

6 fundamental principles to success in the apparel sector

Chief executive of buying at Ackermans, Stacey-Anne Scholtz's journey in the apparel sector, which started as a casual employee folding clothes at Mr Price, is a lesson in hard work and determination.



Image supplied. Chief executive of buying at Ackermans, Stacey-Anne Scholtz shares six fundamental principles that have guided her career in the apparel sector

Scholtz says being a casual at Mr Price inspired her to pursue a degree in Retail Business Management at Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

"Here I learnt very early on about the importance of working hard and making my voice heard as a woman in business," says Scholtz.

During her studies, she was selected for an in-service programme at Harrods in the UK. "This experience broadened my horizons and further fuelled my determination to create a better life for myself and my family."

Starting her career she worked long hours, late shifts, and every public holiday imaginable. She progressed from trainee store manager in Clicks to an office role.

But the pivotal moment came when she moved to Johannesburg to take on a buyer assistant role in the apparel industry, which she took on despite warnings from others.

“I intentionally diversified my experience, moving across different retailers, aiming to polish my skills and broaden my exposure in the industry to grow as a professional.”

Throughout this, her focus has remained on self-improvement and competing only with herself. This journey led her to her first executive role at Woolworths at the age of 35 which led her to her current role as chief executive of buying at Ackermans.

6 fundamental principles

There are six fundamental principles that Scholtz accredits to having guided her in life and her career:

1. Luck favours the prepared

Always be prepared and have a vision for yourself. Actively seek out and create opportunities. You can never overprepare, only over present.

2. Be willing to put in the hours

Regardless of your path, success requires arduous work. You cannot excel without putting in the necessary effort and dedication.

3. Believe in yourself and build your brand

Be courageous, and confident, and have a unique point of view. Your actions contribute to your brand – be aware of your choices. Life is about perspective and focus. What anchors me are my faith, family, and a supportive husband. Remember, when you secure a seat at the table, use it well. Find a prominent spot and never stop challenging the perceived ceiling.

4. Working in corporate is a team sport

Collaboration is key. Connect with people, expose yourself to decision-makers, and embrace constructive criticism for self-improvement.

5. Surround yourself with inspiring people

Build a supportive network. Learning never stops, and having experienced mentors can provide valuable perspectives, especially in a political corporate environment.

6. The only limitations are the ones we place on ourselves

Believe in your value, challenge limitations, and don't make excuses. If an environment stifles your growth, consider seeking a new one. Being a female executive in a male-dominated environment requires resilience, confidence, and a willingness to take calculated risks.

“Being a woman is not a disadvantage, it is a strength because diverse leadership enhances corporate performance.

“What I have learnt about success as a woman is that self-belief and confidence are important. Keep your focus, work hard, and confidently take your seat at the table,” adds Scholtz.

Gender-diverse companies

Gender-diverse companies are 21% more likely to outperform their counterparts in terms of profitability. This is due largely to the fact that companies with diverse leadership, including women, tend to be more innovative*.

Companies with more than 30% women executives are also more likely to outperform companies where this percentage ranged from 10 to 30*.

Still a challenge for women leaders

Women leaders often exhibit stronger interpersonal skills, fostering a positive work environment. Companies benefit from having women in leadership roles when operating in diverse global markets as they bring cultural sensitivity and a global perspective to decision-making that helps organisations navigate international business complexities.

However, entering these roles can still be a challenge for many women. This is especially true in an industry such as apparel retail, which requires a keen understanding of market trends, consumer preferences and effective negotiation skills to obtain the best possible deals.

*The McKinsey's [Diversity wins: How inclusion matters study](#)

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