

Fighting and financial freedom

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

25 Aug 2016

Her CV is impressive and eclectic. Cathy Lammas has served her country as a lieutenant colonel in the air force, trained as a style consultant and currently holds the position of business development manager with Glacier, where she consults with clients and financial intermediaries on investments.



■ ***You've had quite a diverse career path, the military, fashion and now finance. What do you think each of these aspects bring to where you are now?***

Lammas: Ok so to be clear, the term “career in fashion” is a rather generous use of the word career. In reality I have an intense interest in the subject and qualified as a style consultant – but only did it to understand how style and personal presentation can enhance one’s corporate career. My real career experience has been fighting (military experience) and finances.

Growing up I was never really sure what I wanted to *do* but was always sure what I wanted to *be* – an independent woman specifically in the financial sense. All of my choices have been driven by that desire for independence.

I joined the air force because it seemed like such an exciting opportunity and was hoping to study at the military academy. Unfortunately my academic path took several years before coming to fruition because, based on gender, my applications were repeatedly rejected. I started studying part time and took a gap year.

When I returned to South Africa, policy had changed, making it possible for women to attend the military academy.

The military also exposed me to extreme situations very few people get to experience. The base at which I was stationed came under rocket fire one night and we all had to rush to the bomb shelters. Everybody grabbed whatever they could as they ran for cover and my item of choice was my make-up bag. Clearly whatever happened, I had decided I was going down glamorous.

Being able to push through gender barriers and eventually rise to the rank of lieutenant colonel gave me a tremendous sense of achievement, but the greatest gift the military gave me was a sense of belonging, fantastic camaraderie and a network that is still in place to this day. Indeed the doors to the corporate world were opened for me by a previous air force colleague.

▀ ***What do you love most about your job?***

Lammas: My job gives me the freedom to be as creative as I wish. I carry massive business targets, but how I achieve them is entirely up to me. I have the option to conduct training sessions, host business lunches, do power point presentations or hang from a tree handing out marketing material. As long as I am delivering results for my company.

I also love the fact that my career brings me in contact with an issue that is directly relevant to everybody – money. Whether one is materialistic or not is irrelevant; money is the currency which dictates so much of the quality of our lives , and crucially – how much we save for retirement. Sadly less than 7% of South Africans are saving enough to comfortably put up their feet and relax at the end of their working lives.

There's so much work to be done in the field and my career gives me an opportunity to be part of that. Women in particular do not save enough and to some degree still feel it is socially unacceptable to be forceful in striving for wealth.

▀ ***What advice would you give to a girl/woman who looking to start out in the world of business?***

Lammas: Being nice is overrated. Of course a good attitude is important, especially in a team environment, but for too long women have been expected to “be nice” and anything to the contrary is viewed with suspicion.

Instead I would encourage women to get up, dress up, show up and be brilliant, hard-working and dedicated, but most of all to be real and to be kind.

I would also advise women to put effort into constructing a professional capsule wardrobe. Research has shown that women who put effort into their appearance, advance further in their careers. Unless you're Mark Zuckerberg, a hoodie and t-shirt just won't cut it in the boardroom.

▀ ***Who inspires you?***

Lammas: Of course I love the idea of success, but I'm even more inspired by people who have been really successful, suffered major and often painfully public setbacks, but have then come back better and stronger than ever.

My all-time favourite is Joan Rivers. She was an actress, comedienne, jewellery designer, fashion critique, star and host of several hit television shows, winner of *Celebrity Apprentice*, author of 13 *New York Times* best sellers, and still socially relevant the time of her death with over two million twitter followers. But her life wasn't all plain sailing. She contemplated suicide as she faced bankruptcy and alienation with nobody wanting to employ an “old woman”. But she turned her life around. At the time of her death she had amassed a personal fortune of close to \$200m. Joan is proof that things don't happen *to* you, they happen *for* you.

▀ ***Name three things on your bucket list and why they are there?***

The company for which I work hosts an annual Woman's Day. It is still in its infancy, but I would love it to grow to the size

where we fill a rugby stadium with women all keen to take their lives to the next level, especially financially. Ideally it should be a paying event where all proceeds go towards helping young working women put together a professional capsule wardrobe suitable to their chosen field of employment.

On a personal level I would love to sky dive again. Years ago I did about six accelerated free-fall jumps but bad weather interrupted my training. During that time I built up a huge resistance to jumping again. I need to get over that and get back in the sky. Every single jump is a huge triumph in overcoming personal fears.

I'd also love to visit as many countries as I can, go to the New Orleans Jazz festival, and plant at least a thousand trees before I die.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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