Stepping up the ladder of success

The Institute of People Management's Women's Convention in Durban featured a line-up of impressive speakers. With National Women's Day coming up, **Lindsay Ord** found out what makes them tick

Lebo Mashile, poet, presenter, actress and producer

As a child, who was your greatest influence?
My mother is my best example when it comes to drive and work ethic, and Oprah taught me I could be big, opinionated, black, female, and intelligent on TV.

Who has inspired your working life?
Gcina Mhlope. She makes audiences and colleagues feel better about themselves. She travels the world but is still so rooted.

Biggest obstacle you have overcome?
Every artist continuously faces the demonic little voice that says you will end up broke, crazy and bitter for choosing a creative life. I had never seen anyone make a living as a poet before I chose this path. Even people who loved me told me I should get a day job. Here I am today, still standing, still working. That puts a smile on my face.

What achievement are you most proud of?
I could rattle off a list of awards, but what makes my heart leap every day is being a mom. When I look at my son, I want to be a better person and a better artist.

How do you achieve a work-home balance?
That is my biggest struggle. I am learning that life balances itself out, as long as you don't get in the way. There are manic times, and there are slow times. I do small things that make me happy like eating a healthy breakfast, cooking meals for my family, meditating, journalling and spending time with my partner, family and friends.

When are you most productive?
In the wee hours. I love writing when the whole house is asleep, or when the sun has just risen. As a performer and a presenter, I have to be ready to work at all hours.

What makes you sad?
Having no network. I am a Facebook and Twitter junkie.

What makes you mad?
The way some taxi drivers behave during peak-hour traffic.

Favourite way to unwind?
A long bath with a great book and long conversations over great food with friends and family. I'm a foodie. If I never had to work again, I would watch cooking shows, especially *MasterChef*. If there was ever an SA version, I'd be first in the queue at the auditions.

Lieutenant Laura Ilunga, helicopter pilot in the South African Air Force, Durban

As a child, who was your greatest influence?
My mother and those who raised me in my early years.

Who has inspired your working life?
Captain Refilwe Ledwaba, a helicopter pilot for the SAPS Airwing, who faced many challenges as a female pilot, and draws on her strength to stand tall. She is also the founder of Sawia (Southern African Women in Aviation and Aerospace Industry), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to making aviation a viable and accessible career for women – I have joined her management team.

Your biggest obstacle?
Not every man can handle or is willing to tolerate a strong woman and her mindset.

What are you most proud of?
My pilot wings. I had a dream of being a pilot and six years later my dream was realised. There will be failures, but the failures one day make a great success story. Start a "bucket list" at a young age because you never know when that bucket will be kicked over.

How do you achieve a work-home balance?
I do not have a good balance because when I get home I dig into my Sawia responsibilities. It gets a bit overwhelming sometimes.

When are you most productive?
Between 4am and 6am. I have always been an early bird.

What makes you sad?
Other people's hardships, but we are in this world to help each other. Service is the rent we pay for living.

What makes you mad?
Liars, self-centred people, hypocrites and people who try to bring down others. Why can't the whole world be friends? Hate is a language that I just don't understand.

Favourite way to unwind?
To have no plans and just sit around with others and laugh hysterically. A friend once told me that I laugh too loud and that upset me and did not make much sense. Watch Julia Roberts laugh; she just lets it all out.

Iris Francis, group corporate social investment and communications manager for the McCarthy Motor Group

As a child, who was your greatest influence?
My incredible mother, Maureen Fynn, who not only raised her 13 children to be strong and independent but also mothered my dad's other children, with the same love and acceptance.

Who has inspired your working life?
My two previous CEOs, Gareth Coleman from KZN Tourism (for his fearless nature, forward thinking and visionary leadership style), and Brand Pretorius from McCarthy Limited (who taught me that leadership is about service to others), as well as my humble, exceptional assistant, Rene Chateau, who epitomises what it means to truly love others, in service, in deeds, in selflessness.

What has been your biggest obstacle?
Accepting that I can't be brilliant at everything. Accepting that I have a particular set of skills and that it's okay to "fail" at some things. That's why we have teams, so that each person can bring his or her own set of skills to the table and that together, the team can be brilliant.

What achievement are you most proud of?
Being a mom to two incredible boys, Travis, 19, and Tristen, 9.

How do you achieve a work-home balance?
I don't! I have Jabu, my helper, friend and children's other mom. I can travel for work knowing that everything at home is taken care of, because Jabu is there.

When are you most productive?
When I am at the office. I live fully in each moment and because I have an incredible job, I owe my employer my full attention.

What makes you sad?
I once returned home from a business trip and my son would not come to me. My husband, Kevin, looked me in the eye and said: "Tristen does not know you." That made me really sad. He knows me now.

What makes you mad?
The lack of respect, validation, motivation and appreciation for the teams that make us managers look so good. When I see managers take all the credit and side-line their teams to get to the top at the expense of others, I get really mad and very vocal.

Favourite way to unwind?
At home with Kevin and my boys, doing nothing in particular, but together. Mangwanani Spa works too!

Ingrid Roberts, Pietermaritzburg-based motivational speak and mentor

As a child, who was your greatest influence?
My parents undoubtedly. They built my confidence by doing the most important thing parents can ever do for a child: their eyes would light up whenever I came in the room!

Who has inspired your working life?
Being self-employed, I have had to depend on the written and taped teachings of personal development giants like Jim Rohn and Denis Waitley as my "itinerant instructors" while driving the miles in my car. And my daily Oprah fix has been of value in teaching me about the human race!

Biggest obstacle you have overcome?
Stepping over the many no's to get to yes ... that's hard to do when you work for yourself.

What makes you proud?
Seeing the emotion in a person's face when they are affirmed and begin to grow again.

How do you achieve a work-home balance?
Limit time away from home and try to follow a saying my mom taught me: "Treat guests like family... and family like guests!"

When are you most productive?
Between 10pm and early morning.

What makes you sad?
The damage words can do.

What makes you mad?
People not keeping to their word.

Favourite way to unwind?
Watching the waves.

Empowering those in HR

THE Institute of People Management (IPM) recently celebrated its 65th anniversary and has played a pivotal role in empowering HR professionals and practitioners.

IPM is also an affiliate of the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations and the African Federation of Human Resource Management Associations.

The Durban branch has won the IPM Branch of the Year Award for the past seven years and has led the field as a result of its members' enthusiasm, close co-operation and the knack of providing HR professionals and practitioners with what they really want – knowledge-sharing, learning and networking opportunities, says branch co-ordinator Nadia Thomson.

Membership enquiries: Nadia Thomson at 031 564 4927 or 083 513 9292 or e-mail ntonline@telkomsa.net

The website address is: www.ipm.co.za

Don't miss it

CATCH the Shoprite Women Of The Year finals on Monday on M-Net at 9.30pm and again on National Women's Day, August 9, at 3pm.

The stellar line-up includes all category winners, including KwaZulu-Natal's Ednah Zulu, as well as the Lifetime Achiever winner.

Men are trying a little harder at home: study

LONDON: It's been a long time coming, but men are finally catching up with women in their contribution to the household chores.

The gap between the hours they toil and those their wives or girlfriends put in has been narrowing at the dizzying rate of... 27 minutes a decade.

But in 30 years, that represents a substantial transformation. Men have increased the amount of time they spend on domestic duties by more than 60 percent.

Taking all employed and non-employed partners into account, the average woman now works five hours, 55 minutes a day on employment and chores.

Men spend five hours, 37 minutes. At current rates, the 18-minute gap would be closed by the end of the decade. Women sleep an extra 14 minutes each night.

For the overworked woman struggling to balance a job and home life, this has meant they have regained 40 minutes a day since the 1980s.

But there still appear to be some areas where the modern man draws the line. They spend just four minutes a week on laundry and ironing.

The picture changes dramatically when only employed partners are included in the figures.

According to the latest figures from the UK Office for National Statistics, a working man spends an average of 38.4 hours a week in paid employment compared with 33.3 hours for the average employed woman.

On the domestic front, the employed man spends two hours 28 minutes on chores, while the woman does four hours and 40 minutes.

This week, 180 experts gathered at Oxford University to study how we use time, analysing figures from the past half century from 60 surveys in 25 countries.

Professor Jonathan Gershuny, director of the centre for time use research at Oxford University and co-author of a new report, "Gender Convergence in Domestic Work", said: "The idea of what it is to be a man is changing.

"It wouldn't surprise me if man overtakes woman in total hours worked. But while men are doing more cooking and home work, they are doing no extra laundry whatsoever. I'm guilty of that, too."

Dr Colin Gill, a psychologist, said: "Today it is the men who are feeling the greatest pressure. They are much more worried about their status. It may mean they are taking on more work in the home not simply to save or preserve their money but also to assert their masculinity" – Daily Mail

Diary dates

ANIMAL Anti-Cruelty League is holding an open day at its cat shelter at 41 Belvedere Road, Redhill, on Saturday, August 13 from 9am to 12pm, and a puppy open day at 208 Blackburn Road, Redhill on August 20. Entrance is R10 and includes refreshments. Any donations of dry cat food (for the cat day) and chicken and rice (for the puppy day) are welcome.

Enquiries: Kerry at 031 563 4409 (cat open day) and Caryl at 031 564 9949 or 079 381 3150 (puppy open day).