLENGE

Maintaining supply chains during a major market disruption

## HER SOLUTION

### Developing a resilient supply chain strategy and expanding supplier relationships

For Dounia Home, as a business that is underpinned by the finest local artisan craftsmanship and the use of raw materials, the Covid pandemic brought a whole new set of challenges. Initially, the business functioned as normal using its stocks of raw materials and keeping its local artisan workforce in production. As the pandemic started to impact on the accessibility of essential raw materials, the challenge was to ensure supplies of brass, copper and silver required for the manufacturing process. What became apparent was the need to develop a more resilient supply chain to keep the workforce active.

*“Maintaining supply chain is critical. Even in the best of times, you have to develop a strategy to maintain your supply chain in worst case scenarios and build more relationships than you currently have.”*



In response to this supply chain disruption, founder Dounia Tamri-Loeper had to expand her existing supplier relationships. She started looking for different companies that had raw material stock, buying from local businesses to ensure supplies were maintained. Dounia Home was working to fulfill an existing order book and her artisan workforce needed to produce to deadline. The new approach was to buy as much raw material as was available on the market and to keep it in stock.

*“If you have previously relied on one big supplier, you need to have a contingency plan and going forward work with different suppliers.”*

The lesson learned moving forward for the business was to stock enough essential raw materials to ensure production coverage for at least three months without interruption in response to future market shocks. In addition, Dounia built strong relationships with her well-chosen shipping company, ensuring ability to deliver products to clients despite the challenges.

Another key learning for Dounia was to have her artisan craftspeople working on producing best selling products for her to keep as stock. This required constant communication and guidance with the artisans on production priorities. Previously, the business specialized in fulfilling made to order product items, and that approach worked at the time. But six years down the line, the business best sellers are well known, and therefore keeping these as ongoing stock items made commercial sense.

*“Last year was a big learning experience. It really teaches you what's working and what's not working, what you have to improve upon, and learning quickly is what keeps everybody productive.”*

As a result, the business was able to respond quickly to last minute requests for products, meeting customer demand in real time. Dounia recommends stocking your best sellers one hundred percent, and also maintaining strong communication channels with production teams on priorities.

# Develop a resilient supply chain strategy

**HER CHALLENGE**

Maintaining supply chains during a major market disruption

**HER SOLUTION**

Developing a resilient supply chain strategy and expanding supplier relationships

To build strong supply chains and a reliable network of suppliers who can meet your raw material requirements to ensure your workforce keeps manufacturing product, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Agility** — Ensure your strategy is agile enough to respond quickly and effectively to any disruptions to supply chains or production, and be ready to make quick decisions.

**Engagement** — Develop effective business relationships with your supplier network to ensure continuity of support and supply during turbulent times.

**Communication** — Continually communicate with your workforce, particularly if they work remotely, to keep them updated on possible supply chain issues and changes to productivity deadlines needed.



# Eugenia Langa

**Founder of Nweba, Mozambique**

[www.nweba.co.mz](http://www.nweba.co.mz)

Eugenia Langa, founder of Nweba in Mozambique, has built a significant reputation for herself and her business, providing world-class services in the highly specialized fields of Procurement and Logistics for the Construction, Oil & Gas, Mining and Energy sectors. Nweba is the first Mozambican company of its kind providing solutions to the specific challenges pertaining to these sectors in the country.

## HER CHALLENGE

Maintaining client and supplier engagement remotely

## HER SOLUTION

# Introducing new hybrid remote working practices and digital project management systems

As a specialist Procurement and Logistics business servicing the Construction, Oil & Gas, Mining and Energy sectors in Mozambique, Eugenia and her team at Nweba had to respond quickly to the new world of work created by the Covid pandemic. The first challenge to overcome was the need to change the existing in-person business model to a digital one. A new hybrid working model was introduced for staff members, with some days spent working from home and others in the office on a rotation basis. Client liaison, which had always been done in person previously, was now undertaken digitally too.

*“We created a new type of digital system that helps us measure our levels of efficiency and identify the areas that we needed to improve.”*

One of the biggest challenges facing Eugenia and her team was to find a solution to dealing with logistics and procurement during a pandemic. There was a need to respond quickly to rapidly changing shipping schedules for cargo, constantly communicating with suppliers and clients to keep everyone updated in real-time. In the past, they would have travelled in person to their logistics and materials suppliers to ensure accurate fulfillment of purchase orders and delivery schedules, but that had to change.

*“Every worker is empowered to take responsibility for each stage of the procurement and logistics process digitally and must improve the available data to inform and respond to clients.”*

Eugenia introduced a new remote way of working in the business, creating close partnerships with companies in the countries where they were buying goods and shipping services for their clients. Those partnerships created a line of sight for Eugenia’s workforce to key suppliers, factories, shipping offices, to ensure continuity of reliable supply and transportation.

Eugenia and her team also innovated in response to the need to create a new digital project tracking system, allowing clients to monitor in real-time all stages of their order processing. Clients can track the end-to-end logistics and procurement process, starting with market research, supplier negotiation, production, packing and despatch, through to delivery.

*“With this new trajectory, it's starting to feel like my team is ready to be left alone, meaning I can focus on working on the business instead of in the business.”*

By creating new, more innovative and responsive digital tracking and customer engagement systems, clients feel more confident in the supply process. Another innovation was introduced in the form of product manufacturing monitoring via video, with the Nweba team able to work with suppliers to ensure quality control and technical specification adherence, plus adherence to packing and shipping guidelines, all via video link. This facilitated remote monitoring of all projects to keep them on track.

# Introducing hybrid remote working practices

## HER CHALLENGE

Maintaining client and supplier engagement remotely

## HER SOLUTION

Introducing new hybrid remote working practices and digital project management systems

To introduce new hybrid remote working systems for employees, combined with digital internal production monitoring processes and project management systems, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Communication** — Introduce an effective digital communications strategy and action plan that speaks to and engages internal staff and external clients and suppliers.

**Innovation** — Think about new ways of doing things and introduce innovative new working practices and internal systems for your employees and suppliers to follow.

**Empowerment** — Develop an effective employee engagement strategy and training programme that empowers everyone to take responsibility for productivity and delivery.



# Filipa Oliveira

**Founder of MIRA Market Intelligence Research, Angola**

[www.mira.co.ao](http://www.mira.co.ao)

Filipa Oliveira is the founder of MIRA Market Intelligence Research Angola, a specialist business bringing world-class market insights to her customers to help them grow their customer bases. MIRA positions itself as the partner which is always capable to collect, process and systemize reliable and useful information in order to take clients' businesses one step forward in the marketplace.

## HER CHALLENGE

Maintaining employee morale and wellbeing in the new workplace

## HER SOLUTION

### Creating effective new working environments and practices for employees

Being in the market research field, Filipa Oliveira recognizes that she is in a people centric business, both internally and externally through her business. Ensuring her employees remain safe, healthy and motivated in a changing working environment due to Covid is a priority. As a result, she has introduced a number of new practices that can ensure a better and more productive working environment for all her employees. One of the first steps Filipa took to manage the health and wellbeing aspects of her employees was to try remote working.

*“Today clients don't have the money they used to have for research. Instead of asking us to do a big project with a big budget, now they request smaller projects and smaller budgets to match. So we try to maintain quality, but think out of the box.”*

However, employees missed the highly focused, structured call-centre environment. As a result, a move towards greater digitization of work processes where possible took place, with interviews undertaken digitally and telephonically instead of in-person. Filipa also took the decision that the physical call centre environment needed to adapt to meet the needs of both employees and health directives.

*“I know that my business misses the networking and interaction between employees and clients. We used to spend time with clients, going to events, conferences and meetings. Now, it’s all done on Whatsapp and Zoom.”*

Desks and chairs were better spaced out across the office to avoid close contact between employees. In terms of adapting the many research focus groups which were traditionally conducted face to face on behalf of clients, a new approach was implemented. Because many interviewees didn’t have access to internet connectivity, local hotel open spaces were hired to gather people safely together and conduct focus group interviews in the open air.

Key to maintaining good employee morale during the introduction of new operating environments and practices in the workplace was leadership communication. Filipa implemented a leadership communications strategy in the business to ensure she could reach and engage employees, keeping them motivated in this new workplace. She also introduced extensive education and communication around healthy work practices, ways of staying safe, including ensuring good ventilation in all office spaces.

*“As a business and as a country, we need to adapt. And people are not very good at adapting. But you have to control what you can control, and my company and my team have adapted and made changes to survive and thrive for the years ahead.”*

Filipa ensured a constant communications flow around employee wellbeing and vaccines during the pandemic, encouraging employees to stay informed and to get the vaccines when they became eligible. Her engagements with her distributed leadership team members who were remote working in different global locations were undertaken using Skype and other digital communications methods, instead of face to face.

# Creating effective new working environments

## HER CHALLENGE

Maintaining employee morale and wellbeing in the new workplace

## HER SOLUTION

Creating effective working environments and practices for employees.

To create a highly motivated, productivity driven workplace environment that is also focused on ensuring employee health and safety, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Leadership** - Develop a leadership style that will inspire and steer your employees through a new way of working, including effective remote working.

**Knowledge sharing** - Introduce motivational learning programmes online and in teams to encourage self development.

**Employee morale** - Create new ways of engaging employees and boosting morale, particularly for those who are working from home and feel isolated.





# Flora Mutahi

**Founder of Melvin Marsh International, Kenya**

[www.melvynstea.com](http://www.melvynstea.com)

Flora Mutahi is the founder of Melvin Marsh International, the Kenyan-based family business that first began in 1995. Kenya's first flavored teas were launched under the company's renowned brand – Melvins Teas. Today, Melvins Teas serves millions of cups of tea a year. The product base has expanded to include not only flavored teas, but also herbal and fruit infusions.

## HER CHALLENGE

Managing and motivating people in a challenging business environment

## HER SOLUTION

### Implementing effective digital employee engagement and communication strategies

For Flora, adapting her business to the future of work whilst navigating through the Covid pandemic, the biggest challenge was around managing people. As a production house manufacturing consumer goods, remote working was not a possibility for employees. Instead, the focus was on leading employees through a rapidly changing business environment, whilst at the same time creating a sense of calm in a safe working environment. Flora realized that to maintain employee morale and ensure productivity was not impacted, it was all about strong leadership, combined with great communication and engagement.

*"I must say, we are communicating better now than we were before Covid, because I think before the pandemic we thought our communication had to be in person. Now, everybody's consuming this information differently and that has worked in our favour."*

Flora's first approach was to upscale everyone's access to Zoom, providing a direct communication channel for her to speak to employees directly and explain the new strategy and its roll-out. In terms of efficiencies, meetings held via Zoom cut down travel time, meaning staff members were able to stay informed but maintain their maximum productivity. The whole communication style of the business changed to more regular leadership engagement.

*“Before the pandemic, we were so busy working in the business, we didn't have time to stop and think. So now we're finding strategy execution a lot easier, so I think there's definitely been a positive side to it.”*

Company changes to established ways of operating were communicated directly to employees, giving them a compelling reason as to why they were being asked to do things a certain way. The communications style focused on explaining in detail what needed to be done, when it needed to be done, and why it had to be done a certain way.

Flora believes that the business is communicating better now than it was before Covid. Previously, everyone in the company thought communication had to be in person, whereas now there is a realization that everybody is consuming information differently and that has worked positively for the business. Being able to communicate online with everyone in the company has really helped Flora as a business leader. Previously, she would have had to go to individual meetings in different locations, whereas now she can speak to everyone directly using Zoom technology.

*“I think with the slowing down and people being able to be more focused, there's a lot more quality decisions that are required and that can be made, much more easily than would previously have been.”*

She feels that this connection with her as a leader in the business helps her employees to feel more engaged, helping them to understand the strategy and their role in executing it efficiently for the benefit of the business. As a result, Flora believes that individual employee accountability has improved as they are now able to understand the bigger picture and their roles in the business.

# Implementing digital employee engagement strategies

**HER CHALLENGE**

Managing and motivating people in a challenging business environment

**HER SOLUTION**

Implementing effective digital employee engagement and communication strategies

To enhance the level of engagement and communication you have with your employees, and to use digital technology to drive a new positive communications culture internally, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Technology** - Use the power of digital technology to ensure your leadership communication can effectively reach and engage the maximum number of employees.

**Leadership** - Create a new direct leadership approach to improve and drive your internal communications and to create a more committed and motivated workforce.

**Culture** - Introduce new digital and in-person engagement strategies and tools to encourage knowledge and experience sharing, and to create a positive work culture.



# Dr. Hend El Sherbini

**CEO of IDH-Integrated Diagnostics Holdings, Egypt**  
[www.idhcorp.com](http://www.idhcorp.com)

Dr Hend El Sherbini is the ceo of IDH-Integrated Diagnostics Holdings, a leading consumer diagnostic healthcare company in Africa and the Middle East with operations in Egypt, Jordan, Sudan and Nigeria. Dr. El Sherbini's experience is not only limited to her position as CEO, but she is also a professor of clinical pathology at the Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University and currently sits on the board of American Society of Clinical Pathology (Egypt) and consults on the international certification process.

## HER CHALLENGE

Adapting the leadership style to meet the demands of a rapidly scaling business during a pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

### Implementing virtual meeting and communication strategies to engage employees and stakeholders

For a rapidly scaling business with a large and growing workforce, and a large stakeholder universe to navigate, maintaining effective communications and engagement during the Covid pandemic was critical to Dr Hend El Sherbini. Her strong leadership was essential to the business during this period, but remote working and the need to stay connected presented its challenges.

*“You cannot rely on the ordinary way of doing business. So now, we’re mostly meeting remotely, especially if it's a big meeting. I think this is going to be the way forward, even after Covid.”*

Dr Hend adapted her leadership style to meet the demands of the new business environment, creating a shift in the organizational culture of the company towards adopting digital and virtual ways of doing things. At a practical level, she recognised that ensuring meetings with the management, operations and logistics teams could take place regularly but safely across the business, meant introducing a digital meeting solution. The business started using Microsoft Teams, with everyone encouraged not to meet in person for safety reasons but instead to meet digitally and remotely instead.

*“I'm not traveling any more. I'm doing everything via Zoom or Microsoft teams and using different ways of communicating digitally.”*

Dr Hend's primary concern was ensuring the safety of employees and the management team in the business during this time. Meetings were coordinated digitally and held virtually, especially for the larger meetings involving large numbers of people. She believes that the advantages of this new way of working will be the norm going forward. Dr Hend also noticed that by adapting the internal meeting culture to digital, there were a number of practical benefits to be gained.

Firstly, virtual meetings meant Dr Hend and her team were able to bring much larger numbers of people into meetings, resulting in greater efficiency of messaging and traction. Another added bonus of this digital meeting approach was the minimizing of usual travel expenses incurred with large meeting attendance by company employees and management team members. In her personal capacity as an industry thought leader, previously there would have been a lot of business travel for Dr Hend to undertake, attending and speaking at global conferences, and meeting key global stakeholders.

*“If you want to scale, you need to have a business that is very well organized and efficient. If you have that, then scaling is going to be very successful. But if you have problems in your model to start with, then with scaling this is going to be a major problem.”*

By changing her leadership approach, and by embracing digital technology, she no longer had to spend precious time travelling, and instead was able to engage in and speak at global industry events via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

# Rolling-out virtual communication strategies

## HER CHALLENGE

Adapting the leadership style to meet the demands of a rapidly scaling business during a pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

Implementing virtual meeting and communication strategies to engage employees and stakeholders

To ensure that employees and other key stakeholders are fully engaged at a leadership level, and informed about the business growth strategy and its strategic and operational benefits, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Communication** - Devise a high visibility virtual engagement strategy to ensure key messaging around company policy and strategy is powerfully communicated.

**Leadership** - Develop an industry thought leadership virtual strategy to maximize opportunities to reach key audiences through media, specialist events and platforms.

**Digital buy-in** - Ensure new virtual meeting and digital communication strategies have been understood and embraced by employees to get buy-in.



# Joycee Awosika

**Founder of Oriki Group, Nigeria**  
[www.orikigroup.com](http://www.orikigroup.com)

Joycee Awosika is an award-winning entrepreneur, energy economist and speaker. Her business, ORÍKÌ, is the first all natural farm-to-skin brand to operate a fast-growing premium product and wellness spa brand. Launched in 2015, ORÍKÌ has developed six spas in four years and distributes specialist spa products globally. Joycee is passionate about impacting SMEs to be sustainable and scaleable, realizing they form the backbone of the economy.

## HER CHALLENGE

Finding smarter ways of working in a people-focused business during a pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

# Refocusing the business to democratize wellness and maximize new opportunities

Rethinking the future of work is something that Joycee Awosika knows all about in her luxury wellness business. Being a customer facing business in the premium market segment through her luxury spas, when the Covid pandemic hit the impact was felt immediately. During lockdowns, her spas had to temporarily close. However, Joycee quickly realized that although the business had always been traditionally focused on the luxury and premium market, her business offerings had a wider appeal and application in the democratized wellness space.

*“We always talk about how we put the Oriki family first. We keep that family feeling for our Oriki team members through our company values. The first value is nurture. So it was definitely an interesting time nurturing and taking everyone through the transition.”*

When lockdowns eased, she saw a real consumer need to alleviate stress, but in the safety of the home environment. So she took the decision to offer a new, safe, home spa service for her customers. Her competitors were still reluctant to move into this market space, so Joycee was able to create a strong business case and get first to market advantage. The health and safety of employees and customers during the roll-out of this business model was paramount.

*“We decided that on our mission of democratizing wellness, we were also going to launch Oriki as a franchise, so we brought in franchise consultants. It's always been a mission of Oriki Spa to scale.”*

During the pandemic, to keep everyone safe, Joycee's therapists were accommodated, they were transported to people's homes to provide the spa service, and they wore their PPE at all times. Interestingly, something positive happened during that time. Joycee's customer base increased because no one else was willing to provide this type of home spa service to customers who were in dire need of stress relief during the pandemic.

Joycee's business grew a new customer base during this period of time, with the home spa service offering generating other business once lockdown was completely eased. There was an immediate increase in patronage for her luxury spas as people began to look at wellness as an important and integral part of their lives. This move to democratizing wellness led to the creation of a new business opportunity, franchising of the Oriki brand.

*“We changed our HR model completely during the pandemic. We wanted our team and our people to feel that their voices were heard. We have more of an open door policy now.”*

This ambitious move, to scale up the business and brand in as many communities as possible, provides an opportunity for people to become entrepreneurs and also own Oriki franchise businesses across Africa, and hopefully globally in the future. Joycee brought in franchise consultants to advise on the process and create a roadmap to launch this new business concept in the third quarter of 2021.



# Refocusing the business

**HER CHALLENGE**

Finding smarter ways of working in a people-focused business

**HER SOLUTION**

Refocusing the business to democratize wellness and maximize new opportunities

**Finding smarter ways of working in a people-focused business in a challenging environment, you'll need to tackle three key issues:**

**Innovation** - Develop an internal culture of innovating to find solutions to key challenges, and market test quickly to ensure first-to-market advantage.

**People** - Create a values-driven employee engagement strategy that is built on regular communication and feedback.

**Customer centricity** - Ensure the business strategy is customer-focused, incorporating methodologies for customer feedback and communication.



# Kate Quartey-Papafio

**Founder of Reroy Cables, Ghana**

[www.reroycable.com](http://www.reroycable.com)

Kate Quartey-Papafio founded Reroy Cables Ltd in 1992 to distribute high quality electrical cables. Reroy Cables represents the repositioning of one of the iconic brand names in Ghana's cable manufacturing and aluminium application industry. The business is a major player in the production and supply of power cables, conductors, provision of electrical power distribution system, and strategic contract services to the electricity sector.



## HER CHALLENGE

To manage change and mindsets in the business in order to stay agile and innovate

## HER SOLUTION

Strong leadership communication, training and introducing innovation into the business

For Kate Quartey-Papafio, the pandemic stimulated a need for change in the business, both in mindset on the part of all employees, and also in terms of a more innovative approach required to business operations and management, and of course, customer engagement. It required a 360 degree rethink of the business strategy, from the grassroots in manufacturing, through to distribution, supply chain and logistics.

*“We needed to get the mindset of our people right, for them to understand that we are not in normal times. They have to know that the time now is for innovation. We all have to put our heads together and think about how we move the company forward.”*

Kate also recognised the need to adapt her business working environment from a people perspective in order to keep employees motivated during a period of so much change. The need to encourage people to do things really differently in their work, meant keeping everyone pointed in the same direction, strategy wise and keeping them motivated. Good communication was key.

*“I'm thinking of bringing more women on board because women are more stable, they are calmer, and they can really handle things better. I'm looking at encouraging more women in my industry sector.”*

Kate introduced the practice of doing more internal and external meetings online instead of in-person as would have traditionally been the case. To support these changes in working practices and to help employees to successfully navigate the changes, she also put in place a series of training programmes for employees to retrain their mindsets as well as their practical ways of working.

Another challenge Kate encountered during this time was the need to hire more people in the business who could help drive the new, more innovative and efficient business processes that were necessary. She recognised the gap to improve everything from internal quality controls through to deliveries, by introducing more innovations and new ways of doing things. Once again, it required a change of mindset on the part of employees, and a willingness to quickly adopt the new skills through training and development. Hiring young and dynamic people to take a more innovative approach to doing things differently and more efficiently in the business was key.

*“What we are doing now is hiring people who can turn the business around. We need to hire a lot more people who can really help make our processes better, from quality control through to deliveries. You make them better with innovations.”*

Getting the existing workforce to adapt to a new more innovative way of working remained a challenge initially as they were used to doing things the same old ways and reluctant to change. Hiring additional people with positive mindsets and an openness to learning new skills helped to drive greater efficiency in business processes.

# Managing change through innovation

## HER CHALLENGE

To manage change and mindsets in the business in order to stay agile and innovate

## HER SOLUTION

Strong leadership communication, training and introducing innovation into the business

To manage change and mindsets in the business in order to stay agile and innovate, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Leadership communication** - get employees to support the need for change in the business by sharing the new business strategy and communicating the role employees need to play in achieving overall goals.

**Innovation** - introduce and encourage a more innovative way of thinking and approaching jobs and roles within the business, to make business processes more efficient and competitive.

**Skills development** - develop a strategy for skills development for employees across the business to encourage faster adoption of new production, quality control, sales and other business processes.



# Keren Pybus

**Co-founder of Ethical Apparel Africa, Ghana and Benin**

**[www.ethicalapparelafrika.com](http://www.ethicalapparelafrika.com)**

Keren Pybus is the co-founder and ceo of Ethical Apparel in Ghana. She brings over 20 years of experience to the business in sourcing, merchandising, and retail operations. Her passion for ethical manufacturing inspired her to start the business with her co-founder. The aim was to develop a business model that provides living wages and worker empowerment.

## HER CHALLENGE

Improving internal communication across a culturally diverse team

## HER SOLUTION

# Introducing remote communication strategies, with an emphasis on quality engagement

While there are many options for remote communication, choosing the right mix is important. Keren relies on different communication platforms to keep her multi-cultural staff connected. She is all too aware that the risk of misunderstandings increases with distance. As a result, a large portion of her day is spent having conversations, listening, and planning with her staff. In terms of communication platforms and tools, WhatsApp is a reliable option, especially with the volume of international calls that Keren needs to make. She has set up WhatsApp groups to connect specific segments of the business.

*“Our goal is job creation. It’s a core part of what we do.”*

Keeping track of important conversations can be difficult. She finds that communication platforms with built-in search features are very useful for reviewing past discussions. Keren finds that it helps to have a clearly defined purpose for each communication channel. At Ethical Apparel Africa, there is a team chat for informal discussion, where employees share their experiences. This is separate from the formal platforms for monthly team meetings where staff work through performance-related issues.

*“Obviously photos and video calls have become really, really important. And we've had to massively upgrade our Internet in the office to allow for much more of those kinds of things.”*

She also encourages the use of Google Hangouts groups within the business for various things, including team chats, in a more social and informal way. Monthly team meetings are held in the same way where the focus is on discussing business performance. Also training sessions which address hotspot training needs, whether it's on a policy or something that's particularly come up in the day-to-day running of the business, or the needs of a new client.

The aim of such communication channels is to ensure that everyone in the business is talking all the time, recognising that the best remote work communication strategy can only go so far.

Keryn believes that hiring staff whose values align with those of the business guarantees that everyone is working towards a shared set of goals. Finding individuals who are a good fit might take longer, but like the effort that she is investing into building clear and effective communication channels, it ultimately pays off.

*“If somebody could have all the technical skills that we require, but if their values and their attitudes don't line up with where the business is, we wouldn't recruit them.”*

Job creation remains a core part of what the business does, and one of the key aims is to prove that an ethical manufacturing model can be done at scale, and scale means creating jobs. That is Ethical Apparel's core vision in terms of achieving that goal.

# Maintaining good employee communication

**HER CHALLENGE**

Improving internal communication across a culturally diverse team

**HER SOLUTION**

Introducing remote communication strategies, with an emphasis on quality engagement

**To ensure the most effective use of remote communication channels between management and teams of different backgrounds, you'll need to focus on three key issues:**

**Communication choices** – Provide a variety of communication technology choices for your staff and customers. Fast is not always best. Sometimes, a quick exchange is all that is needed but there will be situations where face-to-face engagement is necessary.

**Clear guidelines** – Make sure that everyone is clear about the rules for digital communication in your company.

**Social networks** – Consider setting up an an informal channel for employees to share information and updates, so that they do not feel disconnected and isolated.



# Lilly Alfonso

**Founder of Lilly Alfonso, Malawi**

[www.lillyalfonso.com](http://www.lillyalfonso.com)

Lilly Alfonso is a renowned fashion designer and founder of Lilly Alfonso in Malawi, a fashion design label that has evolved over the years to become one of the leading fashion brands in Malawi. With 10 years of experience in design and manufacturing, Lilly has proven that with passion, dedication and hard work, one can flourish and grow a brand of international repute.

## HER CHALLENGE

To engage employees and customers in an ambitious vision for the business

## HER SOLUTION

# Communicating a big vision for the business through an ambitious, strategic 100 Year Plan

When the pandemic brought business as usual to a standstill, it meant creating a new strategic vision for the future for Lilly Alfonso and her fashion design and manufacturing label. She realized that for the business to adapt to the new reality and continue to grow, despite the challenges, there had to be an ambitious new plan developed, one that was both visionary and high impact. For the Lilly Alfonso brand, that was the 100 Year Plan, a strategy for how the business would grow, but also a philosophy for investment and pride in proudly African made design and product manufacture. Lilly's vision for her 100 Year Plan was a mechanism to reach both her employees and her customers with her brand message, and capture the imagination of consumers which in turn would hopefully lead to new sales and business opportunities.

*“We have to invest in Africa. We have to believe in Africa. We have to believe in what we have. We have to learn to put our products out there.”*



Lilly has taken a very proactive approach to training of her workforce over the years, particularly because the brand is built on fashionwear products that are created by hand, by well trained craftspeople. In fact, Lilly's team has been trained over and over again throughout the years. However, the pandemic brought a more innovative approach to not just training her people on production techniques, but also in terms of telling the Lilly Alfonso brand story through it's approach to craftsmanship in production and design.

*"I have my vision though the 100 Year Plan, so it's easy for me now. I'm using it to inspire and motivate people, to remind us what needs to be done to move forward in the business."*

By harnessing the power of digital technology in the business, Lilly and her team started to look at ways of sharing and communicating new design and production processes. By both employees and consumers seeing through the medium of video how the end-to-end process is undertaken to creating high quality fashion products, everyone is more engaged with the brand.

By using videos to tell the production process and Lilly Alfonso brand story, everyone is able to see the transition from concept through to the methodology of producing a garment. As a result, everyone learns and everyone is engaged in the brand.

*"Through my 100 Year Plan and the Lilly Alfonso collections, I am giving people a reason to have hope for the future and understand why Africa is important. So for me, it's a powerful way of communicating, but in a different way."*

For Lilly, creating a big vision and communicating it through her 100 Year Plan means that she can build brand passion internally amongst her employees, celebrating their craftsmanship and passion in the products they produce for the brand. Her commitment to training her workforce and using videos to both teach and highlight the talent of her individual craftspeople in the business, means she is harnessing the medium of video to its fullest benefit.

# Communicating a big vision to engage people

## HER CHALLENGE

To engage employees and customers in being part of a big vision for the business

## HER SOLUTION

Communicating a big vision for the business through an ambitious, strategic 100 Year Plan

Lilly offers some key points on how to get both employees and customers to buy into and engage with the business and brand, and importantly, its vision for the future.

**Develop your vision** — Spend time articulating your vision for the business and make it easy for employees and customers to understand.

**Communicate** — Create a communications strategy that will ensure employees understand the vision of the business and brand, and their role in helping it to grow.

**Technology** — Harness the power of digital technology, and especially video, as a means of reaching both employees and customers with the vision for the business. Use the power of distribution for the video through social media to extend both internal and external reach.



# Lorna Rutto

**Founder of EcoPost, Kenya**

[www.ecopost.co.ke](http://www.ecopost.co.ke)

Lorna Rutto is a Kenyan eco-preneur, and the inspiring founder of EcoPost, a social enterprise created in response to the need to find alternative waste management solutions to Kenya's huge plastic waste problem. In 2009, she founded her company which collects plastic waste and manufactures commercially viable, highly durable, and environmentally friendly fencing posts, used widely across Kenya.

## HER CHALLENGE

Keeping up with growing demand by integrating local people into the supply chain

## HER SOLUTION

### Developing local people solutions to improve productivity

Lorna Rutto's passion for the environment and dedication to creating jobs in marginalized communities is the driving force behind EcoPost. She is among the fortunate few who found customers flocking to her business during the Covid pandemic. Some were attracted to her brand because of new products, while others found new uses for her existing range. Lorna proactively integrates local communities into her supply chain by using cooperatives to pick and sort waste that she then recycles into environmentally friendly plastic lumber.

*"We introduced a new product into the market to help tackle the problem."*

During the Covid pandemic, a ban prevented waste pickers from working at dumpsites and earning much needed income. She temporarily turned to factories to purchase waste directly until restrictions were eased and she could reconnect with community groups.

*“Demand increased because people were at home and free to fence their homes because they were not at work. So, there were a lot of orders.”*

Working from home meant that some people had time to devote to long overdue maintenance work. This led to a spike in customer orders for Ecopost’s fencing. To scale up production, Lorna needs to import equipment, but the pandemic has drastically reduced imports. Instead of delaying her plans, she has decided to refurbish and upgrade locally sourced equipment as a short-term solution. She also turned to a local transportation company that was licensed to travel outside of Nairobi for nationwide deliveries.

Technology has helped Lorna to maintain productivity levels. She installed cameras on the factory floor to monitor production processes and quality control remotely and she has drastically cut travel costs by communicating online with clients.

*“We also introduced a camera at almost all points of the factory so that eventually we could watch from wherever we were.”*

Another positive to emerge from this new working environment was the introduction of more effective ways for customers to transact with the business, using an e-commerce platform. Not only did this provide a greater amount of transparency regarding sales and orders, but also it provided a powerful way of managing cashflow and monitoring revenue coming into the business and tracking progress in real-time.

# Improving productivity by going local

**HER CHALLENGE**

Keeping up with growing demand for products

**HER SOLUTION**

Developing local solutions to improve productivity

Lorna created opportunities during the Covid pandemic for her business through innovation and persistence. To maintain and grow your own business during such challenging situations, you'll need to tackle three issues:

**Substitute where possible** — Consider local, affordable alternatives to tide over interruptions in your supply chain.

**Productivity** — When you can't be physically at the office, explore tech solutions to monitor productivity and quality control.

**Innovation** — Introduce suitable technology for your team to collaborate, share ideas and innovate.



# Margaret Hirsch



**Co-founder of Hirsch's Group, South Africa**

[www.hirschs.co.za](http://www.hirschs.co.za)

Margaret Hirsch has become a leading, inspirational example to business women in Southern Africa – coming from a humble background, to co-founding and running the multi-million rand Appliance and Electronic retail organisation, Hirsch's. Margaret has been recognised through her efforts in building a successful business, and her determination to give back to the community.

## HER CHALLENGE

How to motivate employees in a crisis to stay focused, positive and productive

## HER SOLUTION

### Develop an employee engagement and motivational strategy

Being in the highly competitive retail sector, Margaret Hirsch understands how essential it is to be an agile business, able to respond quickly and innovatively to any challenge, such as the Covid pandemic. With a large business employing thousands of staff members, agility is key, together with keeping every employee focused on delivering their roles and responsibilities in order to achieve the vision and goals of the business. From a leadership perspective, Margaret understands the power of communication and employee engagement, and the need to develop an internal business culture underpinned by motivation and big team thinking.

*“We adapt to our internal world of work almost daily because new things are coming out all the time. During the pandemic, all our branches came online every morning at 8am for a 10 minute employee motivation session.”*

Margaret believes in the power of motivation and positive thinking to improve employee wellbeing and productivity, and this philosophy is at the heart of Hirschs. Through the pandemic, a spirit of team building and personal motivation has been a constant feature, with regular online and shop floor engagement events taking place, often led by Margaret herself. These daily events feature motivational songs, personal gratitude sessions, individual and team goal setting for the day.

*“We have a meeting in the morning which is very positive, and then we finish with a motivational song before we talk about the customer specials of the day.”*

In any successful retail environment, customer facing employees need to stay motivated and brand committed in order to close those essential sales. By encouraging each employee to start their work day by thinking about the things they are grateful for in their personal lives, and the things they want to achieve each day, they are positive in their attitude. This personal empowering approach to positivity in the workplace creates a great place to work for everyone, and importantly, ensures a great customer experience too.

Margaret also harnessed the power of webinars to create a platform for motivational leadership, connecting her to employees remotely when in-person visits were not possible to individual stores. Using webinars has given Margaret the opportunity to recreate the sense of in-person employee engagement and team building and to ensure line of sight to inspirational and motivational leadership.

*“We literally have to think on our feet all the time, and that’s the beauty of our business and our dynamic team.”*

Margaret is also a key champion of constant learning and encourages employees to keep developing themselves, to learn new skills, to study so that they can fulfill their potential. She leads from the front as a role model, continuing her own personal development journey as a business leader and motivating others in the business to do the same.

# Motivating your employees

## HER CHALLENGE

How to motivate employees in a crisis to stay focused, positive and productive

## HER SOLUTION

Develop and implement an employee engagement and motivational strategy

**Respond to key challenges by keeping your employees engaged, inspired, motivated and focused on the solution.**

**Communicate** — Create effective digital and in-person communication channels to inspire, motivate and engage every employee daily

**Engage** — Create a strong team environment where every employee feels acknowledged and engaged.

**Motivate** — Lead from the front by empowering and encouraging each employee to meet their business and personal goals daily.

**Culture** - Build a positive internal culture where employees are empowered to ensure negativity is left at the door before work starts each day.





# Michelle Adelman

**Founder of Infinite Foods & Go Fresh, Botswana/South Africa**  
[www.acciteholdings.com](http://www.acciteholdings.com)

Michelle Adelman, founder of Accite Holdings in Botswana, is harnessing the power of technology combined with sustainable business and investment models to create fast growing solutions to meet the need for fresh produce and alternative sources of protein. Accite Holdings is a boutique business development and impact investment firm focused on technology-led agriculture and food security projects in growth markets.

## HER CHALLENGE

Navigating a shortage of agricultural inputs and a reduced market for produce because of pandemic restrictions

## HER SOLUTION

Investing in a fast-growing market segment, while developing the skills of young entrepreneurs

Michelle Adelman's bold leadership is redefining how food security can be achieved in Africa. She also has a great passion for supporting young people who are trying to break new ground in this industry as entrepreneurs. Accite Holdings brings together a collection of innovative agricultural projects. While some parts of the business thrived during the pandemic, others were severely constrained. Her technology-led approach to agriculture meant that production was well set up for lockdown interruptions. Produce is grown close to city centres, thus eliminating the carbon and spoilage from the delivery footprint, and guaranteeing fresh, nutritious products to the consumer.

*“Getting your food safety certifications in line so that you have the ability to scale up the business is key to getting stability and cash flow.”*

Her biggest challenge, in the early days of the pandemic, was accessing inputs from South Africa. Border closures led to severe supply disruptions. Planting cycles were missed. The closure of the tourism and restaurant industry effectively cut off her market for higher-end produce.

*“I would really advise young entrepreneurs to focus their energy on product. You've got to be able to have a product that tastes good, that has the right feel so that consumers come back to over and over again.”*

Michelle shifted her focus from the high-end market towards commodity crops for the local market. She also launched an affiliate program during the pandemic to tap into the growing demand for plant-based meat and dairy alternatives in sub-Saharan Africa. As always, she is determined to use this new venture to help young entrepreneurs access funding and acquire business skills in a rapidly expanding segment of the food industry.

To stand out in the food and agriculture industry, Michelle urges young entrepreneurs to focus their energy on developing a product that stands out, tastes good and looks appealing. Quality is everything and quality is the only way to unlock food safety certifications, so vital for scaling up the business.

*“We will be launching in Kenya and then in West Africa. We're very excited. We think that there's a lot of potential in the East and West African markets, that will bring a lot of new complexity to the business from a supply chain perspective and from new consumers that need new sales and marketing approaches.”*

# Develop skills for new market opportunities

## HER CHALLENGE

Navigating a shortage of agricultural inputs and a reduced market for produce due to pandemic constraints

## HER SOLUTION

Investing in a fast-growing market segment, while developing the skills of young entrepreneurs

To remain relevant to your customers, while maintaining a growth outlook when supply and delivery channels are severely interrupted, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Minimise your losses** — When you're cut off from higher-margin segments of your business, focus on where you can bring in revenue until you can rebalance.

**Growth strategy** — Innovate to become competitive in industries where demand is growing, and develop the skills of the next generation young entrepreneurs in the value chain.

**Product quality** — Avoid taking short cuts on product development. Continue to improve quality while always keeping the consumer in mind.



# Monica Musonda

**Founder of Java Foods, Zambia**

[www.java-foods.com](http://www.java-foods.com)

Corporate Lawyer turned entrepreneur, Monica Musonda is the Founder of Java Foods, a Zambian based food-processing company that provides affordable nutrition to the Southern African market. Java Foods was founded in 2012 with the vision of manufacturing nutritious food products using locally acquired raw materials at affordable prices. Initially Java focused on convenience and providing affordable meal options for its consumers, but in 2015, Java's mission changed to focus much more on nutrition.



## HER CHALLENGE

Rethinking operations to address supply chain challenges

## HER SOLUTION

### Limiting her company's reliance on scarce components and strengthening communication in the workplace

Java Foods was in the middle of implementing an exciting expansion plan for its factory when the Covid pandemic hit. What followed was a gruelling six-month wait for equipment to arrive from China. The unexpected delay effectively ground sales to a halt. And while the equipment eventually arrived, the manufacturers did not send technicians to install the systems. Monica had no choice but to set up the factory using local resources. The biggest take away from this initial pandemic experience was that Java Foods needed to diversify its production and quickly. Over reliance on a single best-selling product could be risky. While the products changed, the company maintained its policy of sourcing ingredients from local suppliers.

*"I think it was really about open communication. That's what we focused on much more and also empowering our managers. So, the managers are much closer to the teams. Also, really getting the managers to say, OK, how is your team doing?"*

Flexibility to work remotely is available in many industries but for workers in manufacturing it's simply not possible to take equipment home. To ensure business continuity in the event of staff becoming unavailable to work during the pandemic, Monica divided her support staff (admin, finance and IT) into teams of four who were available at the office on a rotational basis. She took a different approach to protecting factory employees who need to be on site every day. She invested in training her wider team about the pandemic, purchasing personal protective equipment and made sure that they had sufficient cleaning and sanitising material both at work and at home. She also covered transportation costs for workers to commute safely, as well as medical expenses for staff who became sick.

*“But we really kept on speaking to our employees and teams, to say, look, we all have to work together to get through this.”*

Monica is a perfect example of a compassionate leader during a crisis. She encouraged open communication and she relied on managers to monitor the welfare of their teams. She set up structures for staff to air their concerns and to discuss any challenges that they were facing and was careful to choose appropriate communication tools, depending on whom she was speaking to. WhatsApp worked well with senior staff. A regular monthly Town Hall worked better when speaking to the entire company.

By prioritising safety in the workplace and by being empathetic in her leadership, Monica has created an environment where her staff feel valued and appreciated and are focused on delivery.

Monica relied on her powerful communication skills to negotiate price increases and to adjust delivery schedules. At a time when people's finances are stretched to the limit, even the slightest price increase needed to be explained carefully.

*“We are positive because we're already seeing growth. I think what we're seeing is definitely a time that is focused on growing volume, looking for new markets this year and then next year, really building towards profitability.”*

Monica has overcome several setbacks in the past year by consistently cultivating a work culture that encourages engagement and loyalty and she is optimistic about the future outlook for Java Foods.

# Strengthening communication for growth

**HER CHALLENGE**

Rethinking operations to address supply chain challenges

**HER SOLUTION**

Limiting the company's reliance on scarce components and strengthening communication in the workplace

Supply chain interruptions are often beyond your control but decisions about the communication culture in the workplace can sustain a company well beyond the original crisis. To develop a communication culture that supports the growth of your business, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Communication** — Encourage open communication among staff and with customers to build trust during times of uncertainty.

**Diversify** — Avoid relying on a single best-seller and diversify your range of products.

**Build positive relationships** — Create opportunities for employees to connect with each other and show that you recognise the role that they are playing in the business, especially during challenging times.



# Ngyenzi 'Nunu' Mugyenyi

**Co-founder, Bold in Africa, Uganda**

[www.boldkla.com](http://www.boldkla.com)

Ngyenzi 'Nunu' Mugyenyi is one of the co-founders of Bold in Africa, the brainchild of three vibrant and talented women entrepreneurs from Uganda who have a vision for raising awareness of, and retailing, African fashion brands. Their Bold in Africa retail concept is truly world-class and provides affordable space and excellent exposure for uniquely African designer fashion brands.

## HER CHALLENGE

Rethinking retail during a pandemic to achieve growth potential

## HER SOLUTION

Leveraging social media channels to increase visibility and tap into growing e-commerce opportunities

Bold in Africa is a highly successful retail outlet for the African fashion industry. Ngyenzi 'Nunu' Mugyenyi, one of the company's three visionary co-founders, explains that before the pandemic, the plan was to increase the number of physical stores. The lockdown completely redirected their plans with a greater focus on tapping digital e-commerce opportunities. After the initial shock of closures had worn off, the team quickly launched a new delivery service within Kampala to support digital sales.

*"I feel like we're starting to give back more to both to our clients and also to other young up and coming entrepreneurs in the industry with a specific focus on women."*

The founding entrepreneurial trio at Bold in Africa have always been highly effective at harnessing the power of social media, so as a business they tapped into these skills to increase brand visibility, advertising and engagement with customers, using every opportunity to tell their customers about their digital sales and newly introduced options for home delivery.

*“Our focus is on our domestic market in terms of our physical location and really making the most of it. The domestic market is very important to us.”*

They have also stepped-up plans to develop the business's e-commerce activity, a process which has not been without its challenges. Nunu and her co-founders needed to work out ways to accommodate all their different artisans and brands onto a single platform. They have also spent time exploring the most cost-effective options for international shipping to support e-commerce activity.

A positive outcome from the pandemic is that engagement between the company, its employees and suppliers has increased and relationships have strengthened. International growth is a priority for the future, but the domestic market base remains an important and valued part of their business, so these relationships are key.

*“I'm so grateful that the business didn't close during the pandemic because a lot of businesses did. We owe it to the business to really take it to its full potential. Thinking this way helps us to open many doors and try things that we've been thinking about.”*

Nunu encourages businesses that are developing sophisticated online sales systems to look carefully at what features are available on social media apps in order to improve their business's visibility in the short run. Many of these apps are familiar to users, are easy to use and are cost effective. If an app has a large market share in a country, then the value of integrating it into promotion and marketing activities further increases.



# Leveraging the power of digital

## HER CHALLENGE

Rethinking retail during a pandemic to achieve growth potential

## HER SOLUTION

Leveraging social media channels to increase visibility and introducing a local delivery service

To grow your retail business without increasing the number of locations, you’ll need to refocus your employees to think digital marketing, a shift to e-commerce. Start by tackling three key issues:

**Increase your digital sales channels** — Aside from building an e-commerce store, there are several other possibilities including social media and third-party stores. You might consider a safer and less costly alternative to start with, while you develop more integrated solutions, and ensure you upskill your staff to be more digitally focused.

**Communicate** — Harness the power of social media to communicate with customers and engage your employees to start thinking about how they communicate both internally and externally using digital platforms and tools.

**Customer base** — Finding new customers via digital marketing and retaining existing ones are both essential for growth.



# Dr. Ola Brown

**Founder of Flying Doctors Healthcare Investment Company, Nigeria**

[www.fdinvestmentcompany.com](http://www.fdinvestmentcompany.com)

Dr Ola Brown is the founder of the Flying Doctors Healthcare Investment Company (FDHIC) in Nigeria. The Group invests and operates across the healthcare and wellness value chain in hospital/clinic construction and refurbishment, diagnostics and equipment, health facility management, pharmaceutical retail, drug manufacturing, air ambulance services and logistics, and consulting/healthcare technology.

## HER CHALLENGE

Adapting to a new way of working in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

# Business agility and a new spirit of innovation in The New Workplace

During the Covid-19 lockdown, Dr Ola Brown's business, Flying Doctors Healthcare Investment Group in Nigeria, had to go into remote working mode. For the first time, employees were not able to see each other physically, not able to use the office, not able to work in the environment they were used to. Providing infrastructure to deal with the change internally meant implementing Google Meet, and providing people with the data and power for their homes to be able to work during the day. In a lot of developed countries, power is a given, but it was necessary to look for alternative power sources for the teams to work from home.

*"It's the agility and the spirit of innovation that I believe we gained from having to respond to something so unexpected that is going to continue to be part of our DNA."*

As a healthcare business, innovation was key to rising to the challenge and finding solutions in a state of emergency. Instead of having the time to set up response projects step-by-step in the usual methodical way, a rapid response team was formed to quickly address day-to-day challenges. The business's procurement value chain leveraged long-term partners to access equipment that had become very scarce. Existing business relationships were also leveraged to quickly respond and set up emergency isolation centres.

*“The strength of the relationships that we built prior to the pandemic helped us get our hands on stuff that perhaps a lot of people would have found difficult to do.”*

Geographically and logistically, they were practical challenges to address, because team members weren't able to travel by air during the lockdown. For example, the team had to make a 20 plus hour road trip from Lagos to Zampa in the north of Nigeria to set up a new diagnostic facility. In all, three molecular labs were established and 12 states were covered with testing centres, with over a hundred molecular lab scientists trained to be able to use the PCR technique to do molecular testing.

In addition to these sorts of interventions, the business had to work around logistics. It was necessary to improve project management skills to deploy these projects a lot quicker than in normal circumstances, and to leverage relationships to get access to essential equipment and PPE, all of which was in huge global short supply.

The workforce grew significantly during the pandemic as a result of resource mobilization for all the different diagnostic and treatment facilities that were set up. As a result, they had to become a lot more agile.

*“I don't think I've changed my leadership style during the pandemic, but I think that it has become more effective as people have become more sensitized to the importance of our sector.”*

# Reimagining the Workplace

**HER CHALLENGE**

Adapting to a new way of working in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic

**HER SOLUTION**

Business agility and a new spirit of innovation in The New Workplace

**To create a more agile and responsive workplace strategy, you'll need to tackle three key issues:**

**Partnerships** — Leverage the power of existing partnerships and the strength of your relationships to get things done.

**Agility** — Stay agile, build agility into your business DNA, and create an internal business culture where staying agile in response to new business challenges becomes the norm.

**Skills development** — Keep investing in your skills development, especially online, because it makes a difference to your people and your business.



# Samantha Skyring

**Founder of Oryx Desert Salt, South Africa**

[www.oryxdesertsalt.co.za](http://www.oryxdesertsalt.co.za)

Samantha Skyring is the founder of Oryx Desert Salt in South Africa. She has enjoyed a varied entrepreneurial journey, including a five month journey in Namibia which was the catalyst for creating her business and brand. Today, her growing business supplies a natural, crystal-white salt from the Kalahari – unrefined, sun-dried, and free from additives and preservatives.

## HER CHALLENGE

Redefining her role as she moves her business into international markets

## HER SOLUTION

### Hiring a CEO and taking on a more strategic role

As with so many other businesses globally, Covid had a negative impact on Oryx Desert Salt's sales. As a luxury product dependent on the tourism, hotels and restaurant trade, Oryx was caught in the cross-hairs of the worst of the impact of the pandemic. While Covid was decimating revenue, it also brought clarity about some problems that had remained unresolved within the company. After a few personnel changes, the company was in better shape for the next big step up. And this arrived when Oryx Desert Salt got a listing in Whole Foods, the US food distributor. This is a good fit for Oryx, so there is every prospect of increases in revenue going forward.

*“The pandemic gave me perspective that working on your business and not in your business is very key. To trust my team.”*

As the company has grown, Samantha has found that she needed to change her role too. As CEO she had been laser-focused on delivering on sales and production, but this left too little time for thinking about strategic direction. The solution was to bring in a new CEO and make sure that great people were in the key positions in the business, allowing Samantha to be more hands-off in the day to day operations.

*“I cannot get involved in the stuff that everyone else can actually sort out by themselves. I need to be focusing on what's going to pivot and take us to the next level.”*

Samantha found it was important not to be a problem solver but to rather trust her team to resolve day-to-day issues. Her focus needed to be on larger strategic questions. A less involved role also means she will have more time to devote to the larger clients.

Samantha also found some great ways to build her team. On Fridays, everyone shares a meal. And sharing a meal has now grown into dancing. She believes that bringing joy and human connectivity into the workplace has made the company a better place to work. Importantly, this human centered approach has created a sense of community in the business, a place where people feel they belong and that everyone has a stake in the success of the business.

*“Having the right key people is so important.”*

Samantha believes in building integrity with a brand, and being unwavering in that goal because it is a challenge, it's a journey. She says that as soon as you get over one mountain, you realize that there's another one just as big to get to the next, and the hurdles just keep getting bigger. But she says if you remain true to your brand, to your product, and focus on quality, and that you are offering a service to humanity, there's no reason for it not to be successful.

# Redefine roles and delegate

## HER CHALLENGE

Redefining her role as she moves her business into international markets.

## HER SOLUTION

Hiring a CEO and taking on a more strategic role.

To ensure you can grow your business and take advantage of new opportunities when you move into new markets, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Trust your team** — Allowing your team to solve day-to-day operational problems allows you the headspace to focus on bigger strategic issues that are key to business growth.

**Think long-term** — Look ahead and plot a strategic direction for where the company should be in 5 or 10 years time.

**Change your role** — Step away from day-to-day operations and bring in new staff to fulfill the management roles and responsibilities.



# Sarah Collins

**Founder of Wonderbag, South Africa**

[www.wonderbagworld.com](http://www.wonderbagworld.com)

Sarah Collins is an impact driven entrepreneur whose company manufactures, sells and subsidizes a revolutionary cooking product known as the Wonderbag, based on the oldest technology in the world – heat retention cooking. Wonderbag is a revolutionary product which has created life changing impact in millions of homes across the world. It is both an environmentally and socially impact driven business, not only creating economic growth per household but also creating Carbon credits by saving CO2 emissions from cooking fuels.

## HER CHALLENGE

Finding a solution to widespread hunger during the pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

# Scaling up manufacturing and adapting production processes

Sarah's greatest concern at the beginning of the Covid pandemic was how to continue to support the people and communities that relied on Wonderbag. However, the business's capacity to manufacture proved to be an unexpected advantage. A shortage of face masks at the beginning of the pandemic created the opportunity to temporarily diversify and change production processes in order to produce face masks for both the local and international markets in the crisis.

*"I don't think there will ever be a post covid, not for the next few years anyway. One of the big things that I am preparing myself for and have been working towards is how do we work within the framework of the world that we are now living in."*



With short-notice, a strict lockdown from March 2020 plunged many South African households into hardship. Restrictions on movement forced people to remain indoors, often in overcrowded dwellings. For households living in informal settlements, cooking indoors increased the risk of exposure to harmful pollutants. Wonderbag's fuel efficient cooking mechanism offered a timely solution to communities that were hardest hit by the pandemic. As a result, the company scaled up manufacturing and distribution, maintaining vital work flows for the business and its people.

*“We had to pivot very quickly back into the carbon space. We needed to really dig down into how were going to be raise carbon funding. Who were we going to talk to? who were the biggest emitters in the world or in South Africa.”*

Carbon Tax legislation is being finalised in South Africa and many local companies are looking to reduce their carbon footprint. Wonderbag projects have been registered to issue carbon credits for many years and Sarah's foresight is finally paying off, which bodes well for the business.

Sarah's business is well positioned to have a significant impact on climate change while continuing to empower communities. She believes that technology is set to play a growing role in the future of the business, not only to improve how carbon audits are conducted but also to monitor manufacturing processes.

*“I've risen to the challenge to say to banks and to investors, you put your money where your mouth is. And if you want to be part of a world that makes sense for the future, an equitable world, we've got to learn to work in an equitable way.”*

Despite having a proven track record, and even with clear evidence of a meaningful social contribution, support for women-led businesses among investors remains lukewarm. Sarah believes that a good way to remain anchored in your goals as a woman entrepreneur looking to grow a business is to find a mentor, especially with the adjustments that most businesses are currently undergoing.

# Scaling up and adapting production

**HER CHALLENGE**

Finding a solution to widespread hunger during the pandemic

**HER SOLUTION**

Scaling up manufacturing and adapting production processes

**Social enterprises have a crucial role to play in supporting vulnerable communities through a crisis. To continue to make a difference while remaining financially sustainable, you'll need to tackle three key issues:**

**Become more data driven**— Review the data you are already generating and decide which metrics will support the goals of your business.

**Adapt to changing needs** — Your business's infrastructure could be well-positioned to provide new products and services during an unexpected crisis. Being agile and adapting to new circumstances can maintain jobs and redeploy resources.

**Find a mentor**— A mentor can provide valuable feedback and advice for you to grow personally and professionally, and provide strategic insights and perspective when needed.



# Suzie Wokabi



**Founder of Suzie Beauty, Kenya**

[www.suziebeauty.com](http://www.suziebeauty.com)

Suzie Wokabi founded SuzieBeauty back in 2001, Kenya's first homegrown makeup brand. Suzie's vision was to provide consumers with a high quality brand of cosmetics at fair prices. Her company specializes in the latest and most current natural products and exceptional colour ranges inspired by the African continent.

## HER CHALLENGE

Rethinking the business model and harnessing digital talent to maximise online sales

## HER SOLUTION

Tapping into digital business opportunities by refocusing internal employee skillsets and expertise

As a highly experienced beauty brand builder, Suzie Wokabi understands the power of communication, which has been key to dealing with the challenges of the pandemic and its impact on the retail beauty trade. When retail stores were forced to close during lock-down periods, her business looked to maximise digital sales opportunities through online, requiring a shift in focus for employees.

*“We've always had an in-house social media manager who's amazing at what she does. So she's had to step up our online game a lot. Our web developer has also had to step up his game, in fact everyone has had to up their digital game in the business.”*

Suzie's biggest challenge in the early days of the pandemic, was shifting stock during periods when in-person retail was not possible. The opportunities to connect with customers via online needed to be maximised, and that required Suzie Beauty internal social media and web management employees to work with Suzie to develop solutions.

*“The pandemic gave us the opportunity to do better in the e-commerce and social media environment, so we were very stringent on that internally in the business.”*

Suzie realized that her role as business founder would need to adapt to take on board a more visible presence as the face and voice of the brand in order to maintain market presence, and to engage with and inspire customers and employees alike. As a business leader, Suzie went back to basics and harnessed the power of her personal leadership brand to empower, engage and inform.

Suzie quickly realized that the level of customer and employee engagement increased when she used her own personal voice and industry insights to make those all important people connections. By taking on the highly visible role of being the face and voice of her brand instead of delegating that role to others, engagement levels increased.

*“Prior to the pandemic, we just weren't focusing on our online business strategy...and now, the results are being seen. So it's great and we will be sticking to it for our future of work for sure.”*

Getting back to basics has been key for Suzie and her team, and she has seen her leadership role as pivotal to the business adapting to the changing market environment and its challenges during the pandemic. Going forward, she will be using her brand voice to inspire, motivate and bring her employees along with her as the business evolves to meet the demands of the ever changing marketplace.

# Refocusing internal skillsets & expertise

## HER CHALLENGE

Rethinking the business model and harnessing digital talent to maximise online sales

## HER SOLUTION

Tapping into digital business opportunities by refocusing internal employee skillsets and expertise

To maximise employee engagement, and sales and brand visibility opportunities during challenging times, you'll need to focus on three key issues:

**Rethink your strategy** — Having an agile, market responsive digital marketing and sales strategy is key - develop your online platforms and supporting digital sales plans for employees to implement.

**Tap into your employee skillsets** — Harness the specialist expertise of your employees responsible for your company digital presence, and innovate to increase sales and brand presence.

**Refocus employees** — Engage your employees to shift their focus to online sales and provide the necessary training to create this new future of work internally.

**Lead through your personal brand** - Use your leadership brand voice and visibility to strengthen employee and customer engagement.



# Tara Fela-Durotoye

**Founder of House of Tara, Nigeria**

**[www.houseoftara.com](http://www.houseoftara.com)**

Tara Fela-Durotoye is a Beauty Entrepreneur who pioneered the professional make up industry in Nigeria in the late 90's. She is the founder of House of Tara. She is considered a major force in the Nigerian female entrepreneurship community having created an impact business that has empowered tens of thousands of beauty entrepreneurs through the "Tara Beauty Entrepreneur" initiative. Tara continues to be a thought leader and major influencer through training courses that focus on sharing her 20+ year experience with budding entrepreneurs.

## HER CHALLENGE

Responding to frequent changes in market conditions

## HER SOLUTION

# Building employee resilience to respond to market uncertainty

Tara Fela-Durotoye was in a unique position at the beginning of the Covid pandemic. With a wealth of experience as a highly respected business leader and mentor in the beauty industry, she had grown accustomed to adapting her business in response to uncertainty. Top of her list during the pandemic was restructuring her operations to improve efficiency. A leaner company structure was needed to track performance carefully because there were fewer people with larger business portfolios to handle.

*“We had to restructure the business around e-commerce, shrinking some of our previous departments and becoming leaner for efficiency. We had to digitalize our business as well and try to build a new clientele base that works online.”*

The company was forced to shut down its stores nationwide to comply with lockdown regulations. After reopening, the focus was on regaining customer confidence by ensuring that covid protocols were in place. She invested in sanitisers and spraying machines and introduced strict social distancing guidelines.

*“Giving employees a sense of hope, teaching them about resilience, became my focus for a long time, for many, many months.”*

Her business faced yet another crisis, this time in the form of civil unrest, which led to one of the stores being vandalised. Employee morale was at a record low. Tara knew that she needed to step in and play a more active role in the business to keep her young team inspired. She organised a system of small group check-ins among her employees and she introduced regular virtual meetings with some of her teams.

The online segment of the business was the responsibility of the marketing department. Recognising the role and importance of e-commerce for future growth, Tara created a separate department to focus exclusively on improving the quality of existing digital platforms. Not all her clients are ready to transition to online shopping with many still preferring the in-store experience. Her online growth strategy is based on gradually persuading existing customers to buy online and attracting new online shoppers to her brand. It is still early days for the online business, but Tara anticipates steady growth if her company continues with its current e-commerce strategy.

*“I think we need to spend more time asking and trying to understand what consumers want. We've just introduced a new skincare range that came out of that engagement that is doing very well as a new product in the market. We probably would not have done that without hearing from our consumers.”*

Understanding and responding to customer needs remains important for the growth of House of Tara. The recent launch of a very popular skincare range came about directly from engaging with customers.

# Building agility through motivation & communication

## HER CHALLENGE

Responding to frequent changes in market conditions

## HER SOLUTION

Building agility and resilience through motivation and communication to respond to uncertainty and change

Growing your business through period of uncertainty often requires setting aside old ways of doing things and embracing new approaches. This means bringing your team members along with you. To build a sustainable business during turbulent times, you'll need to tackle three key issues:

**Restructure your operations** — Focus on addressing the short and long-term impact on your business of the disruption, and engage employees to make them part of the solution.

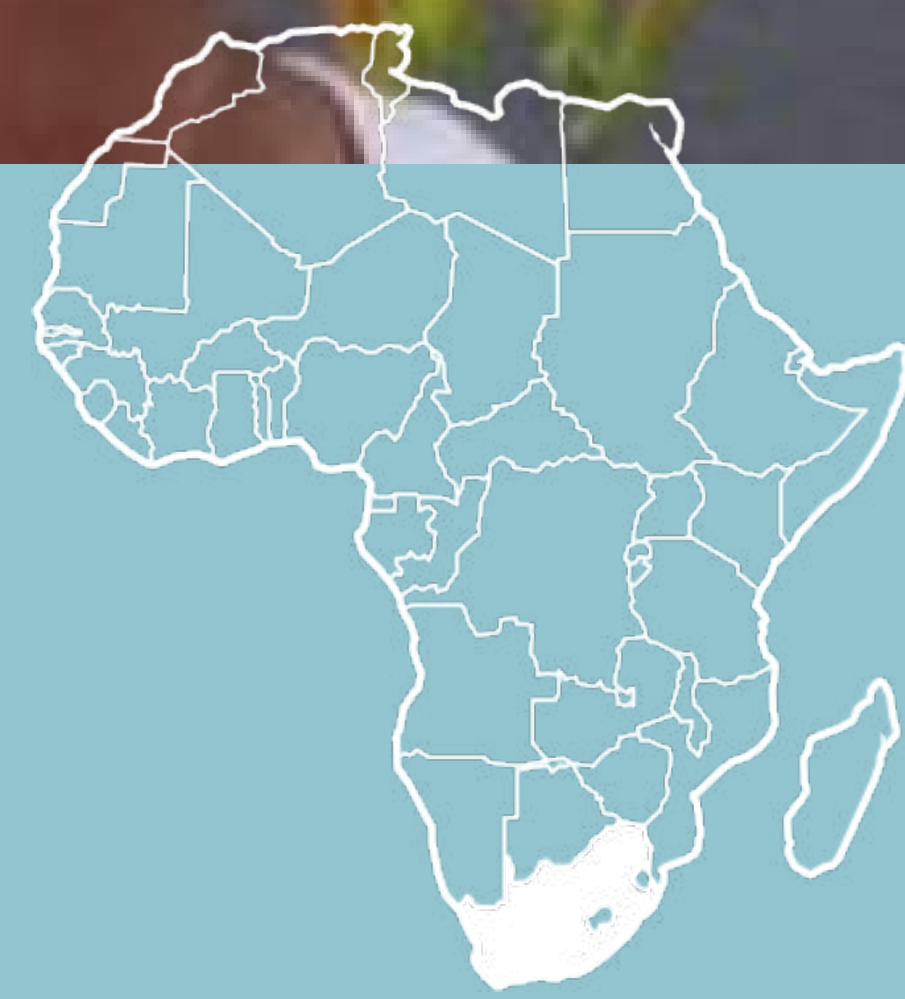
**Understand your customer needs** — Listen to your customers and be aware that these needs can change as your customer base grows, and then develop your employees to respond to those needs.

**Motivate and be visible** — Your team needs to know that their contribution is valued and that you are all working towards a shared set of goals.





# Thokozile Mangwiro



**Founder of Nilotiqa, South Africa**

[www.nilotiqa.com](http://www.nilotiqa.com)

Thokozile Mangwiro is the founder of Nilotiqa, a South African premium quality, natural hair care product manufacturer. The Nilotiqa brand is a line of products that are proudly made from organic and naturally formed ingredients to deeply moisturize and nourish natural hair. All Nilotiqa products are premium quality and offered at prices that are affordable to key target markets.

## HER CHALLENGE

Finding innovative solutions to reach her customers during the pandemic

## HER SOLUTION

### Increasing social media engagement, while diversifying sales channels

South Africa's natural hair care market is a competitive space, but Nilotiqa's natural hair care range is renowned for its exceptional quality and affordability. The products are available in retail outlets across South Africa and are distributed nationwide. With retail spaces and hairdressers closed during the pandemic, Thokozile needed to direct her retail customers to her online store and to reach new customers, and that required a new focus on social media engagement.

*“And so, the future of digitizing the business is a viable option. It's a definite viable option. And I think it's going to grow.”*

During the pandemic, 'at home' haircare had increased overnight and Thokozile was well positioned to meet the growing demand for accessible natural hair care routines. She and her team focused on producing social media content that added value, such as offering practical advice about hair care and educating her customers about the best products for their hair types. Enhancing brand communication and digital engagement was good for business and good for customers.

*“It's going to force us to find ways to improve the business and this is going to force us to find ways to improve how we work as a business. But it's going to be beneficial to us.”*

Instead of relying exclusively on the physical retail space, Thokozile decided to diversify the sales channels for her business and soon realized that there were benefits to this approach for her brand. Her shift in strategy coincided with growth in the number of delivery companies. An increase in the number of delivery services had reduced prices and delivery times, helping her to keep her product prices competitive for customers who wanted products delivering to their homes and businesses.

Thokozile recognizes that changing customer behaviour towards shopping online is a process, but the trend is moving in the right direction. The pandemic has taken its toll on people and business generally and Thokozile senses how exhausted consumers have become. How she and her team speak to customers is as important as choosing the right platform to have those conversations.

*“The idea is how do we pivot quickly enough to grasp and keep the attention of the people we're selling to?”*

The social media space is working for Thokozile and her brand from a sales perspective, but also people are encouraged to shop on the company's website. As a result, she still puts a lot of focus on the company's online presence as an integral part of her retail and brand positioning strategy. She spends time pitching the idea of shopping online to customers, knowing that delivery fees have come down, and turnaround times of deliveries are much faster. Also, customers are much more familiar with shopping online. Thokozile believes that online retail is set to continue to grow in the future, and therefore digitization of the business is a viable option going forward.

# Increasing social media engagement

## HER CHALLENGE

Finding innovative solutions to reach her customers during the pandemic.

## HER SOLUTION

Increasing social media engagement, while diversifying sales channels

To tap into new digital brand and product marketing opportunities, you will need to shift the focus of internal people and digital resources to tackle three key issues:

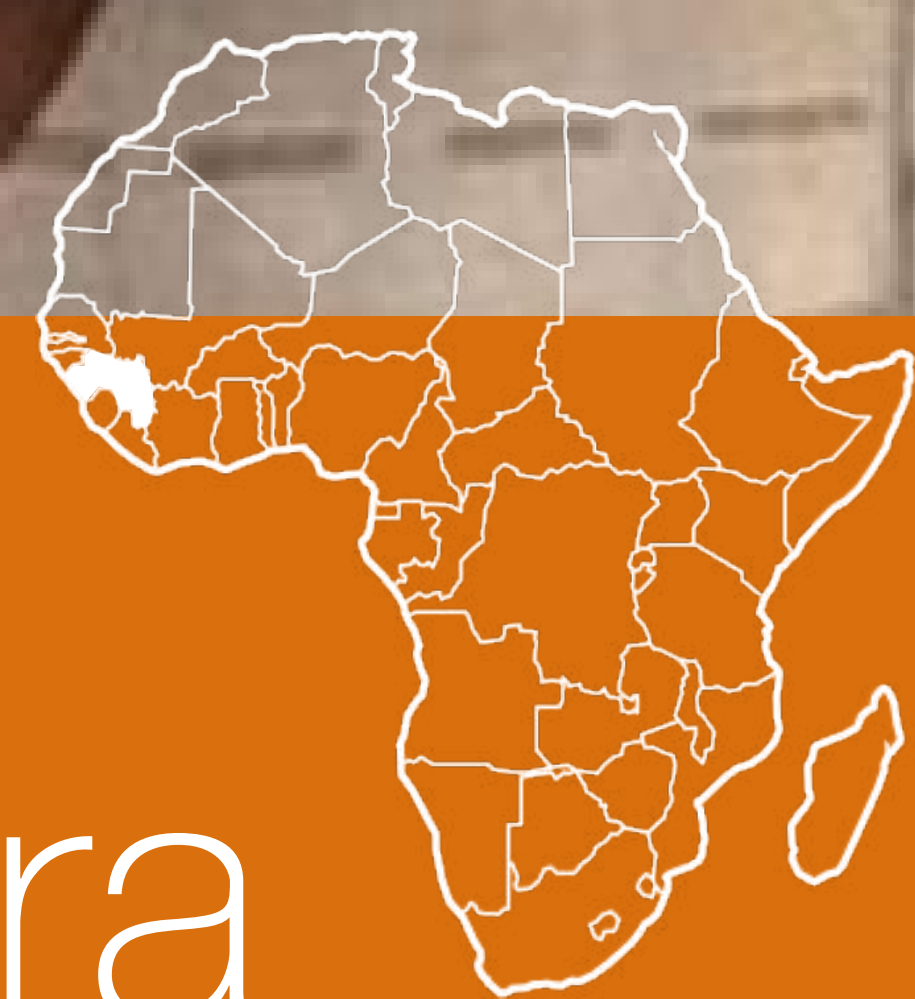
**Social media content** — Create a team internally to help you create and distribute helpful brand content across your social media channels that your customers can use and relate to.

**Customise** — Understand which customers are relying on different sales channels so that you and your team can tailor the content that you are creating and distributing.

**Diversify** — Look into different types of sales and distribution channels so that you increase the chances of customers finding your products. Upskill your team to effectively maximize these new channels to increase business.



# Tiguidanke Mounir Camara



**Founder of Tigui Mining Group, Guinea**

[www.tiguimininggroup.com](http://www.tiguimininggroup.com)

Tiguidanke Mounir Camara is a mining entrepreneur and the founder Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Tigui Mining Group (TMG) and Camara Diamond & Gold Trading Network (CDGTN). Tigui is one of the youngest women mining executives and one of the few women mine owners in Africa.

## HER CHALLENGE

How to diversify the business to stay operational and retain jobs

## HER SOLUTION

Promoting a culture of remote working as the norm and enhancing internal employee communication

Tiguidanke Mounir Camara's businesses have always been digitized because some of her workers live outside Africa, so remote working means business as usual for her team. She is a great believer that businesses focused on staying ahead of the competition need to create better strategies that include technology to promote an efficient way of working. So when the Covid pandemic struck, her business was prepared. In-office work ceased, remote working became the norm, and communications were undertaken via Zoom. When projects were impacted due to lockdowns, Tigui pivoted the business model in response.

*"We sat down, we talked about the situation, and we decided that we will work part-time in order to continue to get salaries, and then try to find new strategies to continue the company without closing like so many other people did."*

From a people management perspective in a tough business environment, Tigui had to make difficult decisions in order to retain employees. She used strong leadership communications and a proactive employee engagement strategy to talk to all her employees via Zoom. She talked honestly about the challenging business situation. She reinforced her commitment to try and retain employees during lockdown, explaining about the need to cut salaries to protect jobs.

*“During the pandemic, we were able to level up. And what is great about us as a business is that mining is not the only activity that we do. We have other activities to fall back on in order to stay afloat.”*

Ultimately, she got buy-in from employees to work together to find a solution during the pandemic. As a result, business continued. Tigui diversified the business to focus on activities in other industry sectors such as agriculture. She set up a company selling a range of almost 200 agri products such as cashew nut snacks, organic juices, spices, meat and dairy products.

Through this diversified business approach, Tigui was able to keep employees in work, plus also create work for other companies in the business portfolio, including her textile company which designed packaging for the agri product range, and her cosmetics business. She believes that one of the benefits of having a diversified holding company is that in tough times, if one business is not able to perform to its full capacity, attention can shift to another business, thereby managing risk.

*“Remote working is our new reality and people need to get onto the program. The life that we knew before will never be the same. From now on, we have to adapt. Yes, certain people will continue to go to a workplace, but they won't be the majority.”*

Tigui uses the same program to uplift communities as part of the company's corporate social responsibility commitment. She injects funding into local entrepreneurship by buying goods from young entrepreneurs and women cooperatives, helping them to sustain their own businesses in tough trading conditions.



## Learn from Tiguidanke Mounir Camara's Playbook

# Diversify to manage risk

### HER CHALLENGE

How to diversify the business to stay operational and retain jobs

### HER SOLUTION

Tapping into new opportunities with a diversified business strategy

**In order to diversify the business, stay operational and retain jobs, you'll need to tackle three key issues:**

**Risk management** — Spread the risk in your business by diversifying your products and services and looking for new markets, locally and globally in order to retain jobs.

**Digital transformation** — Implement a digital transformation strategy to digitize systems and processes across the business to increase efficiency and upskill employees.

**Remote working** — Develop a remote working culture that encourages and supports employees to work from home whilst ensuring they remain engaged with the brand.

# Conclusion

The future of work is a reality for all our businesses right now, and if the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it's that we have to prepare our businesses to meet whatever new challenges lie ahead. That's where learning from other highly experienced women entrepreneurs who have been in business longer than us can be so helpful. They have a wealth of insights to share, having successfully navigated the highs and lows of being in business.

As women entrepreneurs, we have a responsibility to keep improving the way we manage our people, our workspaces, and our business practices. We need to constantly re-evaluate the way we have traditionally done things and be open to innovation and positive change that keeps us agile and responsive. Importantly, we need to ensure that we are harnessing the power of digital technology to make remote working and hybrid working models work for both our employees and our businesses.

The future of work is here. Is your business ready?

# How to get your business future of work ready

**From our research findings, we've identified 9 helpful hacks that will help you to get your business future of work ready:**

- » Prepare your future of work strategy and action plan in readiness for implementing across all areas of your business
- » Prepare your future of work employee engagement and communications strategy to get everyone's buy-in
- » Undertake an audit of job functions and roles that could be transformed into remote working or hybrid models
- » Roll-out a new digital technology implementation plan to support remote working communications and productivity
- » Create practical training programmes to improve employee digital communication skills and engagement levels
- » Create and implement a set of remote working protocols to ensure quality delivery of projects and tasks to timelines
- » Create and communicate a future of work rulebook
- » Create a digital employee wellness plan and introduce greater engagement tools and communication platforms to manage it
- » Find yourself a mentor you can trust and who can provide guidance, advice and a sounding board when needed



# Acknowledgements

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# About the partners

## LIONESS DATA

Lioness Data is the research and insights unit of Lionesses of Africa Public Benefit Corporation, a social enterprise advancing Africa's women entrepreneurs. Lioness Data taps into a growing network of over 1.5 million women entrepreneurs across Africa to extract actionable insights that help investors, policy makers, and development agencies make faster and better data-driven decisions. Lionesses of Africa builds and delivers development programmes, business tools, community platforms, digital media, networking events and information resources that women entrepreneurs need—connecting them with key global markets for growth. Lionesses of Africa's community stretches across 54 African countries and thousands of users in the Diaspora in Europe and North America.

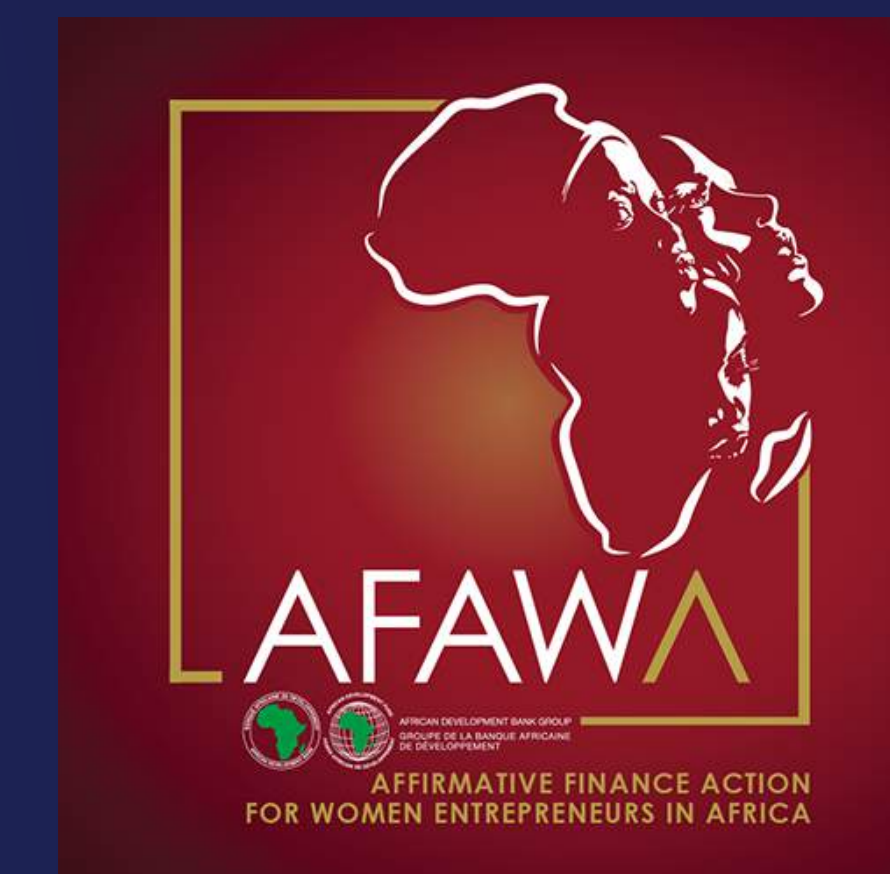


**Lioness Data**

**For further information about  
Lionesses of Africa, visit  
[www.lionessesofafrica.com](http://www.lionessesofafrica.com)**

## AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK'S AFAWA PROGRAMME

African Development Bank's AFAWA Programme (Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa) is a pan-African initiative to bridge the \$42 billion financing gap facing women in Africa. AFAWA adopts a holistic approach through three pillars. AFAWA finance leverages the African Development Bank's financial instruments and has two innovative solutions to drastically transform the banking and financial landscape in Africa and to create incentives for lending to women in business. AFAWA technical assistance provides advisory services to financial institutions to ensure successful implementation of their product portfolios for women, and strengthens the capacity of women entrepreneurs through training to enhance business productivity and growth. AFAWA enabling environment engages with African governments and other key stakeholders to support legal, policy and regulatory reforms and strike down the structural barriers impeding women in business.



**For further information about  
AFAWA, visit [www.afdb.org](http://www.afdb.org)**