

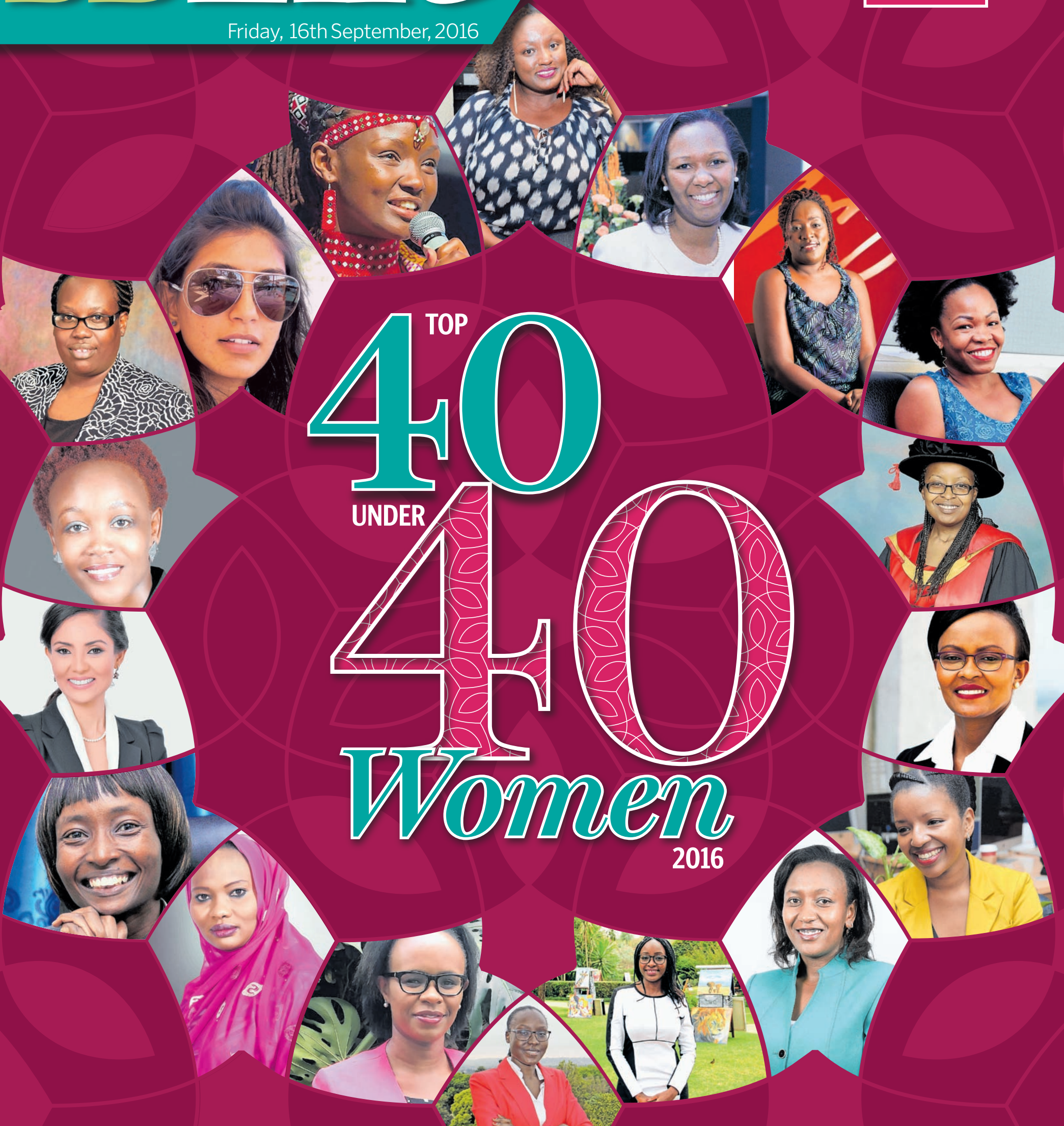
The business of taking a break

# BDLife

Friday, 16th September, 2016

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# TOP 40 UNDER 40 Women 2016





# How the Top 40 Under 40 2016 were selected

**T**Due to the realities of the times, the search for this year's Top 40 Under 40 awardees went digital.

The campaign for nominations mainly took place online and in social media platforms, resulting in a record 650 entries. Even more fulfilling about this year's list is the fact that it is largely made up of fresh candidates—signalling the pace at which women are rising and making an impact in the various spheres of life. Only two are repeat nominees.

A close look at this year's profiles also reveals that smart women on the move can stand on their own and make an impact in any segment of the economy. On this list are aeronautical engineers, stem cell scientists, technology geeks, medical doctors, military psychologists, entrepreneurs, innovators and corporate executives to name just a few.

The freshness of the candidates and their outstanding contributions to the segments of the economy that make Kenya does inspire confidence in the fact that the country is on the path of progress despite the many challenges.

As has been the tradition of the Top 40 Under 40 awards, the selection process kept the spirit and the faith of the survey—resisting the temptation of making it merely an annual parade of the best known, most prominent or most influential young women in Kenya today. It took the judges an entire day of sifting through the 650 entries, interrogating each, researching the backgrounds, comparing them with competing candidates to come up with the final list. The freshness of a candidate in their area of operation was a big score for each candidate. Ingenuity, performance and durability were big winners for those in contention as was the ability to demonstrate that they care for societies in which they live—beyond what they do as professionals or to earn a living—which is what life is really about.

We have as is the tradition verified each candidate's age (and dropped some in the last minute who proved difficult with it), interrogated information offered on the nomination forms as to the size or scope of the nominee's achievements as well as assessed the competitive landscape of the segment of the economy in which these companies or businesses sit.

Women occupying senior positions in companies with a multinational reach scored higher marks than those in charge of national/local agencies. In this list are also professionals such as lawyers, architects, and partners in accounting firms, included purely on the basis of the work they have done. The Top 40 Under 40 project has also awarded high marks to women who have excelled in emerging sectors such as technology and social enterprise. Here's the list.

**Ochieng' Rapuro, Managing Editor, Business Daily**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
**Joe Muganda**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
**Tom Mshindi**

MANAGING EDITOR  
**Ochieng' Rapuro**

BD LIFE EDITOR  
**Diana Mwango**

PRODUCTION EDITOR  
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SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
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GRAPHIC DESIGNER  
**Millie Wachira**

PHOTO EDITOR  
**Joan Pereruan**

PHOTOS  
**Diana Ngila**  
**Salaton Njau**  
**Anthony Omuya**  
**Kevin Odit**

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Kimathi Street, Nairobi  
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Telephone 254 20 328 8104  
Fax 254 20 214 849  
Email: [bdlife@ke.nationmedia.com](mailto:bdlife@ke.nationmedia.com)  
[www.bdafrica.com](http://www.bdafrica.com)

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“

**Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.**



JOHN C. CROSBY, AMERICAN POLITICIAN

**It's not government that creates jobs; it's small business. Its job is to make sure they have the access to capital, the access to contracting opportunities, and the help, advice and mentoring that they need to go out and be successful.**

KAREN MILLS, AMERICAN PUBLIC SERVANT

**The problem with feminism in the second wave was that we fought so much among ourselves, and I think we did so much damage to the movement... and I think the next wave, the third wave, is women mentoring younger women and women helping younger women to enter the political process and the writing world.**



ERICA JONG, AMERICAN NOVELIST AND POET

**“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”**

ISAAC NEWTON, PHYSICIST

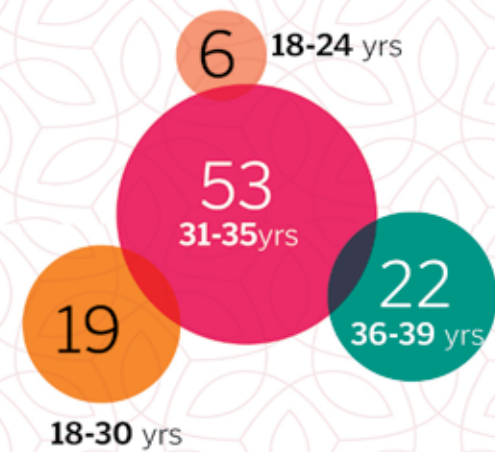
**“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches, but to reveal to him his own.”**



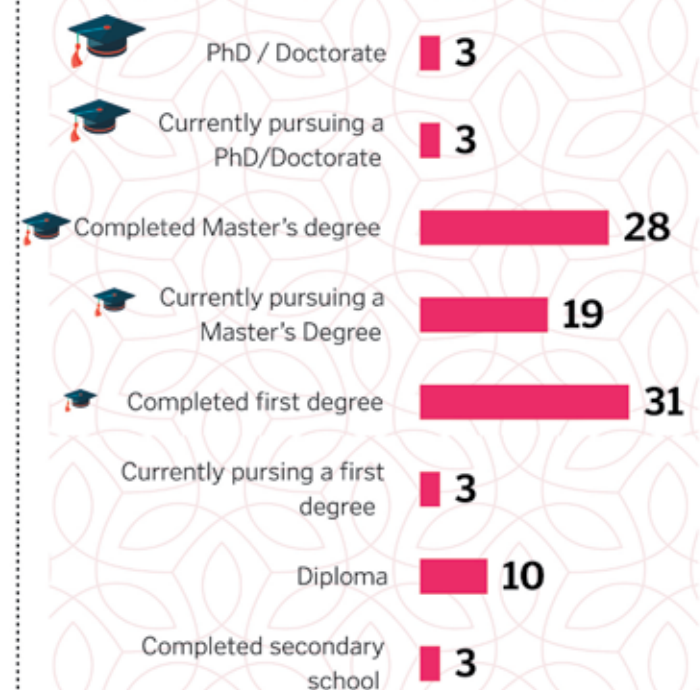
BENJAMIN DISRAELI, FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

## Demographics

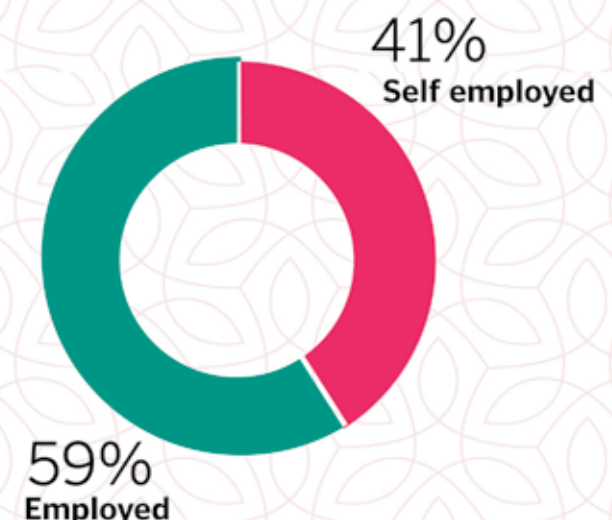
### Age distribution %



### Education level %



### Employment status %



TOP 40 UNDER FORTY WOMEN 2016 POLL



Entrepreneurs

- Entrepreneurship is not an easy walk in the park as the women face quite a number of challenges.
- Top of the list of challenges faced by women is lack of access to capital at 54 per cent mentions. This is quite interesting considering efforts by government and financial institutions to provide loans/ grants to women-owned institutions.
- Another 31 per cent have to work harder to succeed in a male dominated industry. This is an indication that the female business owners still face significant obstacles because of their gender.



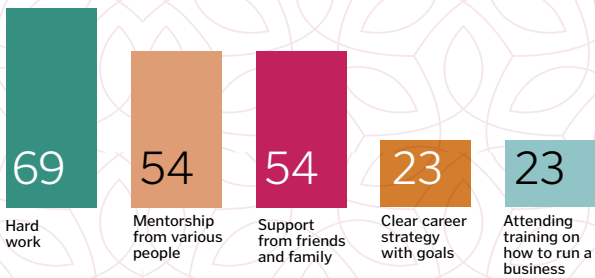
Challenges faced%

Employed

- Top of the list of challenges faced by those employed is lack of a work life balance with 74 per cent mentions.
- Succeeding in a male dominated field is not easy and this challenge gets 53 per cent mentions.
- Corporate politics is the third largest challenge with 32 per cent mentions. Various studies globally have shown that women avoid corporate politics yet it is inevitable as they advance in their careers. Women need to accept that corporate politics exists and learn how to play the game – and win.
- Lack of mentors and lack of time to pursue further studies generate low mentions.



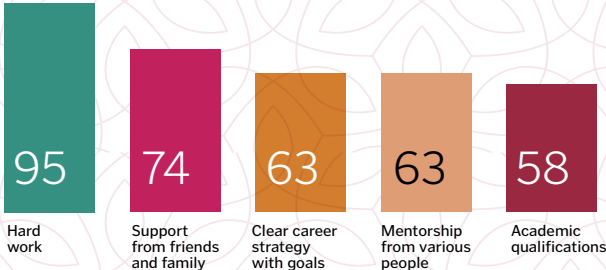
Entrepreneurs



Success factors%

Both those employed and entrepreneurs attribute their success to hard work. Support from family and friends is also important. Mentors also play a key role in the success of both.

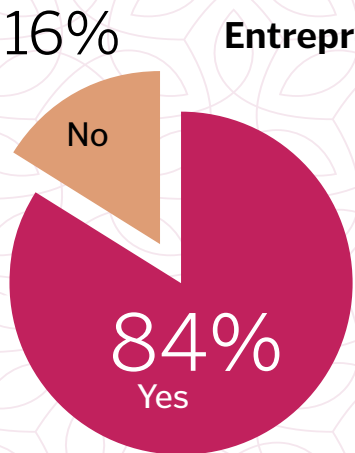
Employed



Motivators: Entrepreneurs and Creative Ideas



Entrepreneurial ambitions %



Majority (84 per cent) of those who are employed intend to set up a business in future. Although they have the ambition to set up a business, the true test is time as it takes courage to move from full time employment to self employment.

Mentorship%

Mentors play a key role in the Top40Under40 nominees' lives as 75 per cent have one. Entrepreneurs are more likely to have mentors compared to those who are employed.

YES NO







# This skill could save your job and your company too

Millennials value new skills so highly that many are willing to spend their own time and dig into their own pockets to pay for it

BY MARA SWANEXECUTIVE

**W**hen new skills become in demand as fast as others become extinct, employability is less about what you already know and more about your capacity to learn. It requires a new mindset for both employers trying to develop a workforce with the right skillsets, and for individuals seeking to advance their careers.

It's time to take a fresh look at how we motivate, develop and retain employees. In this environment, learnability—the desire and capability to develop in-demand skills to be employable for the long-term—is the hot ticket to success for employers and individuals alike.

Up to 65 per cent of the jobs Generation Z will perform don't even exist yet and up to 45 per cent of the activities people are paid to perform today could be automated using current technology. This won't necessarily mean fewer jobs, but it will mean new jobs requiring different skills.

Add to that the fact that 38 per cent of employers tell us they're already having difficulties finding people with the right skills to fill open jobs and it's clear that there's a mismatch. Anticipating what the skills of the future might be is critical if we are to build a sustainable pipeline of talent.

According to a survey by ManpowerGroup, millennials say success depends more on having the right skills than the right connections.

As business needs change, employers are focused on skills too. JP Morgan Chase is offering development in business-critical skills such as software development and network engineering, while AT&T is providing nano degrees to make sure its workforce is prepared for the shift from a hardware-oriented focus to software-defined IP networks.

## Career success

ManpowerGroup is working with a number of companies to identify the skills that will be needed in advanced manufacturing and our own employability programmes include MyPath, a selection of tools providing our associates with assessment, guidance and education – including free college degrees – to help them develop the skills we know are in-demand.

The purpose? It's a way for working people to “future proof” themselves no matter who their em-

ployer may be and creates opportunities for people to boost their career success. It also enhances the competitiveness of organisations and all the time helps build more sustainable communities in which we all operate and our employees live and work.

Employers can harness the appetite of their employees to learn. Our research found that millennials value new skills so highly that many are willing to spend their own time and dig into their own pockets to pay for it.

For employers, motivating and retaining employees with learnability means finding new ways to nurture a learning culture and to reward it day-to-day. This creates a virtuous cycle. It challenges employees to make themselves more valuable to the company and in turn keeps them engaged and stimulated in their job, boosting retention.

As with any culture change, it has to come from the top. Employers need to lead rather than delegate, and the first thing to do is appoint a Chief Learning Officer. It's not just a nice-to-have; it's business critical. That means the onus for shifting an organisation's culture into one of continuous learning is on leadership, and it starts with four steps:

**1. Look beyond the resume.** Many organisations continue to pay too much attention to academic qualifications and hard skills. While these can be important, what entry-level employees learn during university often doesn't equip them for today's job market. Look for employees who are enthusiastic and demonstrate a willingness to learn new skills.

**2. Select carefully.** Offer the best learning opportunities to employees who you know will take advantage of it. Make it clear to employees that having the opportunity to cross-train and learn new skills is a prize to be earned by demonstrating curiosity and a genuine interest in acquiring new knowledge. You'll get more bang for your buck by focusing on individuals with higher learnability.

**3. Model learnability.** If you want your employees to embrace learning as a habit, you need to set an example. Sure, we're all busy, but it's important to carve out time to expand your own mind. Ask yourself, when was the last time you read something from an unusual perspective, and not just another article one of your friends shared on Facebook? When have you taken the time to wrap your head around a new industry?

To engage in conversation on a subject outside your comfort zone? Curiosity is a muscle prone to atrophy when exposed to the online world of instant information. To keep that skill sharp, we all need to take the time to find unfamiliar topics and dig beneath the surface.

**4. Recognise learners.** Put your money where your mouth is when promoting learning. We've all seen how well monetary incentives and competition work in motivating employees to change their physical fitness habits – think of team Fitbit challenges – so why can't we do the same for mental fitness?

We could reward employees who organise internal activities that promote learnability, such as bringing in external speakers, hosting roundtable discussions or simply writing a blog and sharing challenging pieces on social media.

Consider rewarding learnability by only promoting employees to a higher level after they have gained lateral expertise in other departments. The best employees want to broaden their expertise, so provide them with opportunities to challenge themselves.

If you've managed to build a team of employees hungry to learn and grow – good. But the job doesn't stop there. The kind of organisation that will survive into the future needs to successfully feed those learnability cravings and keep the virtuous cycle turning.

**Mara** is the Vice President, Global Strategy and Talent, ManpowerGroup

The future now requires employers and individuals to adopt new mindsets when it comes to skills.

FOTORESEARCH



# The world of work is changing fast and workers need new survival skills

**Analytics, accountancy and computer science are all probably safe bets in unknowable future**

BY ANNA BRUCE-LOCKHART

**W**elcome to the age of uncertainty. Never has it been harder to predict what our working futures hold and arm ourselves accordingly, as technological advances, an ageing workforce and the rise of the sharing economy cause new jobs to appear as fast as others vanish.

Traditional career paths are on the way out, say the experts, with jobs-for-life replaced by a new expectation among younger workers that they might hold 11 or more jobs throughout their lives.

This is the new gig economy, and it's gaining ground. In its wake has come a culture of short-termism, an on-demand approach to work which is spreading through professions and occupations, causing a rise in freelance work and part-time jobs.

But with these technological and cultural shifts come fresh opportunities. New and unexpected jobs are being created all the time, writes author Laurent

Haug, whether it's social media consulting, space law or data analysis. When it comes to teachable skills, maths and computing hold sway, with greatest job growth concentrated in industries such as engineering, programming and finance, as shown in this World Economic Forum chart.

But as job families grow and decline, one factor becomes consistently more important: our skills.

In fact, the skills we learn in the workplace will have more bearing on our future employability than the places where we studied or the previous positions we've held, according to the findings of the Human Capital Report 2016.

And this isn't limited to the skills we've already learned, but includes those we will learn, and want to learn.

For many employers, this "learnability" is key, explains Mara Swan of Manpower Group. Research by the global employment agency has found that millennials value new skills so highly, many are willing to spend their own time and money to acquire them.

For companies, meanwhile, finding and retaining employees who can and want to learn is seen as a way to future-proof the business.

## So, which skills should we learn?

Analytics, accountancy and computer science are all probably safe bets when it comes to mastering an unknowable future, according to a study by David Deming at Harvard University. But while technical



With the rise in technological advances, new jobs are appearing fast as others disappear. FOTOREARCH

ability might get you into a job, they're only half of the picture.

According to the same Harvard study, the jobs that have grown most consistently over the past two decades are those combining strong technical know-how with a single powerful characteristic: being nice.

Social skills, or the ability to "play well" with others, is vital, finds Deming.

This shows how jobs requiring both hard and

soft skills have grown over the past 20 years, while those requiring neither, such as machine operating and cleaning, are on the wane.

But it's not just employees who need to worry about brushing up on the skills front: companies too, must find ways to hire and hold on to their best people, whether it's hiring more female leaders, engaging their ageing workforces or learning from the dynamic initiatives currently deployed in emerging

## Want a job in 2025? Focus on the following sectors

BY ROSAMOND HUTT

**R**ecent forecasts of the big shift in the world of work have suggested that within 50 years, robots and computers will do much of the work humans do now.

And less than five years from now, according to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs report, five million jobs will have been lost to automation. But technological advances – in robotics and machine learning, for example – will also create new jobs and change the skills that employers need from human workers.

To compete in the future job market, workers – even those in occupations less directly affected by automation – will need to update their skillsets, the report says. Here's a look at a few of the fastest



By 2020, more than a third of the core skillset of most occupations will be made up of skills that are not considered crucial today. FOTOREARCH

growing occupations identified by the US Bureau of Labour Statistics BLS and

the Future of Jobs report, and the skills you'll need to get them. —Software de-

veloper, computer systems analyst and market-research and marketing specialist jobs are set to grow by around a fifth between now and 2024, according to the BLS. For these jobs, technology and computational thinking skills will be vital.

—Medical technicians, physical therapists, and workplace ergonomics expert jobs are set to see increased demand, as care-giving becomes an increasingly important skill in an ageing society.

—Sales and marketing specialists and customer service representative jobs are also set to grow. Sales-related jobs are one of the top five growth areas, according to the Future of Jobs report. Social and emotional intelligence and understanding new media platforms and how to communicate effectively will be valuable skills, particularly while robots struggle to master them.

—In a fast-changing world, education and training jobs are expected to increase – at number six on the Future of Jobs report list of growth sectors.

—Management analysts, accountants and auditors will see double-digit growth, with adaptability and business acumen being particularly desirable skills for these roles.

By 2020, more than a third of the core skillset of most occupations will be made up of skills that are not considered crucial to the job today, according to the Future of Jobs report.

This table shows which job sectors are likely to see the most "skills instability". For example, 43 per cent of the skills currently needed to perform well in the financial services and investors industry will soon become redundant.

**-FORMATIVE CONTENT**



# Modern etiquette: Ten rules for success

We assume that everyone should have interpersonal skills, but many don't and this can be costly to a career

BY MARY M. MITCHELL

Over a century ago, legendary magnate John D. Rockefeller said, "I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than any other skill under the sun."

Since then, studies by companies such as Google have echoed his thinking by pointing out that the most effective managers and executives possess strong interpersonal skills.

Thus, here are my Ten Commandments for Effective Business Behaviour:

**1. Thou shalt have a positive attitude.** Everybody has bad days. Nobody has the right to take it out on others. Rudeness, impoliteness, surliness, ugly moods, unprovoked displays of anger, and general unpleasantness can be costly to your career.

**2. Thou shalt respect yourself and others in cyberspace.** E-mail is eternal. Social media is a minefield. If you would not want your mother to see it, do not hit "Send."

**3. Thou shalt be on time. Keeping others waiting is the ultimate power play.** This goes for in-person appointments, emails, and telephone calls. In the end, being late is self-defeating. Everybody's busy. Everybody's time is valuable. Being late only makes you look as if you don't have your act together.

**4. Thou shalt praise in public and criticise in private.** If you intend to improve a situation or somebody's performance, public criticism is the worst approach. It serves no purpose except to humiliate the other person, and possibly lead to cutthroat retaliation. Remember that the office gossip looks far worse than those being gossiped about.

**5. Thou shalt honour social courtesies at business functions.** Etiquette is just a matter of common sense with a large dose of kindness. Make sure you respond to invitations promptly and never bring an uninvited guest. Never be a no-show when you've said you'd be there. Good guests contribute as much, if not more, to a social occasion as good hosts.

**6. Thou shalt get names straight. We all forget people's names.** There's nothing wrong with saying, "Please tell me your name again. My brain just froze." But there is something wrong with not checking on

“

Emphasis should be on encouraging women to take leadership roles and to replicate the best practices with regard to women empowerment.

MARGARET KENYATTA, FIRST LADY OF KENYA

correct spelling whenever you write a name. That's lazy. It can cost your career. And remember, with four generations actively operating in today's workplace, it's a big mistake to assume you can call someone by his or her first name.

**7. Thou shalt speak slowly and clearly on the telephone.** A smile can be heard in your voice. So smile or you will sound irritated and put out. Not a good move when you are speaking with someone in authority, and perhaps from a different culture or generation.

**8. Thou shalt not use foul language. Kind is about the only four-letter word for the workplace.** Don't accept vulgarity and poor grammar as your personal standards. On the other hand, liberal use of "please," "thank you," and "excuse me" is helpful in career advancement.

**9. Thou shalt dress appropriately.** Don't enter your workplace without knowing its dress code. Good grooming is more important than making a fashion statement.

**10. Thou shalt be accountable. We all make mistakes.** That does not give us license to blame someone else for them. There is no shame in admitting you don't have all the answers. Yet there is shame in not being willing to look for them.

Mary has written several books on the subject of etiquette



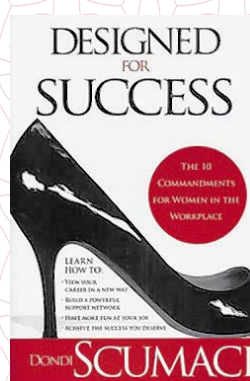
Effective managers possess strong interpersonal skills. FILE

## DESIGNED FOR SUCCESS: THE 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

By Dondi Scumaci

How to step up, step out, and break through at work. Discover how to make the most of your career opportunities and perform your job with passion and excellence. Gain the confidence you need to fully engage at work. Communicate actively, but without aggression. Negotiate instead of just accepting.

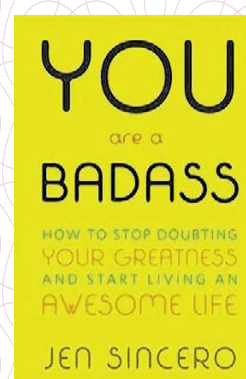
Update, upgrade, and develop yourself. Think strategically and market your results in quantifiable ways. Never settle for less than you were designed for.



## YOU ARE A BADASS

By Jen Sincero

Tips for the doubtful and self-effacing on roaring ahead through life, delivered with stories, insights and exercises.



## BIG MAGIC

By Elizabeth Gilbert

How to overcome the obstacles keeping you from a creative life, from the author of "Eat, Pray, Love."



GOOD  
READS



# The team of judges that picked the winners



## SRIRAM BHARATAM

Sri is a social entrepreneur, Kauffman Fellow, founder of Kuza Biashara – a global network of entrepreneurs- and Iridium Interactive. He is also the chair of EO Africa Growth Initiative, an alumnus of America's prestigious MIT and a nominee of Ernst & Young "Entrepreneur of the Year Award. He brings into the judging process, deep insights from the world of enterprise and investment.



## JOE OTIN

Joe is a seasoned marketing communications practitioner with 23 years experience in the profession. He spent more than 10 years working as head of media monitoring at Ipsos Synovate, a market research agency. Mr Otin has been a chief judge at the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) annual excellence awards and the Marketing Society of Kenya (MSK) gala awards. He is currently the chief executive of The Collective, an interactive ad agency he founded three years ago.



## DR WANJIRU KAMAU-RUTENBERG

A past recipient of the Top 40 Under 40 Award, Dr Wanjiru is the Director of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (Award), a former head of Akili Dada, a non-profit organisation that promotes the education of the girl child. An academic in her own right, Dr Wanjiru spent the early part of her career teaching at a US university before returning to Kenya where she remains one of the greatest proponents of the rights of the girl-child and economic right of women. She has been honoured as a White House Champion of Change, Ford Foundation Champion of Democracy and listed as one of the 100 Most Influential Africans by the *New African* magazine.



## CAROLINE MUGO

Caroline, also a past recipient of the Top 40 Under 40 Award, currently works as Country Financial Controller and Board Member of Cargill Kenya – a global commodities trading company based in Nairobi. She has held senior financial positions in various companies, including Bungee Commodities, Kraft Food (formerly Cadbury Kenya) and Nation Media Group. She is also a columnist with the *Business Daily*, where she writes on topical financial and economic issues.

## It's Time to Shatter the Glass Ceiling

### Executive Leadership Programs Tailored for Women

The role of women in leadership has changed over the years with more women taking an active role due to increased opportunities. Because of the multiple roles that women play in society and especially in the workplace, the ability to perform can be a challenge to many. Strathmore University Business School has created an array of programs for women in various levels of their leadership careers.

### Women Directors Leadership Summit

The Women Directors Leadership Summit is an incisive program that aims at moving the focus from why women should be on boards and C-Suite positions to how they should perform for board excellence and leadership effectiveness.

**For: Women serving on board and or C-Suite position.**

### Women in Executive Leadership League

The annual Women in Executive Leadership League is aimed at raising the standards of excellence and number of competent women at board level. The summit aims at enabling the participants leave a positive legacy while consistently developing the holistic personal.

**For: Women in Senior management from the public, private and social sectors who aspire to join boards.**

### Women in Leadership Program

The Women in Leadership Program is geared towards helping you achieve effectiveness – getting meaningful things done and efficiency in doing things right.

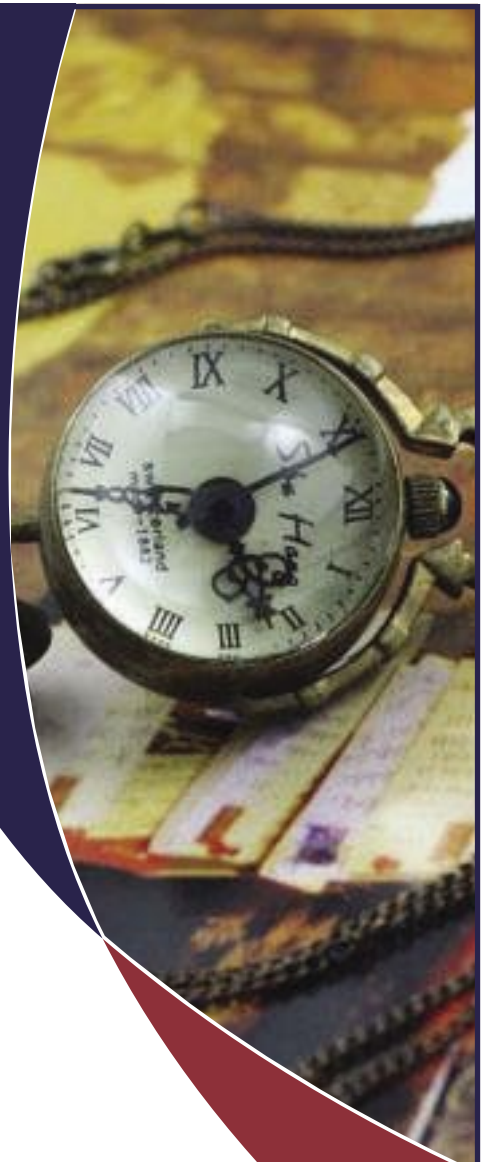
**For: Women in management who want to harness their self-leadership skills.**

For more information on the any of the programs, contact Winnie Omamo on [womamo@strathmore.edu](mailto:womamo@strathmore.edu) or +254 (0) 725567696. Visit [www.sbs.strathmore.edu](http://www.sbs.strathmore.edu) for more information.

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**Strathmore University**  
**Business School**





# Top Forty Under Forty women

Each year, their stories make us think. What drives us? Is it hope, ambition or altruism? Meet the fearless women who have broken the rules, broken boundaries, broken silence to rise above disability, male domination and poverty



PHOTO: SALATON NUAU

## MEDICAL RESEARCH

1

**Dr Marianne Mureithi,**  
CHIEF RESEARCH SCIENTIST,  
KAVI INSTITUTE OF CLINICAL  
RESEARCH, 35

As one of the pioneers of stem cell researchers in Kenya, Dr Mureithi stands firmly in the list of women to watch. Stem cell technology is a rapidly developing field that is being used to restore vision, treat cancers and other chronic diseases, disorders and injuries.

Kenya Aids Vaccine Initiative-Institute (KAVI), in partnership with the plastic surgery department at Kenyatta National Hospital, is already using stem cells to treat patients with burn wounds.

Dr Mureithi, who is also the chair of the African Forum for Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine, is working with a team of researchers and doctors to set up the inaugural centre for sports medicine in Kenya.

This facility will use stem cell therapies to treat sports injuries. The stem cells will repair and replace damaged muscle tissues, enabling sports people to be active in their trade for a longer period.

“Athletes from most developed nations

are already benefiting from these therapies that make them more fit, active and much better in what they do. We want the same for our athletes here,” she says.

She is also part of scientists developing a vaccine that will effectively address the HIV pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa under the International Aids Vaccine Initiative (IAVI).

As a PhD student at the University of Bristol in UK, her research findings influenced scientists to develop the pneumococcal vaccine that has helped Kenya and other African countries to immensely forestall child deaths caused by pneumonia.

She studied at the prestigious Harvard University in US as a post-doctoral fellow between 2008 and 2011. Her research project looked into the possibility of developing a vaccine to tackle the tuberculosis (TB) and HIV co-infection challenge in Africa. Patients infected by both HIV and TB usually suffer from adverse health outcomes. In 2012, she gave up a lucrative job offer at Harvard and opted to come back home instead.

“I wanted to use the knowledge acquired abroad to grow the research capacity locally. I didn’t want to be part of the brain drain problem,” she says.

She is doing this as a lecturer at the University of Nairobi’s School of Medicine where she gets the opportunity to interact and mentor young scientists.

## SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

2

**Salima Visram,**  
SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR, 23

Salima shared a podium with Hollywood star Lupita Nyong’o last Saturday when her Soularpack bag was launched for sale on the Sh400 billion virtual mall HSN.com.

It’s her solar-powered bag, which enables poor children in rural Kenya study at night, that has lifted her to stardom. Disney, alongside their new movie “Queen of Katwe” starring Lupita, announced that the Soularpack would be sold across North America at Sh5,000.

The movie is set in rural Uganda, where the kerosene lamp is central to the plot of the story. Salima mooted the solar-powered school bag idea as a side hustle, raising Sh5 million through crowdfunding in early 2014. She manufactured the Soularpack bags fitted with a solar-panel that charges a small battery during the day and later powers an LED bulb in the evening, enabling children in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to study.

“The Soularpack serves as a book carrier during the day and provides odorless, adequate four-hour lighting for studying,” she said during a visit to Kikambala Primary School last year where she donated 500 backpacks, each costing Sh2,040. Salima is upbeat that Disney’s support would enable her to become self-sustaining and reduce reliance on donations.

The solar panel absorbs light from the sun, which is stored in its inbuilt battery during the day and later used to power a



LED light. Four hours of charging guarantee seven to eight hours of light that illuminates a whole room. The former McGill University in Canada student said she was moved to action to help children entangled in a vicious cycle of poverty as they had no way of studying their way out of poverty. On every backpack is a message by Lupita, “The Power Is In Your Step.” Sale of the solar-bag product is set to start during the official launch of “Queen of Katwe” in Hollywood later this month.

“

There is nothing in your background that inherently holds you back or means you can’t achieve what others can achieve. You are the master of your own fate, and if you work hard, you can do what you want.

Nicola Sturgeon, the first woman to hold position of Minister of Scotland

## TECHNOLOGY

3

**Carole Kamaitha,**  
VICE PRESIDENT SALES – AFRICA  
AT O3B NETWORKS, 37

Carole stands on the cusp of technology’s ongoing transformation.

Her day job involves creating new opportunities for O3b Networks—a global satellite service provider—in over 180 countries in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

She also drives the Africa strategy, directly influencing major deals in the continent across the buyers of the company’s products and services including telcos, governments, Internet service providers, mobile network operators, oil and gas companies.

The great expanse of the territory she covers means she travels often.

“It is not an easy road, regardless of the shape of our individual ladders that we (women) have to climb. I am genuinely grateful to God for the achievements in my life, He made this possible,” she says.

Fashion and cooking takes her to a creative space where she can express how she feels in bright colours and fiery flavours.

Nothing gives her more pleasure than helping people realise and achieve their life



purpose. Sanctuary Trust, which rescues girls in crisis pregnancies whilst helping them restore their confidence through art, is one such cause that she supports.

Carole has been the Salesperson of the Year globally for two years in a row now and aims to continuously seek out opportunities to grow, stretch, and develop her skill sets.

“I would like to see more women on board developing careers within the ICT business sector,” she says.

“It is vital to have the unshakable belief that you can achieve the impossible. It doesn’t matter the shape or length of your ladder, we all have our individual ladders to climb, in our different seasons— climb it anyway!”



## TECHNOLOGY

4

**Stacey Ondimu,** MANAGING DIRECTOR, RUPU KENYA, 27

As far as careers go, Stacey runs on the fast lane. It took her only three years to become the managing director of leading e-commerce startup, Rupu, having started the journey at Ringier Kenya at entry level position. Just one month into 27 years, her job involves managing a team of 17 and overseeing the entire operation of the technology firm that Munyutu Waigi and Ben Maina founded in December 2010.

"I joined Rupu because it was exploring a young industry in a startup environment. I was hungry for more and open to learn new things and grow," she says.

Rupu Kenya, a daily deals and discounts website pushed the envelope on what online buying and selling could do and attracted the attention of Swiss media company, Ringier, which was looking for an African unit and pioneers in the digital space, especially in e-commerce.

Ringier now has an online presence in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria under its African franchise, a transition that came just as Stacey rose to the helm of the Kenyan enterprise.

"Rupu recently came under Ringier Africa Deals Group, which incorporated our sister companies DealDey from Nigeria and Tisu of Ghana just when my boss left and I took over to implement the strategy to make Rupu smaller, but more efficient," she says.

Before rising to the position of managing director, she served as customer service lead and creative manager for the editorial

department as well as head of operations for Rupu and Pigiame in a span of three years.

With a Bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of Nairobi in 3-dimension animation and software development, she did not expect to find herself at Rupu, which was quite a different environment.

"I had to shift from being a software developer to customer service and e-commerce and what I learned is that it doesn't matter what you had learnt or done before," she says.

Stacey who sees herself owning her own e-commerce platform or a content generating website, credits her success to tenacity, "pushing and doing the heavy lifting, putting in work, over and over again."

She says many young people are not willing to put in the good work and are complacent having grown up with the "Mark Zuckerberg" effect where they think they can just come up with a great idea like Facebook overnight.

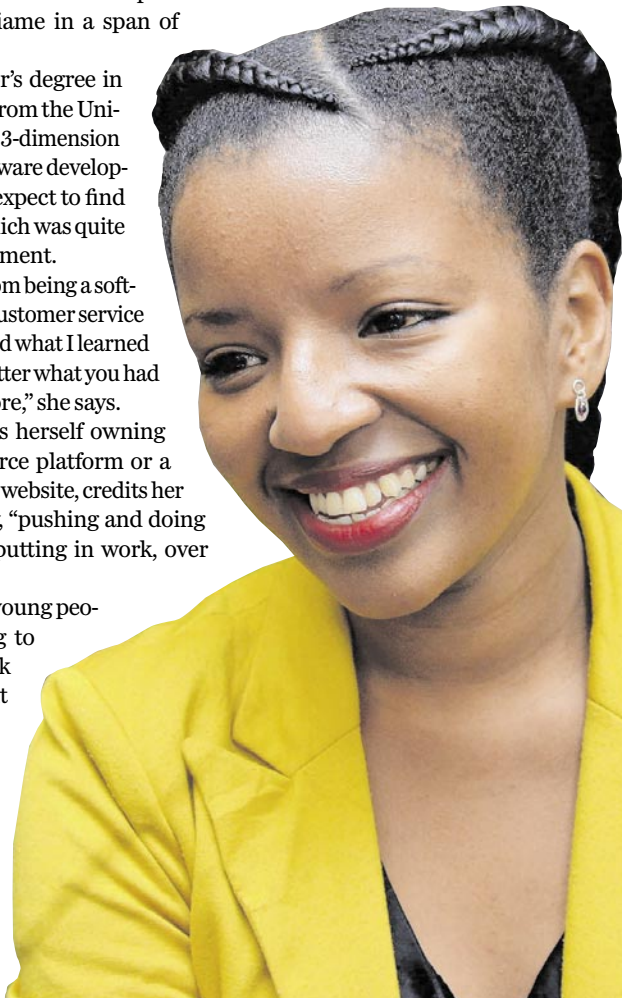


PHOTO / SALATON NJAU

## AUDIT

6

**Freda Muchena-Mitambo,**

AUDIT PARTNER AT DELOITTE, 37

Holding the position of partner in charge of audit engagements and supervision of teams at a large consulting firm such as Deloitte is no mean feat, but that is what Freda has done in the past four years.

"The accounting profession is not for the faint-hearted. The work demands are onerous and require one to be highly self-motivated, organised, analytical and constantly developing to meet client needs," says the 37-year-old who has worked for Deloitte East Africa since graduating from university in 2001.

"The belief that women do not support one another is really a myth as I have experienced the complete opposite in my career. My biggest cheerleaders and support system were Deloitte women partners who supported me and encouraged me throughout my career," she says.

After completing her secondary education at Alliance Girls High School, Freda studied for a Bachelor of Commerce (Finance) degree at the University of Nairobi. "By the time I was in Form 2, I knew I wanted to pursue a business-related course at university level. My mother was a high school mathematics teacher and I identified greatly with her, as numbers always fascinated me, and still do," she says.

She advises that one should work in an area they enjoy waking up to every morning, noting that even when the going is tough, your love for the job energises you to stick with it and ride the waves. She is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration degree at the University of Nairobi.

She describes herself as focused, empathetic, resilient, loyal and derives immense satisfaction from a job well done and guiding others to success, by "inspiring a team to unlock their potential to be better by nurturing and enhancing their strengths and working around their weaknesses to excel in all they are now and plan to be."



Her advice to other women is not to hold back their dreams and goals. "You can live life to the fullest wherever you would like to be. One can be a mother and wife and still grow professionally to realise their dreams. Ensure you put in place support systems that assist you to reach out for your goals. Be the best you can be and enjoy every moment of it."



PHOTO / DIANA NGILA

## MANUFACTURING

5

**Phyllis Wakiaga,**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, KENYA ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS (KAM), 35

Phyllis stands among the top placed women in the private sector with the influence to boot. She wants her life story to read as one who never stopped developing in mind, spirit and body.

That is why she takes time to read books, work out and religiously wakes up at 4.30 am for spiritual devotion.

The lawyer and mother-of-three, who was appointed to head the lobby last year, is strongly convinced that manufacturing's contribution to Kenya's gross domestic product (GDP) can grow to at least 15 per cent by 2020 from the current 11 per cent where it has stagnated for the past 10 years.

She reckons that a mix of right policies and a competitive climate is all that it will take to spur an industrial revolution in Kenya that is crucial for jobs creation, human empowerment and growth.

Her career path perhaps provides the best vignette of her life of continuous self-development and self-discovery. She started out as an advocate, then moved to Kenya Airways as a customer relations executive until 2013 when she joined KAM as head of policy research and advocacy.

Two years later, she became CEO. Key achievements that easily come to her mind one year on include the joint creation of an anti-corruption law with the government and intense lobbying for the release of Sh7 billion tax refunds owed to companies. Some Sh6 billion of the amount has thus far been released.

The KAM boss is a firm believer in the power of education for transformation. She holds two Master's degrees—in law, international trade and investment law and in business administration.

The need to better manage people spurred her to also study Human Resource Management at the Institute of Human Resource Management – where she emerged as the valedictorian in 2007.

Asked of her many career detours, away from her legal background, she says she is a free, fluid spirit that strives to see new possibilities.

"My current role is policy and economy-related, but has a legal side too and that's when I put on my advocate's cap," says the CEO who finds cooking therapeutic, dances often and teaches Sunday school in church.

**"Fearlessness is like a muscle. I know from my own life that the more I exercise it the more natural it becomes to not let my fears run me."**

Arianna Huffington, founder of The Huffington Post, author of 15 books



FINANCE

7  
**Dr Carolyn Njenga,**  
HEAD OF FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE  
NEW BUSINESS VENTURES DIVISION AT CBA, 34

**R**ight from her academic achievements, Dr Njenga stands out as a woman to watch. She holds the distinction of being the first Kenyan holder of a PhD in Actuarial Studies—a feat she achieved at only 29.

Her interest in actuarial science began while she was at Precious Blood High School, Riruta. Always a top student, Dr Njenga graduated with a First Class Honours in Actuarial Science from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, where she also earned her Master's degree and won the Vice-Chancellor's Award for Academic Excellence, before going to the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, for her PhD.

Along the way, she began clocking up awards. In 2009, she received the prestigious Harold D. Skipper Best Paper in Global Insurance Award (co-authored with Prof. Sherris) from the Asia-Pacific Risk and Insurance Association. Later, one of the findings in her doctoral research influenced the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority's decision to revise the longevity risk-margin in its risk-based capital requirement.

"I love and I am good at mathematics and its applications. I ended up focusing on Risk Modelling which is integral in all specialisations of Actuarial Science," she says. The mother-of-two is today the Head of Financial Risk Management in the New Business Ventures Division at Commercial Bank of Africa, responsible for products such as M-Shwari in Kenya and M-Pawa in Tanzania. She build models for risk management.

It has not been all rosy for Dr Njenga. "Getting a PhD is not easy and getting one in Actuarial Science is really hard work. During my PhD studies I continued with life—I got married and had a child. However, I was not able to get childcare so my husband and I balanced shifts around our child. There were days we would meet at the train station in Sydney to switch the child as he left for work and I came from school."

"My husband was a great mentor and under his guidance risk modelling became a lot of fun," says Dr Njenga, who is now set to be certified as an Enterprise-wide Risk Management Actuary. Her motivation in all she does comes from seeing people grow to have better lives.

As a lecturer and academic director at Strathmore University, "I have grown students for about 10 years. I am now helping to grow the citizenry in terms of financial independence by making mobile savings and lending better for them." She also mentors for Akili Dada, a leadership incubator empowering girls, and is active in Stomaworld Kenya, which involves making life as normal as possible for ostomates — people who have a surgical opening in the abdomen for the discharge of body wastes. "I am passionate about this, because my late mother had colon cancer and lived with a stoma for two years."

She advises young people: "Set long-term goals, then set shorter-term goals that will help you achieve the long-term goals. Periodically evaluate yourself to see if you are on track. If you are not on track, change your strategy, but don't give up."



PHOTO / DIANA NGILA



HEALTHCARE

8  
**Dr Shitsama Nyamweya,**  
NEUROSURGEON, KENYATTA NATIONAL  
HOSPITAL, 32

**S**he stands tall among her male colleagues, being one of the two female neurosurgeons in Kenya, out of 22. Dr Nyamweya also bears the distinction of being the first woman to graduate with a Master of Medicine Degree in Neurosurgery from the University of Nairobi in 2015.

Based at Kenyatta National Hospital and at her private clinic in Nairobi, she treats patients with brain and spinal complications that are largely as a result of road accidents, cancers and birth defects such as hydrocephalus and spina bifida. Outside the hospital, she creates awareness on these conditions, early cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Her greatest passion is mentoring young girls and women to enable them develop an interest in neurosurgery and excel in it. Her position as a lecturer at the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) School of Medicine provides her with a platform to do that.

"When I was studying neurosurgery, I didn't have any women role models to look up to or approach for advice. This was a major challenge. That's why I want to be there for others now. I want them to know that if I did it, they also can." She says that she would also like to link women to fellowship opportunities both locally and internationally, which will enable them work with experts and acquire practical experience in the neurosurgery field.

She is also looking at ways of identifying financial institutions and funding bodies that can sponsor students enrolled in the neurosurgery master's programme so as to increase its uptake and address the human resource gap for the profession in the country.

"It's a rigorous and highly specialised full-time course that takes up to six years. So people aren't able to work. Yet, they are required to pay fees annually and also cater for their upkeep. This discourages many students." Her career in neurosurgery began in earnest after she read US Republican presidential aspirant Ben Carson's "Gifted Hands"—a popular book among young people around the world. "The book got me interested in neurosurgery and while at the university, I realised that I was actually passionate about it. The rest is history."

**“It’s a question of not so much pushing the boys out of the picture, but making the whole frame bigger for both men and women.**

CHRISTINE LAGARDE, IMF managing director

AVIATION

9  
**Amelia Omollo,**  
PROJECT MANAGER FOR BOEING 777 AT KENYA AIRWAYS, 37

**A** repeat Top 40 Under 40 laureate, Amelia makes it to the 2016 list because of her professional achievements in the past year. She was the principal Kenya Airways party to the airline's leasing of aircraft to Turkish Airlines, a no mean feat that involves a lengthy fitness and specifications review that requires both aeronautical engineering and legal contracting skills.

"I buy and sell planes—a role that has turned me into a quasi-commercial lawyer having to interrogate every aspect of the sale contracts," she says. Initially, she had wanted

to be a pilot, but ended up studying aeronautical engineering. She started her career in the military then moved to Fly540 as a planning engineer before moving to Kenya Airways in a similar position.

She initially started off troubleshooting and fixing planes, what she describes simply as '*mechanic wa ndege*'. The mother-of-two spends her free time with her children and when she is not at work or with family, she is a mentor.

Most of her mentoring work is done under the United Nations Educational, Scien-



PHOTO / DIANA NGILA

tific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) programmes.

Educators under STEM are part of the move to boost the number of young people in science and curb the shortage of engineers. She is currently enrolled for a PhD in transport and logistics.





## PSYCHOLOGY

10

## Lucy Wairimu Mukuria,

MILITARY PSYCHOLOGIST AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, 36

**T**True to her position as the woman who deals with delicate mental military issues, Lucy comes across as assertive, even combative, yet bearing the extraordinary ability to express deep empathy.

Lucy says her role is to build on the human spirit of soldiers in order to contribute towards their ability to do their jobs and beyond.

“The bedrock of every soldier is the family he or she comes from. Bringing families in the circle of care is an integral piece to success,” she says.

A trailblazer of psychology in the military, Lucy describes her 11 years’ experience as rewarding in personal and professional growth.

Her job involves dealing with a wide range of mental conditions including but not limited to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, burnout, drug and alcohol misuse, depression, adjustment disorders, reintegration difficulties, lack of family support, spousal battery, family disintegration and divorce.

“These are mental conditions which affect how they feel, think and behave. How they relate to people. Their perception of life and living. This matters because it has a ripple effect on spouses, children, friends, family and the society at large.” Caring for the mental health of soldiers has taken her to foxholes and tents in Damassa, Gherille, Kolbio, Baure in Somalia among others for months on end. “A lot of people say soldiers sacrifice greatly. My experience has taught me they make choices to suffer consequences of their actions because they believe in the sacred duty they must perform,” she says. Combining experience and inspiration from the soldiers, she founded True North—a non-profit organisation that provides mental health care to those who have taken up arms to defend Kenya and have suffered combat related stress because of it.

She has published a children’s book titled “Mutenyo and Friends,” designed a mental health app named True North and currently is pursuing her PhD. When not psychologising, Mama Kristabella can be found playing with children, cycling, running, knitting, gardening, partying and cuddling rabbits.



“Many of our girls grow up believing that their worth depends on appearance. They are, however, more likely to develop leadership aspirations if there are visible women leaders to emulate.”

Amina Mohamed, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Secretary

## HEALTH

11

## Janet Kanini Ikua,

HEALTH AMBASSADOR, DOCTORS BEYOND BORDERS, KANINI FOR AFRICA FOUNDATION CEO, 38

**W**hen she was diagnosed with lung cancer in September last year, Janet felt her world crumbling. But it was a shock that has seen the TV anchor now dedicate her life to changing the lives of cancer patients in Kenya based on the experiences she went through.

For a year, she suffered serious financial strain and numerous medical procedures in and out of the country, which exposed her to the challenges being faced by many cancer patients. After telling her story, a campaign named #IStandWithJanet was created to help raise funds for her treatment on social media.

“I went through a very difficult time when I got sick. I was only able to afford my treatment through the help of well-wishers, but not everyone is as privileged as I was, and that is how I got involved with Doctors Beyond Borders,” she says.

Doctors Beyond Borders, an international medical services organisation, enables patients to receive medical attention, consultation and treatment by linking them to doctors globally. The last born in a family of five, all of whom are medical practitioners, has for years been known as an anchor and show host with NTV, KBC and KTN.

At Kenyatta University, she was involved in drama, theatre and poetry for years, before joining TV, where she became the host of “Out and About Travel Show” with KTN, after which she started her own tour company known as “Exotic Expeditions.” In 2007, she joined NTV as an anchor until 2010, an experience that raised her profile and her popularity, opening more opportunities for her. Janet then worked on the show “How to be Rich” from 2012 and was a brand ambassador for Pampers diapers, before returning to NTV to host the “N-SOKO Property Show”.

Her journey of recovery has been a learning process that has driven her to embrace a different lifestyle and shift her focus.

“Through partnering with Doctors Beyond Borders, we are ensuring patients receive quality treatment at a subsidised price, and, therefore, the problem of being stranded in a foreign country without money is eliminated,” she says.

The Kanini for Africa Foundation is further aiming to increase cancer treatment facilities, end stigma and give hope to both cancer patients and their caregivers.

“I believe that cancer is not a death sentence because I am living proof.”





HUMANITARIAN

12

## Josephine Kulea,

FOUNDER, SAMBURU GIRLS FOUNDATION, 33

For a first born in a polygamous family of three wives and 15 siblings, Josephine's local and international achievements are truly outstanding.

She is the decorated daughter of Samburu with a number of awards to her name, including the Unsung Hero 2011, Head of State Commendation 2012, Acumen East Africa Fellow 2013, UN Person of the Year 2013, and YALI Washington Fellow 2014. She started off life complete with all the challenges that the girl-child faces growing up in Kenya's traditionalist and pastoralist Samburu community.

She was brought up in a typical village – right in the middle of Kenya's semi-arid North where amenities that many ordinary Kenyans consider essential such as clean water and electricity were unheard of. Her school life started in equally difficult circumstances— her first classroom having been under a tree —before moving to a boarding primary school some 42 kilometres from her village. These challenges, however, did not kill her quest to find a sanctuary for the Samburu girl-child who is prone to retrogressive cultures of female genital mutilation and early marriage.

She started a foundation in 2012 after rescuing her cousin from early marriage. A charismatic and a passionate community mobiliser, she reckons that her drive has its roots in the satisfaction that comes with seeing a girl pursue her education to the end and become respect-



able members of society. By the time she was thinking of starting the foundation, she had rescued 46 girls whose school fees she paid from her salary. 'So far, I have rescued more than 1,000 girls and supported 300 to get education,' she says. More recently, she has mobilised her community to give 15 acres of land to build a rescue centre for girls.

AGRICULTURE

13

## Bernadette Muyomi,

FOUNDER, GREEN AGRI VENTURES, AND BUSIA COUNTY EXECUTIVE FOR LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, 34

Bernadette wears a number of hats. She is the founder and chief executive officer of an award-winning social enterprise— Green Agri Ventures and is also the Busia County executive in charge of Lands, Housing and Urban Development in Busia.

Her work with communities in different parts of Kenya and other African countries is what awakened her to the reality of social injustices that millions of people face in their quest for improvement.

That is what acted as a trigger to create change. She founded Green Agri Ventures, known as 'The Green Bank', aiming to reverse declining agricultural production, high levels of poverty and increased unemployment in rural communities.

"I realised how poverty robs people of their dignity and confidence and I decided that whatever I do in life must improve the socio-economic wellbeing of people," she says. "I was triggered to think of ways of creating jobs and this is one



of the reasons I started green Agri Ventures," says Bernadette, who holds two undergraduate degrees in nursing and counselling from Baraton University. The Green Bank enables small-holder farmers to grow fruit trees and pool resources for value-addition in cottage industries from which they can earn a living over time. This, as well, is a local intervention to the global menace of climate change.

Her achievements include founding a successful social enterprise, seeing it pick momentum and attract local farmers and international recognition for its outstanding customer-focused model. She also mentors both the young and the old.

"I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was to fulfil my profession."

HILLARY CLINTON,  
US presidential candidate



MARKETING

14

## Emily Oruo Amadi,

HEAD OF MEDIA, TRANSCEND MEDIA GROUP, 38

Meeting Emily for the first time offers one a glimpse into the foundations of her successful career. She is warm, confident and has an air of hospitality that places perfect strangers into an environment of familiarity. She says she derives a lot of satisfaction from motivating others and growing young brands in the marketplace.

Away from work, she mentors the youth getting into the job market on how to handle work pressure, personal relationships and investments. This has seen most of the 25 to 30-year-olds she mentors fondly refer to her as 'mom', something that has made her consider opening an inspirational centre.

"I am looking forward to opening a centre to inspire and motivate, especially the Generation Z who seem to be living on the fast lane and do little to evaluate their choices," the Linguistics graduate from Moi University says.

Back in campus, she would help aspiring student leaders market their brands through designing t-shirts and posters, as well as advise them on strategic locations to pin them for maximum reach.

Looking back, she says, the experience prepared her for the advertising industry, which requires team work and demands that she organises campaigns to grow customers' brands.

Her greatest marketing achievement so far is her successful handling of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) media campaigns in 2013 despite limited resources available.

"It was such an honour when a small company as ours (at the time) won the tender to run the IEBC campaigns. It was baptism with fire, but we appreciate all lessons learnt," says the mother-of-two, adding that advertising requires high organisational skills.

Her clients, she says, have made her time-conscious, because in advertising "if you get late even by one day, you are out of the game, someone else takes all the glory."

Away from work, Emily unwinds through exploring new destinations. Besides, she has recently discovered a new passion in construction and interior décor which now takes quite a chunk of her time.





## FORENSICS

15

## Dr Amritpal Kaur Myrna Kalsi,

REGIONAL FORENSIC CO-ORDINATOR (NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST),  
INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, 36

**A**mritpal is the first Kenyan and African to join the forensics team at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), where she serves as the link between forensic practitioners and the authorities in the near and Middle East region.

“My work entails the establishment of links with the relevant authorities, institutions’ and forensic practitioners to address challenges that require humanitarian forensic assistance,” she said.

“This translates to stakeholder mapping, conducting assessments, identifying areas of engagement, and, together with relevant stakeholders, developing sustainable forensic programmes, as well as guiding and providing recommendations in accordance with international best practice.”

She is also involved in the development of national mechanisms with key stakeholders to address objectives such as the proper management of human remains, in accordance with the mandate of the ICRC and its partners.

“I have had the privilege of

contributing to the work on post-conflict diplomatic mechanisms for the Iran-Iraq war and the Iraq-Kuwait war, processes that seek to resolve cases of those gone missing as a result of the conflict.”

The University of Nairobi graduate in dental surgery began her journey into forensics after her graduation and enrolment in the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology in the US to pursue a course in forensics.

“There, I met the former chief government pathologist of Kenya, Dr Moses Njue, who took me under his wing and acknowledged my role and potential for forensic case work. On completing my Master’s in Forensic Odontology in South Africa, I became Kenya’s pioneer forensic odontologist and one of the few forensic odontologists in the African continent.”

She was later requested to join the large and growing elite team of globally renowned forensic experts and consultants working for the ICRC, an international humanitarian organisation.

Dr Amritpal’s work in the Middle East has also earned her recognition and appreciation from the ICRC regional delegation based in Kuwait for the Gulf Co-operation Countries. “The award was for the forensic contribution to a post-conflict mechanism that assists to resolve the fate of missing persons from the Gulf War of 1990 to 1991.”

She hopes to use her experience to contribute to the development of forensics in Kenya.

“I want to contribute to the achievement of relevant forensic standards and best practices in current and anticipated forensic programmes in the country.”



PHOTO/DIANA NGILA

## AUDIT

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## Nancy Muhoya,

PARTNER, ERNST & YOUNG (EY), 38

**H**er demeanour easily conceals her stature as an assurance partner at global financial services and audit firm, EY. Yet she carries the distinction of being the second woman to hold that position since the audit firm’s inception.

During the interview, Nancy regularly flips open her iPad to respond to e-mails that require her immediate attention from colleagues strewn across Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda and across the globe.

“I am currently leading a team of consultants providing technical assistance to all government ministries in the journey towards adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IP-SAS), which should boost Kenya’s attractiveness to investors and confidence among various development partners,” she says. She is an authority on IPSAS matters and has facilitated a number of sessions in various forums for senior government officials across East Africa.

The mother-of-two has worked at EY for 13 years since graduating from the University of Nairobi with a Bachelor’s degree in Commerce (Accounting Option). She has also studied accounts and attained the Certified Public Accountant (Kenya) status. While settling down in marriage a decade ago brought in new responsibilities, Nancy describes it as her most rewarding decision. She says family remains her key support system in her personal as well as career life.

“Women have a role to play in the fight for positive change. I hardly understand why many are unable to balance work and life. The trick is to integrate the two, rather than try to balance. I am proof that it is possible,” she says.

A stickler to rules and time, she says her most satisfying achievement is her contribution to financial reporting reforms in Kenya that are geared towards enhancing accountability and improving governance structures, making public funds’ utilisation process more transparent. In her spare time, she frequents the local gym and swims.

## LAW

16

## Deborah Bubi-Mwangi,

PARTNER, HAMILTON HARRISON AND MATHEWS, 33

**D**eborah is a prolific lawyer, the chair of the National Youth Advisory Board (NYAB), a Catholic choir girl and a devoted wife. In the past couple of years, she has spent time in Mombasa—almost single handedly setting up Hamilton Harrison and Mathews (HH&M) regional office.

She was recruited to the firm in 2007 after graduating among the top six at the University of Nairobi’s Law school.

She quit in 2013 to be close to her husband, Mwangi Muturi, because the firm did not have an office in the coastal city. “When I first told my boss that I was relocating to Mombasa, he offered me a partner position, but I turned it down,” she says.

HH&M later recalled her and tasked her with opening and leading the firm’s Mombasa branch. In June,

when President Uhuru Kenyatta appointed 32 new heads of State corporations, Deborah was picked to chair the NYAB, something she attributes to her social work with the youth group of the Consolata Shrine, Nairobi.

She joined the church in 2002 to lend her soprano voice to the choir until she moved to Mombasa. She now sings at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Nyali, Mombasa.

While at Consolata, she carried out several projects with the church’s youth group to help the less fortunate in neighbouring slums of Deep Sea and Suswa, something she believes landed her the NYAB job.

“The Consolata Youth Group has formed who I am today. I believe some people saw my work,” she says.

She is passionate about the youth and wants to enlighten them about entrepreneurship opportunities.



PHOTO/KEVIN ODIT.



BEAUTY/PERSONAL CARE

Michelle Nkatha Ntalami

FOUNDER/CEO, MARINI NATURALS, 32

A personal tragedy became her motivation to start a business offering women natural haircare products, shielding them from lifestyle diseases.

After seeing her father fight and lose the battle to prostate cancer in 2013, Michelle became more conscious of health.

“During the period my dad was sick to his passing, I went through a period of evaluating my choices in terms of lifestyle, the products I use for my skin and hair, how often I exercise; and that is how Marini came to me,” she says.

Now three years onwards, Marini Naturals has established itself as the natural hair line of choice, with products produced in Africa for the African woman. It has branches in Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, France, and, soon, South Africa.

Born and raised in Nairobi, Michelle has always had a competitive and hard-working spirit, having acquired a First Class Honours in undergraduate; named the top overall student globally in the chartered post-graduate diploma, CIM, UK; and emerged as top overall student in Kenya for the post-graduate diploma in marketing in 2010.

Despite being gifted academically, her desire to be an entrepreneur began when she launched her own marketing, design and PR company in 2010, but it is Marini Naturals that has proven to be her biggest break. “I started mixing up natural organic products in the kitchen for my hair, since I could not find affordable products after I cut off my relaxed hair. Most of the natural hair products were foreign and very expensive,” she says.

After creating 500 samples, the challenge was to reach a target market, but, to her surprise, in a month the stock was over, and people were requesting for more.

She says the secret of any successful business is to create networks and focus on building a unique brand. Drawing in friends and family is the best way to create a network of customers if one is launching a new product or service in the market, she says.

To her, business is not just about the money, it is about transforming lives and creating an environment that brings people to appreciate themselves and want to be better. Marini Naturals is currently running a nation-wide campaign training women in natural hair care.

“I stand for more than just business and through Marini I want to see women make better life choices, embrace their natural beauty and live healthy lives.”



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“You may have great inner resources, but they don’t show up as confidence when you don’t feel pretty.”

ESTEE LAUDER, founder, Estee Lauder Companies, manufacturers of beauty products

INVESTMENT

Elizabeth Nkukuu,

CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF INVESTMENTS OFFICER, CYTONN INVESTMENTS, 36

Ten years ago, Elizabeth had little practical knowledge of what goes on in the investment industry, and no idea of the deep waters she was about to plunge in.

Today, she sits as chief investment officer at Cytonn Investments, a two-year-old firm that has hit Kenya’s investment scene by storm. Cytonn turned many heads two months ago when it announced an annual profit of Sh600 million just two years into operations — an achievement Elizabeth attributes to the company’s rich human capital base. “We have basically turned the investments market on its head,” she says of the company’s achievements in the past couple of years.

She started out as an intern at Pine Bridge Investments, and describes this as a tough period. “It was easier for me to relate with the concepts at a theoretical level, but found it a little hard translating this into practical work. Fortunately, I had a supportive team that helped me get onto my feet pretty quickly,” she says.

Her commitment and fear of failure also kept her working on improving her skills. “I am naturally a very competitive person. When starting out it is normal to get scared as you are unfamiliar with the territory, but I was never too hard on myself, knowing I have it in me to improve and do better.”

Elizabeth regards her role at Cytonn as a chance to impact lives by helping people make profitable investment decisions that subsequently deliver the highest returns. “Investors come in and trust us with their hard earned cash. At the end of the day, I have to deliver,” she says. She is part of the team that founded Cytonn Investments.

She is impatient with laziness and confesses inability to tolerate underperformance at the workplace, unless it is due to capacity issues.



PHOTO: DIANA NGILA

HEALTH

Dr Diana Kerubo Ondieki,

CONSULTANT OBSTETRICIAN, GYNAECOLOGIST, FERTILITY SPECIALIST AND LAPAROSCOPIC SURGEON, 35

For Diana, the best decision she ever made in life was to follow her father’s advice and study medicine. It was in the medical field that she found her passion as a practising obstetrician, gynaecologist, fertility specialist, lecturer and a peer educator.

At 35, she is one of the youngest practitioners in her field of specialisation, one that she takes quite humbly. Earlier in her pursuit of medical studies, she had wanted to be a dentist but a few traumatic experiences at the dentist’s office saw her change her mind. “I changed to pharmacy, but my father insisted I must do medicine,” she says, a decision that took her to obstetrics. Through her work, she spends a



lot of time with the younger generation on a wide range of health issues, especially on sexual reproductive health.

Mentoring the youth is a subject she feels strongly about, stating that it is the key to an enlightened and empowered youth, be it on careers, social life or just personal life. She also lectures as part of a way to give back to the system. Success is not a foreign concept to the ob-gyn. She came from a humble background in Kibera to emerge the top student in Nairobi

during her Kenya Certificate of Primary Education examinations. Her background is one she says never held her back and is one that many facing similar challenges can learn from.

When she is not helping women bring little lives into the world, she communes with the great outdoors. Being an ob-gyn, she is constantly on call, but that has not stopped her from hiking, cycling, go-karting among the other activities she indulges in during her free time.





## MARKETING

22

## Carol Wachira-Wanyama,

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING  
MANAGER, ROYAL MEDIA SERVICES, 39

The recent migration from analogue to digital broadcasting, alongside ongoing media convergence has put Carol on the cusp of a transformation. With the ongoing shift in consumer behaviour, she has found herself among those on whose shoulders history has placed the onerous task of crafting a new business model for media of the future.

“Gone are the days when we could dictate content to the audience. Now you can’t do that. The audience many times dictate what it wants to consume in the media,” she says. And she is taking it by the strides. While she acknowledges the immense challenges, that have come with the new dispensation, she is equally optimistic, insisting opportunities also abound.

“To be successful in this new world, we have to align the existing broadcast media with the mobile and online platforms that are becoming increasingly important,” she says. That has demanded that her work goes beyond marketing to creating strategic links with audiences and artists. Carol says success in modern marketing requires huge investments in smart research that discovers opportunity or proposes change or strategy improvement.

She has worked at Royal Media in the past 10 years, starting as head of marketing, then moving to head of sales. She took charge of both marketing and business development six years ago. Her dedication to the marketing profession and the success she has realised has earned her recognition among her peers who have elected her to serve as the vice-chair of the Marketing Society of Kenya (MSK) since 2012. Apart from her day job, she mentors students in marketing courses, plays golf and also sings for charity through Twakutukuza annual choir that raises cash for cancer patients. She is married with three children.

## HEALTH

21

## Dr Elizabeth Amakove Wala,

CEO, KENYA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 38

Dr Wala’s personality stands out even in an ordinary conversation. From the time she started working as an intern at the Ministry of Health, she has always been an active member of the medical association, rising through the ranks to position of vice chairperson before taking up the first ever position of chief executive in 2014.

Her role as KMA chief executive officer has given her a platform not only to show her leadership mettle, but also put her in a position to speak to young girls and encourage them to make the most of the circumstances.

Previously, she worked in the pharmaceutical industry and was involved in the first HIV vaccine trials after practising general medicine for about a year.

Even with her busy schedule, shuffling between management and speaking engagements, she finds time to offer support to parents like her who have had to raise multiple children at the same time.

“When I was having my triplets six years ago, there was not much information about having multiples in the country, let alone a good support network for such high risk pregnancy,” she says.

What she started as a support group page, for parents with twins, triplets and other multiple children on Facebook has over the years grown to become a fully registered society. “Multiple Blessings was growing at a fast rate so we decided to register Multiples to Multiples Society in June 2013,” she says.

The society provides support to families struggling to raise their multiple children mainly through partnerships with medical insurers and manufacturers of basic commodities. In addition, she finds time every other day to pen her thoughts on parenting and life in general on her blog [lizwala.wordpress.com](http://lizwala.wordpress.com). While she no longer practises medicine, Dr Wala still maintains her licence and is up-to-date with her listing at the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Board.

PHOTO /DIANA NGILA



## MARKETING

22

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MANAGER, ROYAL MEDIA SERVICES, 39

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“You could certainly say that I’ve never underestimated myself, there’s nothing wrong with being ambitious.”

ANGELA MERKEL, German  
Chancellor



## TECHNOLOGY

23

## Ann Wanjui Njoroge,

PRESIDENT/ FOUNDER, NELIG GROUP, 27

Ann was introduced to entrepreneurship at a tender age by her father, a factor that has enabled her to launch a now thriving business, Nelig Group, formerly The Web Tekies, and emerge as a champion of the Internet in East Africa.

“It was my father who spotted and nurtured the entrepreneurial and leadership seed in me at a tender age. My very first business engagement was after my KCPE, in 2002, where I sold eggs, *sukuma wiki*, and plums,” she says.

However, it was not until 2012 that she founded an online branding and web application solutions company, while she was a part-time student at the University of Nairobi.

A year later, she became a full-time entrepreneur, quitting her job to focus on her company, which she repositioned to focus on branding, marketing, and communications, as well as online and old media. She has since assisted organisations without any digital presence to establish themselves online, to the point where 90 per cent of their business comes from their online presence, which she considers her greatest achievement.

Her passion for the digital revolution also extends to community service, which saw her start RootEd Africa, a social enterprise that focuses on mentorship and education.

“RootEd Africa seeks to transform lives in rural and remote parts of Africa through ICT and non-curriculum activities, such as sports and mentorship,” she says.



Through this group, she assisted in the set up the first library in Kabaru, a small village at the foot of Mt. Kenya, which now serves over 500 students.

She is also part of the Internet for All Project implementation team set up by the World Economic Forum, targeting the connection of 25 million people in the Northern Corridor across East Africa.

“Africa has untapped potential and limitless opportunities,” she says. But the secret to the success of every business is networking, hard work and more hard work, which she learnt from her mother and grandmother.

“My advice to anyone, young and old, aspiring to be an entrepreneur is that, your network is your net worth. People want to do business with people they know. This has been my greatest lesson,” she says.

“I look back at how far I have come and how much I have achieved: it motivates, challenges and inspires me to want to keep pushing forward.”





PUBLIC SERVICE

Mumina Bonaya,  
CHAIRPERSON, WOMEN ENTERPRISE FUND, 35

25

Mumina stepped into Nairobi City for the first time in 2005, carrying in her heart a dream to impact the lives of young boys and girls by pursuing her teaching career. Little did she know that the scope of her work was set to widen in the coming years, with President Uhuru Kenyatta appointing her as the chairperson of Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) in 2013.

“The opportunity to serve at the Women Enterprise Fund was a huge turning point in my career. Being at the forefront in ensuring women grow from a point of disadvantage to where they now own and manage businesses gives me great satisfaction,” she says.

Mumina is proud to note that the Women Enterprise Fund has benefited over 1.2 million women in the country, and trained 800,000 others. With a total of Sh3.4 billion disbursed by the government since the inception of the fund in 2007, the Fund has given out loans totalling Sh8.73 billion, thanks to the loan repayment rate that stands at 90 per cent.

“There are potential women entrepreneurs who are yet to approach us because they are afraid they might have to pay high interest rates; we don’t

charge interest at all,” she says. Of the success stories, she is greatly inspired by a group of women who took an initial loan of Sh50,000, underwent training by WEF, and now own a chain of businesses in Kwanza, Trans Nzoia, including rental houses and poultry, and run a healing support programme for members. The group now earns annual profits of Sh500,000.

Mumina’s own journey, however, is no less impressive. “I was a teacher for about four years. I loved my job, but I felt I needed something more challenging, something refreshing. I felt my life had become routine, and I was less inspired by that. One day I woke up, drafted a resignation letter, sent it in, and set out in search of a challenge.”

With no concrete plan of the life ahead, she volunteered as a co-ordinator for a local community organisation in her home county, Isiolo. In 2012, she moved on to join the Adaptation Consortium and became instrumental in championing for climate change and adaptation. “I wanted to change the narrative that the community has no capacity to take part in their own development agenda.”

Away from work, she spends time with her family, especially her daughter.

HEALTH

24

Dr Esther  
Nyambura Njoroge,  
VICE PRESIDENT OF REGIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT FOR AFRICA,  
SMILE TRAIN, 35

Dr Njoroge’s passion has inspired her career at Smile Train, an organisation that provides free surgery to children with an easily operable condition called cleft palate, which typically deforms the upper lip.

“I started working at Smile Train as a volunteer eight years ago, two years after I graduated from university, in 2006,” she says. “It was then that I learnt about the condition, cleft lip and palate that I had little knowledge of and I had not come across.”

The University of Nairobi graduate with an MBChB (Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery), first experienced a cleft patient with a colleague, and from that encounter she knew that she wanted to make a difference by being a part of an organisation that is helping give a smile back to young children.

From volunteer, she has risen through the ranks to the position of vice president and regional director for Africa. In this position, she is in charge of Smile Train in Africa, a programme spanning 30 countries, and has so far conducted 8,000 surgeries. But to get to that position she has had to overcome some challenges.

“Breaking into new territories within the continent is one of our main challenges,” she says.

Dr Njoroge also mentors young girls. “My inspiration is to help children have a better future through surgery or by getting a good education,” she says.

Her main aspiration is achieving the position where children with cleft palate undergo surgery before they reach two years old and are never exposed to the stigma associated with the condition. She is also awaiting graduation from Moi University with a Master’s Degree in Public Health. One day, she says, maybe she will even be the Cabinet Secretary for Health in Kenya. “I want to run a health sector that is dedicated to children as they are the future of this country.”

RELIGION

Reverend Dawn Gikandi,  
CHURCH MINISTER AND AUTHOR, 33

26

When it comes to male domination of any career or profession in Kenya today, none stands ahead of leadership at the pulpit. Statistics show that more than 80 per cent of all church ministers are men and the figure goes even higher in specific churches or denominations. This is what makes Reverend Gikandi, a minister with PCEA Church stand out. Her life’s journey, which nearly ended in the womb after her mother was involved in an accident while expectant, has been no less chal-

lenging. Rev. Gikandi, who now has two and a half years’ experience as a reverend, actually started the church ministry while on campus, as a youth leader. She was posted to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), Thiririka Presbytery, Juja Parish, where she worked as a student minister ahead of her ordination as an Elder in January 2014.

The ordination at the Juja Parish was her turning point, she says. “Apart from being involved in spiritual groups where I got encouragement, ordination as an

elder lightened my way. I was convinced God had accepted me to serve Him,” the soft-spoken reverend says. She was later licensed and ordained Minister of the Word and Sacrament and posted to PCEA Nairobi Central Presbytery-Bahati Martyrs’ Parish from May 2014. The religious minister has since travelled the world.

She was part of the pilgrimage team, Reference Group on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, which visited Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland and Beit-Jala, near Bethlehem, Israel in 2015 and 2016. She has been the National Council Churches of Kenya, Nairobi Region’s Persons with Disabilities representative since June 2015, serves on several schools’ boards of management. She has also written a devotional, inspirational book, “Snippets of Hope”. The reverend has been nominated for the Timeless Women of Wonder Foundation (TWOW) awards.



PHOTO /DIANA NGILA





AUDIT

27

## Lilian Kubebea,

TAX PARTNER, DELOITTE EAST AFRICA, 36

Lilian has emerged as a leading expert in customs and taxes, representing Kenya at international forums for more than a decade, and now moving towards leadership in her field. She describes her job as one that gives her tremendous joy and satisfaction.

"It is a job that gives me the opportunity to grow and strive to improve myself both on a personal and professional level."

Her work involves delivering quality cli-

ent service— working seamlessly across geographic, functional, and business borders to deliver excellence in all of the services provided; attracting, empowering and nurturing the best talent; building the Deloitte brand; growing a profitable business among others things.

The Master's Degree holder in International Customs Law and Administration from the University of Canberra, Australia, has over 12 years of experience in tax con-

sultancy, and has always specialised in indirect taxes. Previously, she worked at the Kenya Revenue Authority in the customs department.

"At KRA, I was involved in customs policy and operational matters, international trade and advised on indirect taxes," she says. The commitment and passion for her job saw Lilian, at the age of 24, selected to represent Kenya in several International Customs and Trade forums including the World Customs Organisation, the East African Community and the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (Comesa), an experience that she said was eye-opening.

"As I reflect back, some of these interactions at the forums undeniably inculcated values that have shaped me and contributed positively to the person that I am today," she says. Aside from being a tax partner at Deloitte, she is also a member of a women's group at the firm called the East Africa Women Initiative Network.

"The initiative of the group is to empower Deloitte women by promoting self-confidence, mentoring and nurturing career development. We also provide guidance and clarity to clients and the public on changes in the national budget," she says. In future, Lillian, would like to be a reputable and trusted advisor. "I want to be able to contribute to the growth of the tax business in East Africa and to become the undisputed leader in the market." Citing the late British actress, Audrey Hepburn: "Nothing is impossible, the word itself says, 'I'm possible!'- The possibilities are endless."

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

28

## Caren Odanga,

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, SISARI WOMEN INITIATIVES, 22

At 16, Caren launched an organisation to address the challenges facing young girls in Kakamega by offering practical solutions to the problems. Six years onwards, she is emerging as a formidable advocate for women's empowerment.

She identifies the women's challenges as lack of proper education, which limits their knowledge about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence.

"I started the organisation, Sisari Women Initiatives, after meeting young victims of gender-based violence, while volunteering as a peer educator at Yaya Education Trust (YET). I would interact with the young girls and from them I learnt of their problems, which YET was trying to help them out with, but were not able to handle all of them, hence the establishment of Sisari Women Initiative."

She founded the organisation in 2010 when she joined the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication. There she would earn her Diploma in Mass Communication and at the same time she continued helping young women in her county.

Her inspiration is rural girls and women who challenge the entrenched cultural and social norms that continue to undermine their aspirations, which was also the biggest challenge she faced herself when she formed her organisation.

"When I started educating girls about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and providing them



with contraceptives, community leaders and men said I was encouraging immorality. They were hostile and wanted me to stop my agenda."

"But by engaging in meetings with religious leaders, youth leaders, school heads and village elders, I was able to tell them of the importance of such an organisation in the community and on the need to provide sexual and reproductive health and rights education to young girls so as to avoid teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, which are prevalent in Kakamega."

This relentless effort to protect young girls in Kakamega has won her two awards; The 2015 Queen's Young Leaders Award and The 2015 Women Deliver Young Leaders Award.

Caren also distributes re-usable sanitary towels to girls in schools and plans to establish a production centre in Kakamega so that no girl fails to go to school due to menstruation.

She encourages those starting out in their careers to be patient and work hard as nothing comes fast and easy in life.

"If you set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing."

MARGARET THATCHER, first female prime minister of UK

COMMODITY MARKETS

29

## Bhavni Shah,

COMMODITY TRADER AT BUNGE EAST AFRICA, 32



Bhavni found herself in agricultural commodity trading almost by chance. She applied for an advertised position in one of the big four global trading houses, and got the job. Now, as one of very few female commodity traders she heads the regional trading for East Africa for Bunge East Africa.

"It was only after learning the ropes of trading and understanding the backbone behind a trade that I was fully convinced I was in the right place," she says. But moving from research-based agricultural trading to becoming a commodity trader was a career move that stood out for her. It's a job that requires determination, self-discipline and confidence, she says, especially as one of very few women in a male-dominated industry.

But the 32-year-old is motivated by developing innovative ideas that come to fruition and deliver visible results. "This gives me a sense of accomplishment and it's something that I can look back on and say 'I achieved that'. When I pick up a project at work and see it through from birth to maturity, it's a sense of self achievement and motivates me to keep striving harder," she says.

Bhavni majored in marketing at the University of Kent in UK and is planning to pursue a Master's in strategic management in the next two years. "One of my greatest strengths is perseverance, which always

drives me, no matter how hard the task. I believe you eventually find the right tune to play to," she says. She is married to a man she describes as a "crazy fun-loving man and my rock."

She has worked with some of the key stakeholders in feeding the nation, and also got a donor to take up and fund a community project focused on sustainability, human-wildlife conflict, empowering women and protecting wildlife.

Driven by her love for Kenya's nature, amazing landscape and wildlife, and the wealth of its heritage, she works closely with Friends of Tsavo, focusing on preserving the country's flora and fauna in and within the national park.

Currently, the group's main focus is 'water for the wild', as the basic necessity for survival. Friends of Tsavo also work towards preventing human-wildlife conflicts by keeping the animals within protected areas.

"It would be the perfect marriage, if this can be practised in a way that would in turn reduce human-wildlife conflict," she says.

Bhavni aspires to be a key representative in achieving food security in the region, focusing on sustainable agriculture practices for future generations. To young women who want to work in commodity trading or food sustainability, she advises them never to never give up,



## MARKETING

30

## Fiona Kigen ,

VICE PRESIDENT (MARKETING),  
BARCLAYS GROUP AFRICA, 32

For Fiona, the past 10 years have rewarded her for being good at managing smaller stuff. She is now entrusted with the management of a portfolio of products across 11 countries for one of Africa's biggest banks, Barclays.

She joined Barclays Kenya as a marketing executive at just 22-years- old; young and excited to be part of a global brand's marketing team and hoping to use her assertiveness to push the envelope. Her opportunity came a few years later, when she took on the challenge of acting as the head of marketing for Barclays Tanzania when she was 27.

"This was a very exciting assignment for me and it prepared me for my next big assignment a few months later, when I took up yet another acting position, this time as the Head of Marketing for Barclays Kenya," she says. As the head of marketing for the Kenyan subsidiary, she had to manage a team of eight, the entire marketing budget and numerous projects, including the Barclays Kenya Open and the Barclays Golf Circuit.

Two years later, she rose to vice president, overseeing operations in 11 countries. Fiona says her most eye-opening experience has been working with a team in Absa's South Africa retail banking business, which gave

her deep insight into one of the continent's largest economies.

But her walk has not been all rosy as working in a big organisation with thousands of employees means that standing out is so much more difficult.

"It has not been easy, I have been fortunate to have mentors who have showed me the way and helped me make some crucial career decisions," she says. The Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration, who graduated in 2005 from United States International University says that to be successful, one has to develop great relationships that ensure you always have people to turn to for assistance, consistency in delivery and being true to your word, and going over and above what is required to get the job done.

"Specifically for a marketer, keeping up with industry trends and a deep knowledge of best practice is key in making your mark."

She adds that consistency is important to ensure that you build a personal brand that people remember when an opportunity arises that matches your skills. Presently, she works with different teams to conceptualise and execute their marketing plans in line with their strategy and make recommendations based on business needs.



PHOTO/DIANA NGILA

## BANKING

31

## Nuru Mugambi,

DIRECTOR, PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND SUSTAINABLE FINANCE,  
KENYA BANKERS ASSOCIATION, 39

How does one successfully communicate the position of an industry under siege for what is at the core of its business, such as the cost of commercial bank loans? Well, that is what makes Nuru tick.

She is the woman who has been in the eye of a storm as legislators trained their guns at the very heart of the banking business with the passing of a law that caps interest rates. The move left Nuru with onerous task of getting the bankers' voice on the subject to the public domain without appearing to be out of touch with the hard realities of Kenya's credit market.

It was Nuru who, at the height of the interest rates debate, midwived the banks' decision to set up a Sh30 billion loans basket targeting small and medium-sized enterprises with preferential interest rates in the hope of convincing President Uhuru Kenyatta and the public of the bankers' intention to confront the challenge of high interest rates head-on but without legal caps.

Though Mr Kenyatta signed the Bill into law, she has not abandoned the Inuka Programme, underlining the attitude that has seen her rise to the top echelons of corporate Kenya. Last year, Nuru was inducted as an Honorary Fel-

low of the Kenya Institute of Bankers for industry excellence and leadership, becoming the youngest woman in banking to receive the designation. She, however, doesn't consider herself as a banker, but rather a policy maker and lobbyist. Her contributions to banking sector policy formulation are numerous, particularly in the area of sustainable finance, consumer protection, and alternative dispute resolution.

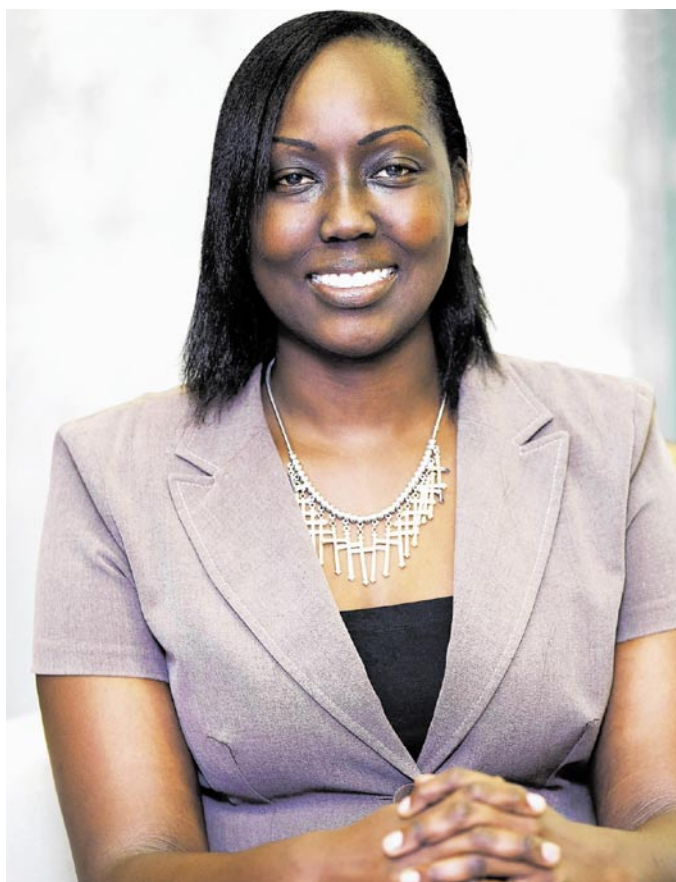
Her work in sustainable financing, which seeks to ensure investment decision have a lasting benefit to society and clients, is currently being studied by banking industries in Ghana, Malawi and the UAE.

This work also earned her the 2016 Eisenhower Fellowships Award. The Sunday school teacher, mother of one also serves as a community advocate with the Kilimani Project Foundation.

She started her career as an intern at Africa Online before moving to the United States for her undergraduate degree in business, and executive Master's degree focusing on strategy. Barclays Plc then hired and posted her to the Kenya unit where she worked for four years as head of corporate affairs before moving to Kenya Bankers Association (KBA).

"You have to look at leadership through the eyes of the followers and you have to live the message. What I have learned is that people become motivated when you guide them to the source of their own power and when you make heroes out of employees who personify what you want to see in the organisation."

Anita Roddick, Businesswoman





## TECHNOLOGY

32

**Joan Mburu Omanjo,**TECHNOLOGY RISK & INFORMATION SECURITY MANAGER,  
OLD MUTUAL AFRICA, 36

Joan stumbled into the world of technology almost by chance. “I wasn’t sure if I wanted to pursue IT after completing my diploma,” she says. Immediately after completing her A-level at Aga Khan Academy Nairobi, Joan decided to pursue a diploma in information technology while waiting to join university.

It was here that the tech bug bit her. Today, she is the technology risk and information security manager for Old Mutual Africa, overseeing 13 countries in East, West and southern Africa. The budding female techie is also a board member at the Kenyan chapter of Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA), the global body for IT governance professionals.

She graduated in 2006 with a first class Bachelor of Science degree in Information Technology from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology. But her rise to the top has not been meteoric.

“I have been able to grow in a career I love to my current position over a period of eight years,” says the techie who was born and bred in Nairobi and



PHOTO / DIANA NGILA

attended Highridge and Makini Primary schools.

Joan started off as a customer care agent at Safaricom in January 2006 while still in university. Two years down the line, she was appointed to the role of information security officer within Safaricom’s risk and strategy division.

She later moved to Old Mutual Kenya as IT risk officer in August 2010, and in October 2015 was appointed the head of IT risk, security and governance for East Africa in the now UAP-Old Mutual group.

She took up her regional role effective September this year, the eve of her 36th birthday, making her Top 40 Under 40 very timely.

When not busy with IT systems, security and audit, you will most likely catch Joan spending time with her husband and two children, travelling, watching movies or dancing.

Last month, she made a presentation on implementing IT governance at the first-ever Africa Computer Audit, Control and Security Conference held in Nairobi, underlining her emergence as an industry leader in the nascent field.



## TECHNOLOGY

34

**Edna Kigen Adjei,**

SENIOR TECHNICAL CONSULTANT &amp; ARCHITECT, ENABLE-U, 32

Edna’s passion for IT is infectious. As a senior technical consultant and architect with Dutch firm Enable-U, her role is to craft and implement security systems for software-based companies, a challenging task given the ever-evolving nature of security systems and threats.

She has worked for Dutch government agencies, South African telecommunication companies, retailers and airlines.

Her love for IT began at Kabarak High School, where part of the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education computer science project was to write a programme in PASCAL— a programming language. She holds a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Business Administration, with a concentration in Information Systems and Technology from the United States International University, where she graduated top of her class.

Edna, who got married two weeks ago,

also holds an honours degree in Technology Management and a Master’s in Technology Management from the University of Pretoria.

“I have great passion for IT that I endeavour to work for the betterment of it, especially at this point when IT is redefining itself; it is not just another cost to the company, but a key driver to deliver operational benefits,” she says.

That passion is manifested in the professional certifications she has received. She is among few Africans who are certified experts in CA API management implementation which involves bringing systems together and securing their integration to capitalise on new opportunities especially in data mining.

Edna is also involved in mentoring of the youth through Ikamva Youth Programme, aiming to empower the future generation through education, e-literacy training and career guidance.

## SOLAR ENERGY

33

**Charity Wanjiku Nyaga,**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, STRAUSS  
ENERGY, 35

Working for Strauss Energy, a company she founded with her elder brother, Tony Nyagah, places a heavy load of responsibility on Charity’s shoulders. The Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology alumnus, who is a member of the Board of Registration of Architects and Quantity Surveyors, developed her career working with interior design and architectural firms as well as Aga Khan Hospital and the United Nations.

Around 2014, she and her brother left their jobs to work full-time developing the Building Integrated Photovoltaics (BIPV)—a product they thought had the potential to change the world.

“Our parents were not very thrilled about the two of us leaving employment to venture into entrepreneurship, but once they understood what we were doing they became our strongest supporters,” she said. Ultimately, the BIPV technology was integrated into roofing tiles allowing homeowners to turn their roofs into a giant solar panel, reducing reliance on electricity from Kenya Power.

Initially, the product was manufactured locally but as demand grew they resorted to outsourcing manufacturers abroad. The architect who is a creature



of habit likes being told things plainly so that she is able to make decisions without any assumptions, which she adds, “comes with the territory of the construction sector? When she is not working she will be outdoors probably enjoying a good workout either running a marathon or going for a hike. Her day-to-day work schedule might be erratic as it evolves writing proposals, meeting potential clients and investors or going for site visits.

Charity says that working with her big brother for the last two years has been a delicate balance that the duo has learnt to manage and is comforted by the fact that he would always have her back.

Her role has seen her travel the world, giving talks and pitching to investors at various forums with the latest being during the Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Silicon Valley, USA in June where Strauss Energy won cash in the People’s Choice category of the Global Innovation through Science and Technology competition.

“If you bring your personal stuff to work and have constant stream of issues and family problems, you’ll create the perception that your plate is full, and you won’t be considered for more challenging responsibilities.

DONDI SCUMACI, Author “Designed for Success”



BEAUTY/PERSONAL CARE

35

Ciku Wamae,  
ENTREPRENEUR AND FOUNDER, CIKU BEAUTY, 39

Having the courage to go into business in a market that many people think is saturated, and succeeding in it is what makes Ciku stand out. The founder of Ciku Beauty, a makeup brand specialising in high-end beauty products, has found success in black women—a market that she says is grossly underserved.

“Most products would look perfect on my face, but would barely last two hours. My husband once told me I looked magenta, when a man tells you that know you really look bad!” she says.



That is where Ciku Beauty’s journey began 10 years ago.

She confesses that seeing her products on shelves in beauty shops and on people’s faces melts her heart. The beauty products are produced in the US.

Ciku is an International Finance Master’s graduate from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Since the brands available in the market favour the white woman, she set out to fulfil a black woman’s dream of applying makeup and feeling good about it. She undertook a makeup artist course at the South

Thames College, 2006 creating a brand that is now stands among the top in Kenyan market. Ciku Beauty’s most notable products are lipsticks, high definition (HD) foundation and makeup brushes. Creating the products was not easy. Winning consumers’ trust was another hurdle, but she has won quite a number, forcing her to officially launch in Kenya last year.

“It is very capital-intensive, but it’s all God. If you have a dream and you work towards it, you pull through.”

Ciku’s products are the result of chemistry and hardwork. To develop the HD foundation, for instance, took two years of mixing colours to achieve different shades.

“Some think I just woke up one day and started doing this, it took me 10 years to get to where I am,” she says.

When not mixing makeup concoctions, she is mentoring girls and women groups. She also writes. Ciku wants to move from Africa to the West and not the other way round. She dreams of a brand so big with makeup stores in every city in Kenya, East Africa and Europe.

ENERGY

36

Yasmin Abdulkadir,  
ENERGY, LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE, MARSABIT, 30

The single largest private investment in Kenya’s history, a Sh76 billion 300 megawatts wind farm sitting on 40,000 acres in Loiyangalani, Marsabit County, falls under the sights of 30-year-old Yasmin.

Marsabit has been relying on diesel-fuelled generators to meet its energy requirements, but is now transitioning as investors and donors come in with modern technology, expertise and management to help residents exploit the abundant natural resources in their county. Yasmin represents a change; young female county executive who has defied all stereotypes to handle a big portfolio, earning her respect.

“Gone are the days when the youth were told they would be the leaders of tomorrow. You are today’s leaders,” she told young people during the launch of Marsabit Youth Bunge this year. She holds a Bachelor of Law degree from London Metropolitan University and a diploma from the Kenya School of Law.

Yasmin left her job, working for the Red Cross as a sexual and gender-based violence co-ordinator, to go and work for the Marsabit county government. And she found plenty of work to be done as Marsabit was not connected to the national electricity grid except in Moyale, since the border town is linked to Ethiopia’s power grid.



With an extensive wealth of experience gained through working with several NGOs as well as government institutions at senior management positions, she quickly engaged German aid agency GIZ to plan for the community that is dependent on expensive and polluting diesel generators.

GIZ helped draw up an Energy Sector Plan that will roll out renewable energy across the county during the next 10 years in partnership with the private sector, offering electricity and jobs.

With over 90 per cent of land in Marsabit classified as community land, the issue of adjudication and demarcation is very emotive, especially given the influx of investors and a population explosion around town centres.

Yasmin has to ensure that all land within Marsabit and the 12 registration sections is undertaken, adjudicated and ownership is processed. Her efforts have so far earned her respect from the locals and Governor Ukur Yattani.



HUMANITARIAN

37

Maria Omare,  
FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACTION FOUNDATION, 28

Maria, who is the founder and executive director of Action Foundation, describes herself as a passionate woman who has been following her dream in the past six years. The nutritionist discovered her desire to work with special needs children almost by chance while volunteering for a sporting event organised for children in schools around Kenyatta University. What started off as a school project has since grown to become a refuge for over 90 children who regularly seek its services, thanks to the support of Maria’s parents and two siblings.

“I realised that children with special needs in slums were more disadvantaged in the access to education and other social services as they are hidden by their parents due to stigma and shame,” she said.

With the belief that every child should be given an opportunity to succeed, she began working towards providing support to these children and their parents, but by the time she was through with school many of those who had shared in her vision had gotten “volunteer fatigue”.

Still this did not stop her dream which she

pursued upon graduation opting out of formal employment in the blue-collar sector to set up a centre for physically challenged children in Mashimoni area of Kibera slums.

“I had only Sh5,000 when we were starting out, raised from family and friends. Half of which I used to pay two months’ rent and the rest I used to buy mattresses just to make the place more friendly.”

Much of the first year was used to getting parents’ confidence in her to keep on bringing the children regularly for physical and occupational therapy as well as looking for partner organisations like trained caregivers of children with special needs to provide guidance to the volunteer parents.

“We provide the therapy free of charge, which is much cheaper compared to the subsidised rate of Sh500 charged at Kenyatta Referral and Mbagathi hospitals, where it is offered as well as provide two meals for the children,” she said.

Recently, a well-wisher’s donation helped them to acquire a piece of land and the Action Foundation is currently fundraising to enable them build a permanent centre of their own.



Since I don’t look like every other girl, it takes a while to be okay with that. To be different. But different is good.

SERENA WILLIAMS, Tennis player



## MEDIA

38

**Grace Msalame,**HEAD OF CONTENT AND  
ACQUISITIONS, BAMBA TV, 30

With style and a unique personal brand are what have made Grace's career a success. Those same qualities are the reason she has become a public personality who is known beyond her regular job at Radio Africa Group.

Grace is a committed fashionista, who doubles as a brand ambassador for Vivo Active Wear and Smile Train Africa—the not for profit organisation that offers free cleft lip surgeries to needy Kenyans.

The mother of twins has been on TV since she was 19, hosting a daily Youth show; “Str8Up”—an entertainment programme. Conscious of progress, she grew into her passion for art, and took up “Art-Scene”, a show she says was aligned with her interests in art, culture, fashion, family, inspiration and spiritual fulfilment.

In 2010, Grace moved to radio starting from Capital FM before she left to help manage her late father's Tony Msalame's radio station Shekki FM studios at Nyali in Mombasa.

“This is how my career was born, having grown up in a very creative home with a father who was a pioneer in radio, acting and advertising. He would be proud of me, because fitting into his shoes has not been an easy feat,” she said. The family venture was, however, sold in 2011, forcing her to return to full time employment later that year at Kiss TV and re-invented herself through the show “GRACED”.

She has once again got off air and is now the content and acquisitions manager at Bamba TV. She manages content for over 60 channels. Bamba TV is one of the country's free-to-view multi-channel digital transmission platforms. Ten out of the 60 are internal, requiring her direct attention in terms of monitoring, creating schedules, negotiating and acquiring content, besides managing budgets and working closely with the creative team to come up with marketing campaigns and product packaging.

A woman of taste in fashion, Grace, who is currently on the second year of her partnership with Vivo Activewear, hopes to jointly launch a collection.

“This will be a big step for me as I plan to one day launch my own Sowairina Clothing Brand,” she said. Grace who says she loves to read, write and tell stories through her blog *sowairina.com*, a platform she uses to inspire and remind people that “we all have a calling greater and bigger than us.”



## MUSIC

40

**The Moipei Sisters: Mary, Magdalene, Marta and Seraphine**

MUSICIANS, 23 AND 21

They were born, brought up and groomed in music: famously known as the Moipei Quartet.

Mary, Magdalene, and Marta, who are triplets now aged 23, and their younger sister Seraphine, who is 21, grew up in a world of music, gifted by their father, Nicholas ole Moipei, who was both a music teacher and chairman of the Kenya Music and Cultural Festival (KMCF).

However, the talent that has seen them gain national recognition has been all their own, the results of their hard work, and of the nurturing and musical support from their mother, Christine, who dropped her banking career to dedicate all her efforts to bringing up the girls.

Yet their father's own dedication to and understanding of music was key.

“I looked and listened to them presenting a song in church some day at their tender ages and I saw the great talents in them. I decided to help them build their career towards what they were best at—music,” said Mr Moipei.

In 2002, his and the family's efforts bore fruit. The Moipei Quartet clinched its first prize by winning the Kenya Music Festival (KMF) Awards with their first

album ‘Land of the Lions’. The band held the prize for three years. It first featured internationally in 2009 when it won the fourth SABC Crown Gospel Music Awards in Durban, South Africa with its famous album “Land of the Lions.”

The sisters' tremendous performances saw the group chosen as UNICEF ambassadors, becoming the first child ambassadors in Kenya.

The four sisters, who are now studying in the US, were born in Narok. Their trademark musical style as a quartet of four is the perfect blending of their voices in Acapella music.

The results are so moving that in 2007, the group was awarded the Head of State Commendation (HSC) by then President Mwai Kibaki for their contribution to the music industry and national cohesion.

Marta said the nomination to the Top Forty Under Forty outstanding women in Kenya was humbling, saying the group had “learnt to stay humble when people appreciate what you do”.

Seraphine, often referred to as ‘Sera’, attributes all their success to God and their supportive parents. “On behalf of my sisters, I would like to say that we are humbled.”



## ENVIRONMENT

39

**Samia Omar,**ENVIRONMENTALIST, COMMUNITY  
MOBILISER, 32

Samia has always been passionate about the environment and social economic development of local communities long before the establishment of county governments.

Despite pursuing higher education abroad, she remains rooted to her Swahili culture and religious upbringing, doing everything in her power to give back to the local communities.

Samia, who returned to Kenya from New York in 2008 where she acquired a Master's degree in public health, is a woman of no mean academic achievements having topped

her Psychology and Health studies at McMaster University in Canada. She soon joined the Turkana Basin Institute as co-ordinator for the community outreach programme, focused on promoting socio-economic development while at the same time seeking to conserve the volatile area.

Samia is fearless enough to oppose the Gibe III Hydroelectric Project on Lake Turkana as part of Ethiopia's national energy masterplan without considerations of the impact it would have especially on the Kenyan pastoralists community who depend on it for their livelihood.

Moving closer to her family in Lamu after being away for so long seemed like the most logical thing to do as she could not pass up the opportunity to work as a coordinator for the Kenya Secure Project when the opportunity opened up at Tetra Tech ARD in 2011.

Her work there not only enabled the conservation of the biodiversity and natural re-

sources, but also led to the formal recognition of the property rights for the indigenous communities living around Kiunga Marine, Boni, and Dadori national reserves. She united the 40 local environmental lobbies and formed one aggregated voice under the umbrella of SaveLamu.org where she worked as an advocacy coordinator.

Her principled stance made it easy for her to fault the lack of transparency in the implementation of the Lapsset project without proper procedures for compensation as well as systems to conserve the world heritage site. “I am convinced that the project will have irreversible and profound impacts on Lamu,” she said.

In August, she tendered her resignation from the position of county executive of Trade, Investment, Culture and Tourism, citing her strong conviction to preserve the natural resources was in conflict with promoting investment in Lamu.





# Why success in life demands the love for networking

## MANAGEMENT

Building and nurturing professional relationships can also help improve the quality of work and increase job satisfaction

BY TIZIANA CASCIARO, FRANCESCA GINO AND MARYAM KOUCHAKI

"I hate networking." We hear this all the time from executives, other professionals and MBA students. They tell us that networking makes them feel uncomfortable and phony — even dirty. Although some people have a natural passion for it, many see it as brown-nosing, exploitative and inauthentic.

But in today's world, networking is a necessity. A mountain of research shows that professional networks lead to more job and business opportunities, broader and deeper knowledge, improved capacity to innovate, faster advancement and greater status and authority. Building and nurturing professional relationships also improves the quality of work and increases job satisfaction.

When we studied 165 lawyers at a large North American law firm, for example, we found that their success depended on their ability to network effectively both internally and externally. Those who regarded these activities as distasteful and avoided them had fewer billable hours than their peers.

Fortunately, our research shows that an aversion to networking can be overcome. We've identified four strategies to help people change their mindset.

### 1. Focus on learning

Most people have a dominant motivational focus — what psychologists refer to as either a "promotion" or a "prevention" mindset. Those in the former category think primarily about the growth, advancement and accomplishments that networking can bring them, while those in the latter see it as something they are obligated to take part in for professional reasons.

In laboratory experiments we conducted in the United States and Italy with college students and working adults, and in an additional sample of 174 lawyers at the firm we studied, we documented the effects of both types of thinking.

Promotion-focused people networked because they wanted to and approached the activity with excitement, curiosity and an open mind. Prevention-focused people saw networking as a necessary evil and felt inauthentic while engaged in it, so they did it less often and, as a result, underperformed in aspects of their jobs.

Thankfully, it's possible to shift your mindset from prevention to promotion. If you're an introvert, you can't simply will yourself to be extroverted, of course. But everyone can choose which motivational focus to bring to networking. Concentrate on the positives, and the activity will begin to seem much more worthwhile.

### 2. Identify common interests

The next step in making networking more palatable is to think about how your interests and goals align with those of people you meet and how that can help you forge meaningful working relationships. Northwestern University's Brian Uzzi calls this the shared



activities principle. "Potent networks are not forged through casual interactions but through relatively high-stakes activities that connect you with diverse others," he explains.

Numerous studies in social psychology have demonstrated that people establish the most collaborative and longest-lasting connections when they work together on tasks that require one another's contributions. Indeed, research that one of us (Casciaro) conducted with INSEAD's Miguel Sousa Lobo showed that this "task interdependence" can be one of the biggest sources of positive energy in professional relationships.

When your networking is driven by substantive, shared interests you've identified through serious research, it will feel more authentic and meaningful, and is more likely to lead to relationships that have those qualities too.

### 3. Think broadly about what you can give

Even when you do not share an interest with someone, you can probably find something valuable to offer by thinking beyond the obvious. Of course, this isn't always easy. We've found that people who feel powerless often believe they have too little to give and are therefore the least likely to engage in networking, even though they're the ones who will probably derive the most benefit from it.

This problem was highlighted in two studies we conducted at the law firm mentioned above, which involved different groups of lawyers at different points in time.

We found that senior people were typically much

more comfortable networking than junior people because of their greater power in the organization. This makes sense.

When people believe they have a lot to offer others, such as advice, mentorship, access and resources, networking feels easier and less selfish.

A controlled experiment confirmed this finding: People in whom we induced feelings of power found networking less repulsive and were more willing to do it than people assigned to a condition that made them feel powerless.

However, even those with lower rank and less power almost certainly have more to offer than they realize. In their book "Influence Without Authority," Allan Cohen and David Bradford note that most people tend to think too narrowly about the resources they have that others might value.

They focus on tangible, task-related things such as money and social connections, while ignoring less obvious assets such as gratitude, recognition and enhanced reputation. The more heartfelt the expression of gratitude, the greater its value to the recipient. And when gratitude is expressed publicly, it can enhance an adviser's reputation in the workplace.

You might also have unique insights or knowledge that could be useful to those with whom you're networking. For example, junior people are often better informed than their senior colleagues about generational trends and new markets and technologies.

When you think more about what you can give to others than what you can get from them, networking will seem less self-promotional and more selfless — and therefore more worthy of your time.





#### 4. Find a higher purpose

Another factor that affects people's interest in and effectiveness at networking is the primary purpose they have in mind when doing it. In the law firm we studied, we found that attorneys who focused on the collective benefits of making connections rather than on personal ones felt more authentic and less dirty while networking, were more likely to network and had more billable hours.

Any work activity becomes more attractive when it's linked to a higher goal. So frame your networking in those terms. We've seen this approach help female executives overcome their discomfort about pursuing relationships with journalists and publicists.

When we remind them that women's voices are underrepresented in business and that the media attention that would result from their building stronger networks might help counter gender bias, their reluctance often subsides.

MANY OF us are ambivalent about networking. We know that it's critical to our professional success, yet we find it taxing and often distasteful.

These strategies can help you overcome your aversion. By shifting to a promotion mindset, identifying and exploring shared interests, expanding your view of what you have to offer and motivating yourself with a higher purpose, you'll become more excited about building relationships that bear fruit for everyone.

**Casciaro** is an associate professor at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, **Gino** is a professor at Harvard Business School while **Kouchaki** is an assistant professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management

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# How to upgrade your company's judgment by forecasting its ability

BY PAUL J. H. SCHOEMAKER AND  
PHILIP E. TETLOCK

Imagine that you could dramatically improve your firm's forecasting ability, but to do so you'd have to expose how unreliable its predictions — and the people making them — really are. That's exactly what the US intelligence community did. In October 2002, the National Intelligence Council issued its official opinion that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Of course, that judgment proved colossally wrong. Shaken by its failure, the \$50 billion bureaucracy set out to determine how it could do better.

The resulting research programme included a large-scale, multi-year prediction tournament, co-led by one of us (Schoemaker), called the Good Judgment Project. The contests, which pitted thousands of amateurs against seasoned intelligence analysts, generated three surprising insights: First, talented generalists often outperform specialists in making forecasts.

Second, carefully crafted training can enhance predictive acumen. And third, well-run teams can outperform individuals. These findings have important implications for the way businesses forecast uncertain outcomes. The approach we describe here is fairly new and has only recently been applied in business settings.

However, our research shows that it can help leaders discover and nurture their organisations' best predictive capabilities.

#### Find the sweet spot

Companies and individuals are notoriously inept at judging the likelihood of uncertain events. So improving a firm's forecasting competence even a little can yield a competitive advantage.

First, let's look at the types of judgments that are most amenable to improvement — and those not worth focusing on. For issues that can be predicted with great accuracy using econometric and operations-research tools, there is no advantage to be gained by developing judgment skills in those areas.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find issues that are complex, poorly understood and tough to quantify, such as when the next game-changing technology will pop out of a garage in Silicon Valley. Here, too, there's little advantage in investing resources to improve judgment. The sweet spot that companies should focus on is forecasts for which some data, logic and analysis can be used, but seasoned judgment and careful questioning also play key roles.

We have identified a set of practices that leaders can apply to improve their firms' judgment in this middle ground. Our recommendations focus on improving individuals' forecasting ability through training; using teams to boost accuracy; and tracking prediction performance and providing feedback.

#### Train for good judgment

Most predictions made in companies are coloured by the forecaster's understanding of statistical arguments, susceptibility to biases, desire to influence others' thinking and concerns



Improving a firm's forecasting competence can build competitive advantage. FILE

about reputation. The good news is that training in reasoning and debiasing can strengthen a firm's forecasting competence.

#### Learn the basics

It's essential that companies lay a foundation of forecasting basics: The Good Judgment Project's training in probability concepts, for example, boosted participants' accuracy measurably. Companies should also require that forecasts include a precise definition of what is to be predicted and the time frame involved. The prediction must be expressed as a numeric probability so that it can be scored for accuracy later.

#### Understand cognitive biases

Cognitive biases lead people to follow the crowd, look for information that confirms their views and strive to prove how right they are. It's a tall order to debias human judgment, but the GJP has had some success in raising participants' awareness of key biases. For example, the project trained beginners to give due weight to evidence that challenges their conclusions.

#### Build the right kind of teams

Assembling forecasters into teams is an effective way to improve forecasts. In the GJP, forecasters were randomly assigned to work alone or in teams. In each of the four years of the prediction tournament, the forecasters working in teams outperformed those who worked alone. Of course, to achieve good results, teams must be deftly managed and have certain features.

COMPOSITION. The forecasters who do the best in GJP tournaments are honest about the source of their success, appreciating that they may have gotten a prediction right despite their analysis. In assembling teams, companies should look for natural forecasters who show an alertness to bias, a knack for sound reasoning and a respect for data. It's also important that teams

be intellectually diverse. At least one member should have domain expertise, but nonexperts are essential too.

#### Diverging, evaluating and converging

A successful team needs to manage three phases well: a diverging phase, in which the issue, assumptions and approaches to finding an answer are explored from multiple angles; an evaluating phase, which includes time for productive disagreement; and a converging phase, when the team settles on a prediction. In each phase, learning and progress are fastest when questions are focused and feedback is frequent.

TRUST. Teams may reach conclusions that raise turf issues or threaten reputations. They are also likely to expose areas of the firm with poor forecasting abilities. To ensure that forecasters share their best thinking, members must trust one another and trust that leadership will defend their work.

#### Track performance and give feedback

Our work on the GJP and with a range of companies shows that tracking prediction outcomes and providing timely feedback are essential to improving forecasting performance. The purest measure for the accuracy of predictions and tracking them over time is the Brier score, which allows companies to make comparisons among forecasters.

But knowing a team's score does little to improve performance; you have to track the process it used as well. It's important to audit why outcomes were achieved so that you can learn from them.

Some audits may reveal that certain process steps led to a good or a bad prediction. Others may show that a forecast was correct despite a faulty rationale, or that a forecast was wrong because of unusual circumstances rather than a flawed analysis. Gauging group dynamics is also a critical part of the process audit.

To avoid catastrophes — and replicate successes — companies should collect real-time accounts of how their top teams make judgments. Well-run audits can reveal whether forecasters framed the problem poorly, overlooked an important insight or failed to engage team members with dissenting views. Likewise, they can highlight the steps that led to good forecasts and thereby provide other teams with best practices.

EACH OF THE methods we've described — training, team building, tracking and talent spotting — is essential to good forecasting. The approach must be customized across businesses, and no firm, to our knowledge, has yet mastered them all. This presents a great opportunity for companies that take the lead. But companies will capture this advantage only if leaders champion the effort, by broadcasting an openness to trial and error, a willingness to ruffle feathers and a readiness to expose what they don't know.

**Schoemaker** is the former research director of the Wharton School's Mack Institute. **Tetlock** is the Annenberg University Professor at the University of Pennsylvania

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