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## WHO WERE YOUR ROLE MODELS DURING THE PIVOTAL STAGES OF YOUR LIFE?

I have been lucky, always having had role models in my life. I think many people live their lives and go through immense struggles without role models to give them any sense of how they might move beyond tough circumstances. I have been blessed to have had a mix of male and female inspirational people in my life. The greatest impact has been the women, mostly females in their 50s and 60s, who have been willing to share what they've learned and are still learning.

I have also been lucky to come from a family and community that have many strong women whom I was always inspired by; providing me with role models that I'd like to emulate as well as demonstrating what I would not like to be.

## WHAT ARE YOUR TOP ATTRIBUTES OF A SUCCESSFUL LEADER?

- Self-awareness
- Vision
- Building effective strategic alliances
- Sense of humour

## FROM A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE, WHO DO YOU ASPIRE TO BE, OR TAKE LESSONS FROM, IN THE POWER SECTOR?

Recently I was listening to Christine Lins, Executive Secretary of REN21, and really appreciate her approach. As a woman working in this industry, you are constantly reminded of the fact that there are some voices heard more clearly than others, which Christine does not allow to deter her. She has not had to be

strident about what she has to say; she just gets on with it, speaking with authority and clarity.

## LEADING PEOPLE: IS IT A SECRET, A SCIENCE OR AN INHERENT TRAIT?

I think it is an ongoing evolution. There are certain traits that are inherent in relation to leadership, like the capacity to actually listen to people and to authentically engage with the people you are wanting to enrol in achieving a vision.

However, I think that there are many traits of leadership that can be learned throughout your life, which come with maturity. We also see good leaders become bad and bad leaders able to vindicate themselves as they learn. I think it is a mix, but more a science than a secret.

**WHAT VALUES DO YOU DEMONSTRATE AS A LEADER?**

- In change processes I take people with me
- I listen, and am willing also to follow when this is what leadership requires
- Empathy: the capacity to take seriously the humanity of others

**WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?**

I can be very impatient about certain things; e.g. I have little patience with people who have not taken the time to engage with social issues like inequality. I am very impatient with behaviours relating to gender and cultural insensitivity. When working under immense pressure every day, it is very easy to ignore your blind spots and operate on instinct. I watch out for this and try to be mindful.

**WHAT IS THE ONE THING IN YOUR OPINION THAT PEOPLE COMMONLY MISCONCEIVE ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER?**

I think that people have little sense of exactly how idealistic I am in what I want to achieve. I am not interested in creating empires – I have been in positions where I built something up and when it got to a certain point I let it be to flourish under a new leadership. A lot of people don't understand that this is about working to achieve what I believe in, rather than in creating a job for myself.

**HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE A TEAM AFTER EXPERIENCING A DEFEAT?**

I am constantly checking in with the original intention of what it is that we want to achieve. Whenever you take this approach, you are reminded that defeat can be part of the process, of making progress. However, defeat is often not the end. Sometimes it merely signals that one needs to change something radically and you actually have to let go of something. Selection of a strong and diverse team is an essential start.

**WHAT SHORT-MEDIUM TERM FUTURE DO YOU FORESEE FOR THE AFRICAN POWER SECTOR?**

I think for South Africa it is certainly going to be very critical what the choices are that we make in our planning space, particularly in relation to the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). I have studied the IRP process since 2010 (I focused my masters on it two years ago) and I am very aware that stated policy and implementation often contradict one another. Regardless of what is included in the IRP (even a policy-adjusted one), the past seven years have proven that implementation still has

plenty to do with political will. I do think we need an IRP update, because it is far too old a plan now. I am also aware of how citizens will make choices based on what they see makes sense, even if policy has not caught up with that wisdom.

On a wider scale, I really would like to see more cooperation across borders. Besides the actual selling of power across borders, there is a lot of practice and wisdom that can be shared within the SADC region. The energy-water-food nexus is going to become increasingly critical, and a lot more people are paying attention as compared to say six years ago, as climate constraints become more evident.

**THE POWER INDUSTRY IS A HIGH-PRIORITY SECTOR FOR ECONOMIES ACROSS THE GLOBE. IN YOUR OPINION, IS THERE A NEED FOR SECTOR CROSSOVER?**

If we do not think about energy from a water perspective, we are really missing opportunities to mitigate risk. By the same token if we don't think of the energy and water effects on food then we are going to hit a serious wall of constraint. Therefore, my sense is that sector crossovers are essential.

**HOW IMPORTANT IS BILATERAL TRADE BETWEEN AFRICA AND FOREIGN COUNTRIES WITH A SIMILAR MARKET BLUEPRINT?**

I think it all comes down to political economy. Northern and Western trade agreements (or the absence of these) have drained Africa of its resources. We have an important priority as southern countries to work with one another better. There is great room for improvement. However, I do not dismiss the value of good and fair North and West trade with the South.

**ARE THERE ANY ACHIEVEMENTS OR CHALLENGES THAT YOUR RESIDING COUNTRY HAS EXPERIENCED THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO HIGHLIGHT?**

The REIPPP programme has aspects of achievement, like the round 1-3 projects that have been implemented and have resulted in real livelihood change. These projects are however still in their infancy. For example, many of the community trusts are only a year or two old and are still finding their strategic approach and voice.

Where we have failed – at both industry and development finance level especially – is in how we have supported communities to take autonomous action that can be sustained and not be undermined by short-term political trends. ■



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