

# Tough trading environment calls for supply chain innovation



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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With over a decade of experience in the supply chain industry, Linda Reddy, supply chain director for Nando's IMEA, has played a pivotal role in driving Nando's local supply chain.



Linda Reddy, supply chain director for Nando's IMEA

In the midst of an ever-volatile economy, rising unemployment and a highly competitive business environment, Reddy believes that South Africa's fighting spirit is a driving force for better things to come.

She believes the region is bursting with possibility and that the key to developing local supply chain is through investing in the potential of South Africa's people; driving win-win partnerships and unlocking innovation, ultimately enabling the country to compete with the global landscape.

Reddy's approach is using the power of the collective to create meaningful opportunities for local suppliers, generate employment and drive growth and skills development. She believes strongly in cutting-edge innovation within every link of the supply chain and in championing and supporting local suppliers to help them grow their efficiencies.

With over a decade of experience in the supply chain industry, Reddy has played a pivotal role in driving Nando's local supply chain. This [Women's Month](#), she shares some valuable insights.

## **Could you describe a typical day in your job?**

I start every day with an update on our economy and exchange rate movements along with what's going on in the other African countries, the Middle East and India.

Since we export products manufactured in South Africa to 16 other countries, it's imperative to keep abreast of customer satisfaction levels so that our restaurants are not affected. We regularly invite our supply partners to join us for a casual lunch at our beautiful Nando's Central Kitchen offices where we touch base on supply, quality, new product developments, and the industry in general.

If I am abroad, in one of our Nando's markets, it's engaging with local suppliers at one of our restaurants. Then there are continuous engagements with my fellow exco peers on the challenges we are facing and collectively finding ways to overcome them.

I also make time for my team members to pop into my office to run an idea past me or keep me abreast of plans that haven't come to fruition - an important check-in.

■ **What did you want to be when you grew up?**

An architect. Having a dad that was a builder may have had something to do with this. At high school, I was the only girl in my class to do technical drawing and I loved it!

■ **How did you get into the supply chain space?**

A contract opportunity in the RCL Foods buying department came my way straight after high school, and I seized the opportunity to gain financial independence. I completed my procurement studies, part-time, and I've never looked back!



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■ **What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?**

My mother taught me to never give up on my dreams, despite the odds and my dad taught me to always treat people with respect and care.

■ **What advice do you have for the future generation of women wanting to get into the retail/logistics space?**

Typically supply chain doesn't feature in the lists of jobs you're exposed to in school but is an integral part of any major business. If you're looking for an integral business role within an organisation, I suggest reaching out to the big brands you admire and asking for an internship or a shadow role to get a feel for how your day-to-day will look.

“ With international and online trade increasing daily and, faster and slicker supply and demand of goods, innovation in supply chain has become the competitive advantage for many successful businesses. ”

■ **Who or what is your biggest motivation?**

My family, close friends and work colleagues. Each and every one of them possesses positive attributes that have impacted me in some or other way.

■ **Are South African women getting enough of a chance to shine in the retail/logistics industry?**

I am pleased to see the growing number of females that are in procurement and logistics (I have female stars on my team that continuously shine). There is, however, room for improvement.

“ *I believe we can include more aspirational females through continuous education of the profession and by profiling more successful women in these fields to inspire other women. It's a profession so well suited to women as it requires one to be agile, structured, fast, tough and supportive – all the attributes I think we naturally embody.* ”

■ **As a female business leader, what's the least and most exciting aspect of your workday?**

The least exciting aspect is solving some of the challenges we face in a developing country. Whilst managing that, I have to continuously assure our international markets that South Africa manufactures world-class, quality products despite some of the challenges we face.

The most exciting part of my day is engaging with my team on their ideas, concerns, opportunities and the odd story of what's going on in their personal lives.

■ **Women are considered to be natural problem solvers. Why do you think this is perfect in the logistics industry?**

Supply chain is a nimble function with many aspects that do not run like clockwork, so it continuously requires creative, innovative and sometimes simple ways to move forward.

■ **Could you list a few, if any, specific challenges females face in this industry?**

The pressure to do and be it all. There have been consecutive days that I would arrive home late from work from either a demanding workload or business travel and this can put a strain on one's personal life. Balancing supplier management, logistics and internal stakeholders takes many years of experience across all dimensions.

■ **What is your advice for overcoming these challenges?**

I firstly recommend that all women with family responsibilities surround themselves with a support structure.

“ *I encourage women to also support other women, inspire and motivate each other – an area that I believe requires more work from one another. Find a good mentor that can coach and guide you.* ”

■ **What trends do you predict in the supply chain sector in the coming years?**

The use of technology driving easier customer engagement and the integration of that into the full supply chain process (end-to-end), making things convenient, faster and more informative.

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