

FoxP2 SA highlights 2 formidable female leaders and their crucial roles within the agency

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In line with the International Women's Day 2020 campaign theme, #EachforEqual, Lynda Fiebiger and Zetu Damane share their thoughts on the theme and what it means to them.

Having begun her career as a PA, 24 years ago, Lynda Fiebiger now leads the FoxP2 Johannesburg office as general manager. She talks about bringing her unique female strength, style and spirit to her career – qualities that have seen her rise from FoxP2 Johannesburg's first employee in a tiny, one-man (one-woman) office to now leading the agency's partnership with the Dentsu Aegis Network (DAN) into the agency of the future.

Zetu Damane started her career 15 years ago at Herdboys Mccann Erickson as a wide-eyed junior strategist from the Eastern Cape. Only a year later, *Financial Mail* named her as one of SA's young guns. Now FoxP2's group head of strategy, she shares her view on being a strong, female voice for data-driven, human-inspired insights and creative that meaningfully connects with audiences. A voice that led FoxP2 to be one of the most awarded at Apex in 2019.



Zetu Damane and Lynda Fiebiger

“ #EachforEqual is about 'collective Individualism'. How our individual actions, conversations, behaviours and mindsets can have an impact on our larger society. ”

With the above in mind, what does the 2020 IWD theme #EachforEqual mean to you?

Lynda Fiebiger: I have a 17-year-old daughter about to enter the big world and so for me, more than ever, it's about driving the change for our future female leaders. Ensuring that there are equal rights across the board whether it be removing pay gaps or pushing to ensure women receive the same respect as anyone else at the table.

Zetu Damane: My daughter is only three, but I also realise that, as women, our small daily actions matter for the future as much as the larger ones. I'm always asking myself what I'm teaching my daughter about being a woman. About owning your voice, no matter how small it may seem. For me, #EachForEqual is as much about watching Zozibini Tunzi take home the Miss Universe crown as it is about seeing women in my everyday life achieving the 'small' things. Every step forward, no matter how big or small is a powerful agent for change.

How do you feel your individual and unique qualities, strengths, talents and perceptions improve the collective at FoxP2?

LF: I am a people's person and love interacting with people and building relationships with them. I learnt long ago the value of determination and energy, of never giving up and never sweating the small stuff.

Throughout my career, these attitudes have allowed me to handle the high-pressure, kill-or-be-killed environment of the media and advertising industry. And I believe it's why I'm able to lead the agency through every victory as well as every challenge.

ZD: I can come across as difficult (you don't want to know the names I've been called) but I believe my defiant refusal to

accept superficial statements, combined with a deep love for data, numbers and statistics drives our insights and pushes the agency to fight harder for real understanding.

It's so easy in our industry to think your voice is insignificant, or that you should just listen to the big people, but I've learnt that just because others can't see what you've got, doesn't mean it's not worth seeing.

Based on your personal experience, what advice and/or suggestions do you have for women currently taking the journey of empowerment?

LF: Always remain true to yourself and your beliefs and make sure that what you are doing makes you happy. Stand up for what you believe in and try new things. Trust your gut – as a woman, I believe this is one of our strongest assets – if it doesn't feel right, it's probably not!

ZD: Try to be bold not perfect. *"A big and debilitating tenant of traditional femininity is the idea of the perfect strong woman"* – Imbhokodo.

To quote [Reshma Saujani's Ted Talk](#):

“ Most girls are taught to avoid failure and risk. To smile pretty, play it safe, get all As. Getting up and learning from failure is an often-critical step towards success. Yet women are taught to fear failure and aim for perfection. The bravery deficit is a critical part of why we see less women in STEM professions; why we only apply for a job when we meet 100% of the requirements while men apply with 60%. My advice – don't fear failure, embrace it. Let go of the pressure of perfection. ”

Why do you think it is important to have more women in leadership positions?

LF: Women bring a completely different viewpoint to business. We balance the functional and empathetic sides of the business easily. Personally, I believe a women's strong intuition, sensitivity, emotional intelligence, ability to multi-task and their helpful and nurturing natures bring individuals together and contributes to relationship-building, collaboration and genuine networking.

We need to encourage a culture of reputable women leaders that future females can learn from and aspire to be like.

ZD: Gender diversity has been proven to deliver better business outcomes. It is even more critical in a media and advertising space where diversity of thought fuels and sustains creativity.

What are you most excited about with regards to tackling in your role in 2020?

LF: Collaboration with the amazing specialists across DAN. It's incredible seeing these unique skills and specialisms come together to take the collective to the next level.

ZD: Marrying increasingly rich data with real consumer insight. For me, they are both equally important and I'm excited about leveraging the vast data capabilities of the DAN group while at the same time inspiring creatives with real consumer truths.

Lastly, as two highly successful female leaders within the FoxP2 group, how do you balance your personal life as well as your career?

LF: I believe it is important to work for and with people that respect and understand family responsibilities and commitments vs work commitments and I've been extremely fortunate to work for a company that understands just that. Whilst finding the balance is not always easy, it is important to me to keep my mind, body, family and work-life healthy to ensure that I can lead a successful agency.

ZD: Can we start asking men the same question? The hardest thing that I had to overcome in my career was guilt. I felt that I was not spending enough time with my child and hated leaving her in the mornings to go to the office. But after finding research (yes, I'm that person) that proved how the quality of time matters more than quantity, I've been freed of this guilt and anxiety allowing me to give, and be, my best at home as a mother and at work as a professional.

Commenting on the crucial roles Lynda and Zetu hold within the FoxP2 group, Grant Jacobsen, group managing director for the award-winning creative agency, said:

“ We believe that an agency is more than just the name on the door and the awards on the shelf, but, rather, that it's the sum of the talent, personalities and strengths of the people who work there. In their own indelible ways, Lynda and Zetu bring a fierce tenacity and beautiful intelligence that makes FoxP2 better and smarter than we could ever be without them. They're the lionesses amongst the foxes. ”

About FoxP2

Part of The Dentsu Aegis Network SA, The Johannesburg and Cape Town-based creative agency is founded on the belief that creativity is often the most-undervalued tool for business. FoxP2 is driven by the power of insightful strategic thought beautifully expressed. They love results. They love their people. They love difficult challenges.

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