

Standard Bank's Top Women Regional Conference comes to Durban to drive women-led progress

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Standard Bank Top Women Conference to celebrate 2018 Youth Month in Durban with women entrepreneurs



In their ongoing quest to drive progress on the continent, Standard Bank is bringing their series of Top Women Regional Conferences to Durban on 28 June. To be held at the Oyster Box Durban, the conference will challenge the current lack of access to markets businesswomen face, a central barrier to success both nationally and in the rest of Africa that must be dismantled if the entrepreneurial landscape is to reflect South Africa's demographics.

According to Standard Bank's Head of Finance for KZN Thabisa, women entrepreneurs make up less than 5% of South Africa's entrepreneurial population. "This is a shame, because an increase in successful female business owners could have far-reaching positive economic impacts," she says. "Research shows that women in business are better borrowers and financial managers than men, and, critically, women tend to share their success with their communities, thus improving socio-economic conditions."

So, what's holding women back from steering the South African economy towards greater prosperity? According to a survey conducted by Standard Bank, it's a lack of access to markets and, subsequently, trade; they have products and services, but where and how do they find opportunities to gain more clients and market share - locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally? This is a challenge that the Standard Bank Top Women Conferences were designed to solve.

Offering, at first, only a national Johannesburg-based conference each August, its effectiveness and popularity quickly led to calls for more platforms to address the challenges facing gender empowerment and women-driven economic growth. This resulted in four Standard Bank Top Women Regional Conferences, one set in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Durban and Polokwane.

"Each is a gathering of renowned thought leaders, mentors and change drivers dedicated to recognising the achievements of women in public and private sectors," Thabisa continues. "Attendees should come away with new strategies for success; game plans that will not only move their businesses forward, but South Africa, too."

Durban's Top Women Regional Conference responds to the critical questions surrounding barriers to success for women entrepreneurs with advice and support from some of South Africa's most influential business luminaries. Speakers at the

event will include accomplished chartered accountant and Standard Bank's Head of Finance for KZN Thabisa Nkanzela; ex-IT consultant and founder of the successful Oak Celebrations Kgomotso Ndungane; and popular radio presenter, writer, and producer and co-host of Gagasi FM's *I love Mornings Njabs Zwane*.

Durban Chamber of Commerce and Industry Board Member and event Moderator, Zama Phakathi, said that conferences like Top Women create a powerful platform for women to have strategic conversations about their business and entrepreneurial futures and to form key business relationships that allow them to leverage off the experience of their fellow female leaders.

Like the others coming before and after it, the conference is innovatively designed to give attending entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs the rare opportunity to network and gain valuable exposure for their business ideas. Central to the Regional Conference is the one-hour Fast Track Networking session in which participants can build meaningful personal networks, encourage business interest or partnerships, and gain knowledge. There will also be a two-hour Pitching Den; in a three-minute pitch, delegates with promising business models will be able to explain them to a panel of high-profile judges and receive helpful feedback.

"Top Women is a community built around the spirit of mentorship, with successful women uplifting others to pursue success to an equal degree, and collectively sharing knowledge gained through experience to help all community members advance," says Karla Fletcher, Director of Standard Bank Top Women. "We look forward to showcasing some of the most successful stories and strategies implemented in the development of leadership roles for women, and connecting entrepreneurs to key influencers who are serious about economy-wide progress."

For more information about the coming Standard Bank Top Women Regional Conference in Durban email Marketing Manager, Asanda Munyu at asanda.munyu@topco.co.za.

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