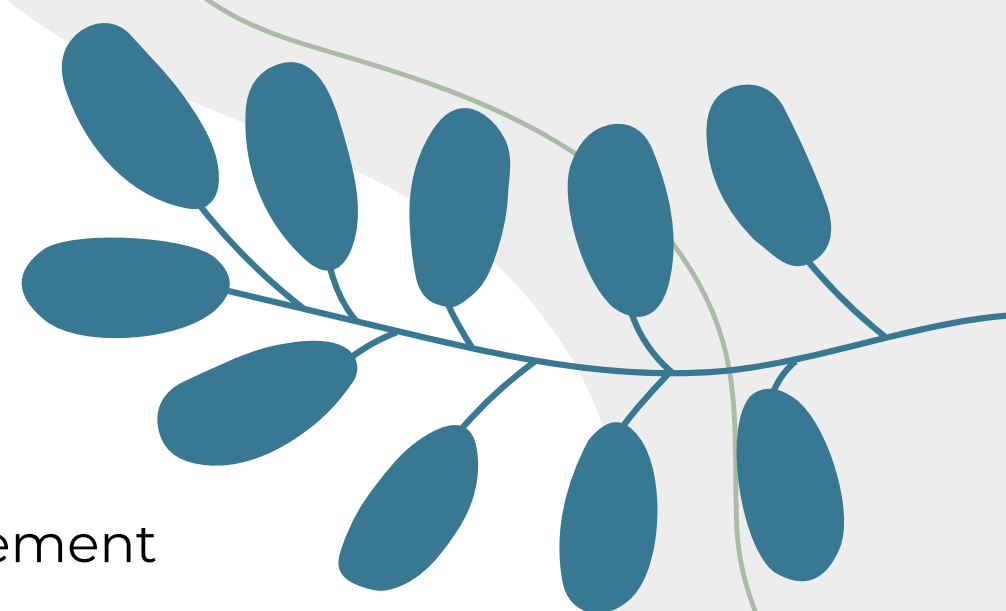




Vanessa Pillay

Managing Director
at First Global Asset Management



My passion is people.

At the beginning of my career, more than 25 years ago, I knew I wanted to work with people, to build strong relationships and treat everyone with respect. I love listening to clients and colleagues and revel in their diverse life stories and experiences, which often turn out to be significant learning curves.

“A passion for something other than making money”

“Increased revenue and profitability are by-products of honesty, hard work, thought leadership and authentic passion around your trade. Find someone who’s not willing to sacrifice those most scalable attributes while they consult.” **Andrew Loos**

One of the most defining experiences in my career was at an international institution where I was mentored by someone who is results driven and believed in me. He motivated me to take advantage of opportunities that I would not have normally considered. It shifted my perspective, and I realised how powerful a change in one’s mindset could be: it can catapult the trajectory of a woman in the workplace particularly because challenges now become opportunities.

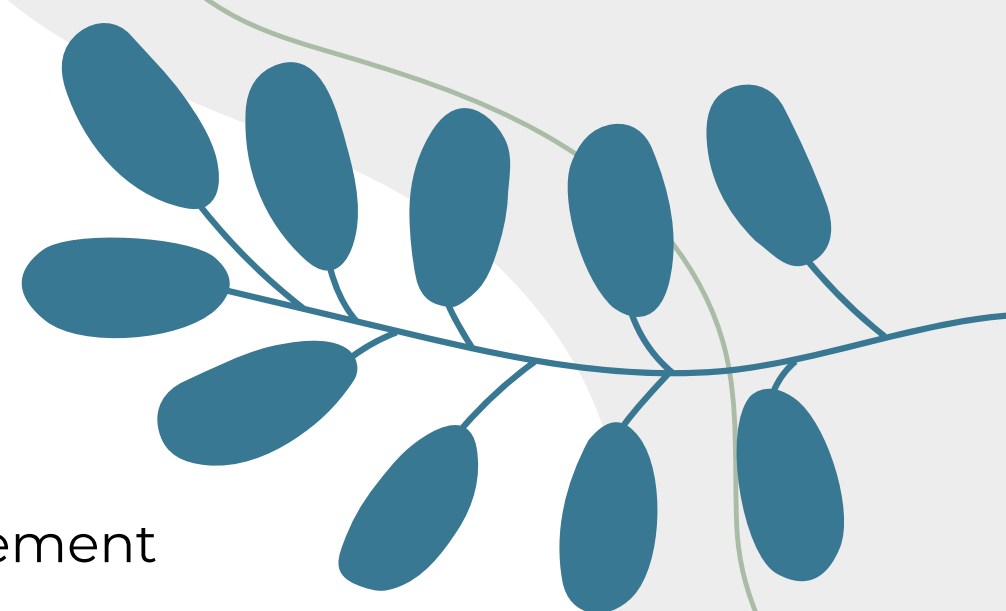
Everyone has different strengths that we must capitalise on, as well as weaknesses. In forging healthy working relationships, we can identify and nurture our weaknesses and find ways to overcome them. Contrary to the conservative perception of women leaders, I have learnt that one of the advantages of being a female leader is that women feel more comfortable showing emotion and empathy. Empathy with service excellence and authenticity are powerful attributes to building trust.

Another keystone to my climb up the corporate ladder is my belief that a business is most successful when it is recognised for the collective collaborative team effort and not for one person’s singular initiative. It’s all about the team working together for a lasting legacy.



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Aligned to the ethos and culture of First Global Asset Management is my passion to serve with dedication and excellence. Core to me is to lead by example, be human and admit mistakes and focus on change. One needs to think beyond the norm and continually challenge yourself to develop and grow; you need to constantly raise the bar.

Women who generally carry many of the wounds of inequality and the larger burden of community responsibility have the tenacity that comes with the territory of leadership. As a woman of colour, I understand many of us have the financial responsibility not only to our immediate families but to support our extended families, so that as each generation progresses, it lifts their economic position slowly, closing the inequality gap with education, economic benefit and possibly creating a more socially-just society for all South African women.

One of the most challenging aspects of my career as a woman was when I started in the financial markets industry and felt there was an expectation to behave in a certain way which embodied many typical male traits. It was not easy being a female in a male-dominated environment, but I have learnt over time that we need to start by owning who we are and what we have to offer. I have learnt to be true to myself and adopt my own style of working that is ethically compliant.

While the world is evolving, women are still lagging when it comes to leadership roles. The major barriers that women face in business today is making our way to the C-suite. Women should take on additional risks and prepare themselves to take on challenging roles.



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My advice to young women who are about to start their career is to:

- ✦ Decide what you want and go for it.
- ✦ Lean towards opportunities that seem risky and uncomfortable at first, but offer great exposure and a chance to learn something new and challenging.
- ✦ Being an efficient female leader is not about pretending to be someone else, but it is understanding your unique leadership style and what makes you a good leader.
- ✦ So, take some time to reflect, to think about the story you want to create and how you want your story to end.

***“The question isn’t who is going to let me;
It’s who is going to stop me?”***

- Ayn Rand