

Cari Drysdale on building good relationships

By  Emily Stander

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Cari Drysdale, the head of business generation, marketing, and corporate responsibility at Turner & Townsend, is a fervent and knowledgeable woman.



Cari Drysdale

As a woman who has worked in male-dominated industries for some time, Drysdale has learned how to hold her own. While working in the Mining, Oil & Gas industry, she said she “Had a fantastic male supervisor who refused to let me stay behind my desk at our comfy offices and insisted I travel to the mines across South Africa and get involved with our clients. It was a real mix of high heels and steel toe-capped boots from one week to the next - and it was also a good introduction to being a minority female in a male-dominated industry.”

After many years in the industry, and learning the ins and outs of successful marketing, she found her place at Turner & Townsend. Here, we hear more about her work, what constitutes award-winning work, and the best advice she can give for women in the industry...

■ Tell us a bit more about your role as head of business generation, marketing and corporate responsibility?

My role is to lead business development and marketing activities to promote the Turner & Townsend brand, develop client

relationships, and enable revenue growth.

This also includes ensuring that our external activities are integrated and well thought out - that the messaging is on point, positions the business how we want, is consistent, and that it ties back to our global and local strategies and ambitions.

Part of my focus is ensuring the Africa business maintains an acceptable conversion rate on opportunities. I was actually recently afforded the opportunity to oversee corporate responsibility for the Africa region, which allows me to set a clear framework to deliver our global corporate responsibility strategy within Africa.

■ ***What do you love most about your work?***

Firstly, our business gives our marketing and business generation great respect. The business units across Africa that my team supports really value our contribution to making the business a success.

I also love the variety of activities, initiatives and strategies we run to win work - which is our ultimate focus. I feed off the pressure that is always on marketing and business generation to meet the deadline that comes with the job.

Lastly, there is nothing better than seeing the results that come from a business that takes marketing and business generation seriously. Winning a piece of work, an award or the respect of peers in the industry that want to work with your organisation is incredibly rewarding.

■ ***What do you think is essential to produce winning work in branding?***

For our consulting business I believe it's essential for us to have a thorough understanding of our client base, consistency in how we position our services and relentless engagement with our market in ways that are helpful to our clients.

■ ***What changes do you think the industry needs to see in the next coming years to stay relevant and make space for women?***

There has already been a lot of change in the built environment and construction industry over the last few years.

Large construction players are struggling to stay ahead of the curve in the face of a constrained construction sector in South Africa - and smaller, emergent contractors find themselves trying to succeed in an industry that is squeezing them on every level. All of these forces open up new opportunities for companies and women in our industry. Especially smaller, emerging businesses; with the right support from bigger global or multinational businesses like Turner & Townsend, can plot a clearer path to growth and remain competitive.

■ ***You have been a finalist for multiple industry awards, could you tell us more about those?***

Personally, I have had the privilege of being a finalist in the 2019 Accenture Rising Star Awards; South Africa Professional Services Awards (SAPSA) 2020 Professional of the Year Finalist in the Construction Sector of the Built Environment

category) and the South Africa Professional Services Awards (SAPSA) 2020 Finalist, Woman Professional of the Year.

I have also had the privilege of telling Turner & Townsend's success stories in the Africa market to multiple judging panels which have resulted in the business winning numerous industry awards. The core themes of our wins are around the quality of our service delivery and our leadership in the areas of BBBEE transformation, gender diversity and digitalization within our industry.

🔴 ***What is the best advice anyone has given you?***

I was young, ambitious and very fixated on climbing the ladder, getting the promotions and getting the big titles. One of my supervisors said to me I should view my career progression as a jungle gym rather than a ladder. That analogy really freed me up to think more broadly about how I could progress my career and rather build my skill set as opposed to building up my CV.

🔴 ***What do you enjoy doing in your free time?***

My family and my friends are everything to me. I like to keep busy, so anything that involves being with them, I am up for.

Covid-19 and the lockdown have been tough for me from this perspective, and I've had to start new hobbies to enjoy their company from a distance. I decided during lockdown to start playing tennis with my husband, painting lessons over Zoom which I do with my daughters, and a conversational Zulu course which I completed (also with my husband) through Dr Noleen Turner at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

ABOUT EMILY STANDER

Freelancer specialising in games and entertainment | My first loves are writing, music and video games

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