

Female mechanical engineer breaks through gender-defined barriers

Issued by [Sumitomo Dunlop](#)

1 Sep 2020

Working in a male-dominated industry can be a daunting prospect for a woman. But today, women are breaking through gender defined barriers, pursuing their dreams - no matter how diverse - while seeking workplace equality. Once such trailblazer is mechanical engineer Lelau Mojela.

Mojela joined tyre manufacturer Sumitomo Rubber South Africa, the manufacturer of the Dunlop tyre brand in Ladysmith in 2017. As part of the Truck Bus Radial Development Department, she works as a process engineer designing new tyres sizes and patterns. The team ensures that tyres meet market demand, provide cost savings to fleets, and complement the existing tyre range produced and sold by the company. "I enjoy the company of my colleagues - it helps to handle the pressure of working in the factory and to deadlines."

With a BTech in Mechanical Engineering from The University of Johannesburg and a National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from Durban University of Technology, Mojela is no stranger to going after what she wants. "I grew up in Limpopo where I went to a technical high school, then moved around the country to pursue my studies before settling in Ladysmith."

Ever practical, her advice to women wanting to achieve in a male-dominated field is to never feel sorry for yourself or feel that you are an underachiever just because you are not able to do certain things. "For example, I cannot underrate my value just because I cannot lift a 70kg tyre the way some of my male counterparts can, but I can excel in other areas. It is not all about the physical, but about how you apply your mind in the workplace, a willingness to learn and being dedicated to your job," she says.

Mojela says working under different managers has helped her grow her goals and push herself harder. "I am a work in progress, learning different things every day, acknowledging that there is always room for improvement in every role you play. Not just about my work scope but also about how to work professionally and with people from different cultures."

A typical day starts on site at 7.30 am and moving between the factory floor supervising tyre builds and the office planning and working through designs. As a mom to a toddler boy, Mojela faces a busy, high pressure time at home too but finds the time to spend time with her family and the energy to enjoy her passion for cooking, "The kitchen is my place of joy, no matter how tired I am."

What would she say to her 18-year-old self? "Don't be shy to go for what you want. Never be scared to take challenges, we learn through new experiences. Let other people in your field inspire you to achieve more and keep studying!"

About Sumitomo Rubber South Africa



Lelau Mojela, process engineer, Sumitomo Rubber South Africa: TBR Development Department (manufacturer of Dunlop tyres) says, "Never be scared to take challenges. We learn through new experiences."

Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (Pty) Ltd is owned by Japanese listed company Sumitomo Rubber Industries Ltd (SRI), situated in Kobe, Japan. SRI is one of the leading premium manufacturers of automotive tyres and industrial rubber products in the world. The existing South African plant in Ladysmith (founded in 1973) currently produces passenger car, sport utility vehicle, light truck and truck and bus radial tyres, which are sold in South Africa and exported across Africa and other countries.

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