

Keep scanning the horizon, Q&A with Pam Golding

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Remain determined and work hard, but remember to make time for fun - this is some of the advice from the founder and life president of the Pam Golding Property Group, Pam Golding, on how to attain success. As humble as she may be, this extraordinary entrepreneur is nothing short of inspirational.



Pam Golding

■ ***As a champion of women's rights, do you think enough progress has been made in business to provide women with equal footing in attaining their goals?***

Pam Golding: I think that there has been considerable progress - particularly in regard to the property industry, where women have made great strides in the real estate sector. However, there are still sectors in the business world at large where women are not on an equal footing and where the male gender still dominates.

■ ***What do you think is the biggest issue facing women in the property industry today?***

Golding: Referring to the residential property sector, there are probably considerably more women than men selling real estate in South Africa. Traditionally, this has been a career popular among women, and today, as a respected profession, it attracts a broad cross-section of people of all ages and all walks of life and background, many of whom have degrees. I think the biggest issue for women today is to shake off any remaining misconceptions that this is a career for bored housewives. This is emphatically no longer the case, as this is a career which has become highly professionalised, and which requires estate agents to have a sound knowledge not only of all the aspects of marketing property and the marketplace, sales etc, but also the entire administrative process and the full range of legislative matters which are involved in the successful conclusion of a sales transaction. I also believe that we as women must take up the challenge to create our own opportunities in life and aim for success and achievement, constantly striving to further ourselves and our situation.

I would definitely recommend this to other women as a career - indeed, women have proven highly successful in this industry, and will continue to be so in the future. I started the company when South Africa was going through a recession, and people said I was crazy to go on my own. But I rarely take notice of things such as recessions! I was determined to succeed and that is half the battle already won.

■ ***You've received a number of accolades for your leadership and business acumen, what advice would you give to women looking to walk a similar path?***

Golding: Be determined to succeed and remain committed to your career path, retaining life's balance. It is important to remain approachable and be empathetic to co-workers and clients. I have found that when employing agents and staff, it is important to ensure the 'fit' is right, in other words that you share similar values and work ethos and that they represent the strength of your brand. I found that being passionate about what I do resulted in success and, yes, it did include hard work, but I always made sure to make time for fun! Keep scanning the horizon for new opportunities, have an optimistic and positive attitude and I think that networking cannot be underestimated.

■ ***Was there ever a women icon / leader you looked up to when starting out your company?***

Golding: Wendy Luhabe and the late Liz McGrath - both members of the International Women's Forum and both passionate about their roles in life and business, positive and dedicated women who have worked for and created their own opportunities, while also helping others achieve. Wendy is an extremely successful South African businesswoman, entrepreneur and mentor who is dedicated to empowering African women in business. Liz McGrath was an iconic hotelier with a talent for creating exceptional establishments in spectacular locations, and selecting the right team to help her do so. Liz and I would go on International Women's Forum Conferences overseas together and had such fun and were great friends.

■ ***The Pam Golding Group, with its international reach, is the largest independent property company in SA, and has scooped numerous awards. What is your vision for the Pam Golding Group going forward?***

Golding: My son, Dr Andrew Golding, has been at the helm of the Pam Golding Property group as chief executive for many years. In his words: "As a group we will continue our strategic expansion programme on the African continent and abroad, which is underpinned by our ever-increasing focus on raising client service standards even further, coupled with marketing and IT innovations which again place the emphasis on increasing levels of service excellence. Over and above these customer-focused business imperatives, for a long time we have shared the vision of many other South Africans that the very heart of the future economic and social prosperity of our extraordinary country is education. However, as we began to envision how the added component of nurtured talent could impact communities, we realised that inside every adult there is still a child with big dreams, dreams that often become inhibited by reality. When a community is able to relate to an individual who has made it onto the world stage, it is given hope - childhood aspirations are reignited and this creates an atmosphere for positive change. This is the vision behind projects such as our Heart of Gold Trust."

I am extremely proud that Andrew has founded The Heart of Gold Trust. Recently, the trust proudly enrolled its first three learners into schools in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng regions for the 2015 academic year. The trust aims to invest in the lives of exceptionally talented youth, particularly in the areas of academia, sport, art, music or culture, but who do not have adequate financial resources, and provide them holistic educational opportunities to develop their talent to its full potential. We believe that through focused tutorship, developed leadership qualities and nurtured talent, we will not only add to the collective effort and contribution already being made by many, but also provide an opportunity to grow champions for tomorrow - champions who, in turn, are likely to positively impact the communities around them.

■ ***You're a founding member of the Proudly South Africa Initiative, what makes you proudly South African?***

Golding: I - and Pam Golding Properties - have always been Proudly South African. We launched an office in London in 1976 at a time when South Africa was persona non grata overseas. Over the years and in the course of my business, I have spent a great deal of time in an ambassadorial role internationally, promoting South Africa, its phenomenal natural beauty and wide range of extremely appealing properties, to the world.

Pam Golding Properties is also the exclusive pan-African Property Partner of Homecoming Revolution. It is our long-held belief that Africa is going to see a significant trend of returning intellectual capital and it's very exciting for us to be playing such an important role in the social and economic prosperity of this beautiful continent.

■ ***As a woman business owner, what were some of the key understandings you walked away with after your tenure as president of the National Association of Women's Business Owners of South Africa?***

Golding: Being on women's committees such as the BWA was my stepping stone to a wonderful network of highly successful people in business, which all had a very positive effect on the success of my business. Apart from launching and establishing Pam Golding Properties, which has become globally renowned as a leading real estate brand, one of my proudest moments was being awarded Sakeleier van die Jaar (*Die Burger*) - the first and only woman to have received this prestigious award (2001). Also Business Woman of the Year (1996) - an award which opened so many doors for me, enabling me to network widely nationally and internationally.

▣ ***Do you think it's important having a month dedicated to women in South Africa?***

Golding: I think every month is important and women need to be accepted, respected and acknowledged for the roles they play in everyday life and in the business world, after all, we are equal to men, aren't we?

▣ ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

Golding: While people from a diverse range of walks of life and ages have proven successful in selling real estate, perhaps women, with their natural empathy and ability to listen and communicate, have an advantage. So I feel that as a career, many women have gravitated towards the real estate business and will continue to do so, but we as women would never exclude men - we would welcome them. The sky's the limit!

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