

# How can women break the glass ceiling in digital media?



By [Tivania Moodley](#)

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There has been a significant increase of women working in digital or technology-related roles, yet we're still to see a sizeable shift of females who are rising to senior positions or starting their own companies.

Despite the evolution of technology, there is still a stereotype about the digital industry being led by avant-garde, t-shirt-wearing, bearded, Apple-loving men with big plans for technological disruption and conquest. This can often be intimidating. To be included often requires an insertion into a conversation in a meaningful way. This comes with a level of confidence and self-assurance that a lot of women second guess.



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There is a disparity with how the genders self-promote and as a result the representation in the industry is compromised. Deshnie Govender, creative director of iVent, a digital consulting firm in Johannesburg, has successfully broken through this glass ceiling. She has proven that it is not necessary to be the loudest in the room just to be the loudest in the room. Her experience includes heading the digital department of many prominent ad agencies, before delving into entrepreneurship. She knows a thing or two about the industry.

“Regardless of the industry, women in any leadership role need to be perceived as strong leaders. The way we speak, display ourselves and behave needs to be associated with authority and mandate. It is important to be authentic. These are the top five pieces of advice I can impart to women and stem from my own journey:

- **Personal brand**

The digital space has a lot of noise and a lot of players. Owning your voice and projecting a strong personal brand helps to stand out uniquely.

- **Network is your net worth**

Ensure the people around you inspire you, push you to walk outside your comfort zone and engage you. Attend industry events and connect with like-minded professionals online to expand your network.

- **Be courageous**

Call it women's intuition or simply going with your gut. Sometimes you have to be brave and take a calculated risk. Fail or succeed – there is always a life lesson out of every courageous action. Whether it's about being voracious with an idea in a boardroom or taking a leap of faith on a business venture – go with your gut!

- **Never stop learning**

I'm a firm believer that to get a seat at the table you need to bring something to the table. The digital industry evolves at such a rapid pace that you need to have an always-on mentality when it comes to learning.

- **Pay it forward**

We rise by lifting others. I'm constantly on a mission to share what I learn. I've gone as far as setting up a Digital SA group on Facebook that serves as a knowledge sharing platform for the South African digital community.”

Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and HP president and CEO Meg Whitman have both proven to be luminaries in their fields and prove that navigating the challenges are well worth it. These two women have blazed a trail in the technology sphere and have been an inspiration to Govender.

“Women need to shift from thinking: "I'm not ready to do that" to thinking "I want to do that – and I'll learn by doing it - Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. I love this quote because it resonates with me deeply. As women, we do need to live boldly – life begins right outside our comfort zone. With digital evolving daily, we will never be fully ready, but we can try our best. The price of inaction is far greater than the cost of a mistake. It's not about having all the tools to action, it's about doing what you can with what you have”.

Like Sheryl Sandberg says, leadership belongs to those who take it.

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