

Nation Builder's Keri-Leigh Paschal; 'We need supportive men to walk alongside us'

By  Juanita Pienaar

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As executive trustee of social impact organisation Nation Builder, Keri-Leigh Paschal looks after strategy, people and networking, which entails seeing the big picture and how they position themselves. "There is a lot of people management involved: I walk a journey with the team and make sure they flourish. And I spend a lot of time working towards greater impact with business leaders, sharing our learnings and, in turn, learning from them as we build awareness about the concept of nation building," she says.



Keri-Leigh Paschal, executive trustee of social impact organisation Nation Builder.

Here Paschal shares what drives her passion for social impact development and how she thinks that even though we are consciously looking to support one another as women, we need supportive men to walk alongside us...

■ Please tell us more about yourself and what it is you do?

I'm the executive trustee of social impact organisation Nation Builder, which aims to bridge the gap and bring collaboration between the donor community and the non-profit organisation (NPO) community. We want to get government, NPOs and businesses working together more closely to build our nation, and we want businesses to anchor themselves in our country and truly become embedded in finding solutions and making an impact.

■ How would you rate your success as an organisation?

Since being founded 10 years ago, we've seen amazing growth in the collective NPO and business communities that have mobilised to have greater social impact, ensuring that the people who need it the most are supported. We're also seeing incredible openness from government to work with us as a community of NPOs, and greater engagement than ever from businesses who want to see our nation prosper.



When times get tough, it's time to stand together

Keri-Leigh Paschal, Nation Builder 19 Mar 2020



▣ What drives your passion for social impact development?

People flourishing drives me. I love to see and be part of unlocking potential in people. This is why I love my role at Nation Builder: how do we look at the resources we have, think about them differently, and better unlock them to create an opportunity for people and society to flourish?

▣ Which NPO that you've worked with would you like to encourage more people to support and why?

There are so many amazing NPOs out there doing different things, so it's almost impossible to single out just one! What I do encourage people to do is to partner with NPOs who have a strong track record and have credibility within their communities.

If I were to win the Lotto, I would donate a lot of money towards the Gap Fund which was created especially to help South Africa's NPOs through the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond. They are helping a lot of incredible organisations who are stepping up to help those who are going through a tough time at the moment.



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▣ After everything you've achieved in your career, do you feel that you've done enough to represent women in business?

I think every woman leader of an organisation is representing women in business right now. I want to be part of shaping what it means to be a woman in business, to show how to lead like a woman, and for that to be celebrated. I am also passionate about seeing women taking on opportunities and making the most of it, and not seeing their gender, or any stereotypes, inhibiting them.

▣ Do you think the future of CSI initiatives will benefit from more female leadership in charge of businesses as a whole?

“ There needs to be a healthy balance between women and men in leadership because both bring different approaches to leadership. However, the greater collaborative approach of women in leadership is essential in the corporate social investment space, and in any business environment. Being able to bring together people and leverage their expertise and skills in a way that will have a greater impact is a really powerful tool. ”

▣ What are your personal tips on getting people involved in CSI projects or social impact development?

- Know where your passion lies and where the need is the greatest. The secret to making an impact is to create long-term partnerships and longevity and to do that, the project you support must align with your passions with the real needs on the ground.
- Do your homework. Go and visit an organisation on site. Ask the community for their opinion.
- Commit. Once you've done your homework and you feel it's an organisation you want to partner with, then know that you're in it for the long term. Walk the journey with them through the highs and lows and be part of crafting that journey with your skill set.

▣ What is your hope for the next or future generations of women?

I'd love to see the business world structured in a way that's more conducive to getting women into leadership positions and staying there long enough to be able to showcase their skill sets and expertise through the different seasons of life. In other words, for women to have the support and flexibility in the work environment to unlock their potential, and to

contribute impactfully throughout their life.

■ **And what is your key message to fellow women this Women's Month?**

“ Be authentic! So often, we think we need to be something else: strong, opinionated, hard. You don't. You need to be only yourself. Know that you're not perfect, and know your why: there will be amazing days, but also challenging and hard days, and if you don't have a firm conviction of what you are trying to accomplish, it can be difficult to keep going. ”

■ **Anything you'd like to add?**

It's important to emphasise that both men and women make excellent leaders and together can do so much more. So as much as we are consciously looking to support one another as women, we need supportive men to walk alongside us on the journey.

Connect with Paschal on [LinkedIn](#) and visit the [Nation Builder](#) website for more info and updates.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.
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