

"Change will not happen unless we drive it ourselves" - Nicolette Scheepers

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

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Here, Ster-Kinekor's chief of content Nicolette Scheepers shares some of the challenges she's faced as a woman working in the film industry, some of the specific challenges females face in the workplace in general and advice in overcoming these...

While she has experienced some men underestimating her ability, she admits that this has been driven by certain individuals, not the sector as a whole. Her underlying message this Women's Month is to believe in your ability, find other women to look up to and in turn help to mentor and support the women around you. "Change will not happen unless we drive it ourselves..."

■ **What is your role as chief of content at Ster-Kinekor?**

I believe that I have one of the best roles available. I have the privilege of working with very passionate and creative people, fantastic content spanning all genres and every week is different from the last. There is quite literally never a dull moment in my line of work.



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Nicolette Scheepers

■ **What's the least and most exciting aspect of your workday?**

My least favourite things are the obvious: filing and cleaning out my mailbox. Meetings that run over time and don't seem to reach effective outcomes are also on the list.

■ **What challenges have you faced as a woman working in the film industry?**

Over the years I have struggled occasionally with men in senior roles who underestimated my abilities purely because of my gender, but these have always been driven by certain individuals and never the sector as a whole.

The film industry locally and internationally, maybe as a result of its creative nature, is not really gender biased and there are many opportunities for women to contribute and prosper.

One of my personal challenges is maintaining a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities. I do my best to maintain this fairly as often as possible but at times one or the other needs to sacrifice a little.

■ **What are a few of the specific challenges females face in the workplace in general?**

The perception that as a woman you are automatically driven by emotion more than reason. I believe that women are completely capable of making reasonable business decisions and their approach to the delivery of these decisions is often more effective due to their emotional understanding.

“ *The expectation that at work you should not reveal your femininity. I once read that women who show male colleagues that they can cook, bake, etc. are less likely to succeed professionally. Does the same apply to men who can change lightbulbs?* ”

I am not sure that men are equally affected by strict working times, but I do believe that corporate environments have a lot to gain by being more flexible in this regard. I know many successful women who can work flexible hours and still get the job done well. Obviously, this cannot apply to all roles in all sectors, but where possible it helps women and mothers to maintain the work/life balance and 'happy employee, happy employer'.

■ **What is your advice in overcoming these?**

Always remember that when at work you have a mandate to fill from your employer. Once you make the link between the company's success and your own, it is easy to make rational business decisions. Once the decisions have been made, use your EQ to determine the best way to communicate and motivate your colleagues to deliver the desired outcomes.

Accept who you are, play to your strengths and manage your weaknesses. Don't get caught up in other people's perceptions or you will make them a reality.

Do your best to always deliver above expectations and accept that if you need to take unplanned time out of the office, you will probably need to take unplanned time out from home as well in order to catch up. Build trust with your employer. If they know that you can be relied on to deliver, they will be more open to flexible hours.

■ **Are enough South African women getting a chance to shine in their industry and shatter that oft-referenced glass ceiling?**

I think that women have made great progress in this regard, but we still have a long way to go. Total equality in the workplace cannot be achieved overnight and the growth and development of women in business needs to be a constant area of focus for all of us.

■ **How can we ensure the next generation results in more empowered females and better gender representation in the creative industry?**

Apart from specific programmes within organisations to drive the development of female employees, I think that every one of us needs to work on changing mindsets wherever we go. Start at home, in social circles and in schools to ensure that our children do not grow up thinking that one gender is stronger, smarter or better than the other. For me, patriarchy is a societal issue that needs to be dealt with at that level before it can be erased from our environment entirely.

■ **Who's your female role model or business mentor – someone you respect and admire?**

I have been very lucky to work with many amazing women over the years, among them: Isabel Rao from Filmfinity, Christine Service from Disney South Africa and Debbie McCrum from Empire Entertainment. They have all taught me valuable lessons and offered invaluable support and while I may not be able to reciprocate, I am committed to doing the same for other young women building careers in this industry.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

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