



**ADDRESS BY VERONICA DE KLERK
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during
the 6th Namibian Women's Summit 2012
Theme" *"The Time is NOW!"*

on the subject:
"The Secrets behind the Success of a Woman Leader"

Thursday, 9 August 2012, Safari Court, Windhoek at 09:00

- **Madam Director of Ceremonies;**
- **Ms Anne Gebhardt – President of the Namibian Women’s Summit; and her team;**
- **Fellow Conference Speakers;**
- **Distinguished “Women Professionals;**
- **Gender Activists; and dear Conference Delegates:**

Good Morning!

Please allow me to congratulate the facilitators for having initiated this wonderful conference for women professionals and entrepreneurs, which bears the theme: **“The Time is NOW”**.

I thank “The Namibian Women’s Summit” for its kind invitation to be part of this most inspiring “Summit” - and to address you on **“The Secrets behind the Success of a Woman Leader”**.

I commend you for your special interest in bringing us all together, to celebrate the numerous talents and achievements of women; to share how we can prepare ourselves to take our rightful place in the world today; and to give something of ourselves to improve the lives of other women wherever we go.

...And while contemplating on this subject, it once again became clear to me that one of the most prominent reasons why so few women have made inroads into the world, traditionally dominated by men - and in particular our economy and politics - is because many women (and more especially rural women), have for generations, preferred to limit their fields of interest to the cooking pots and raising children.

As we are aware, Namibia and Africa are still ruled by men, although in all fairness it should be mentioned - that Namibia never in its history, had so many women in top positions in the business sector, as well as at decision-making levels of Government.

However sadly, many women have all along been happy to have men dominate practically all other activities in our society.

In the process, men built up a huge head-start in terms of knowledge and experience - and for that reason, **they** are the leaders in just about every field.

Most women in Namibia are, to a lesser or greater degree, hamstrung by outdated cultural traditions which dates back to their parental home and which have impeded their development and growth, and which have thus, slowed down the country's economic development.

It is therefore, not surprising that, through my work in the rural areas of the country, one of the most profound problems which has been identified among women, apart from poverty and unemployment, is the shocking lack of self-confidence, a sense of self-value and a sense of human dignity.

However, women in leadership positions have indeed an ideal opportunity to work in unison for the eradication of such cultural baggage because our country cannot allow the injustices suffered by women due to harmful cultural traditions, to be practised any longer.

Women leaders who have been more exposed, should therefore, be the catalyst to bring about change on that front, to bring other marginalized women into the mainstream of the economy – and as we know, the majority of women live in the rural areas of the country.

As I am looking over this esteemed audience, it is my conviction that you, as women leaders congregated here today are the people who bear the responsibility to empower the next generation of young leaders as our future successors. It would be extremely selfish and not promoting the cause of women, if those who have made it up the ladder, fail to send the elevator back down, for the others to be raised to higher levels.

...And what is more - Namibia will speedily see parity in the representation of the genders in the Private Sector and Government, provided that the present generation of women leaders start building on the next generation to be worthy successors and able to serve the nation.

Young girls should therefore, be groomed, trained and prepared timeously, for future leadership roles by talented and experienced women leaders - whether in business or in politics, because the present challenge is, that more women role-models are needed to take young girls to the next level.

Thus, to dramatically turn the tide of getting more women in all leadership positions in the economy and politics, women are called upon today to start now with a determined decision to become more involved in the male dominated world, in order to excel.

In this context, I wish to caution, that If women just hang around in the male dominated board rooms as a lone, uninformed and speechless female, who have very little to offer in terms of contributions and wisdom on particular subjects, they are very likely candidates for male prejudice and mockery!

These embarrassing situations, call for careful and resolute preparation by women themselves, by in-depth studying the topics that would come under discussion in the boards on which they serve,and there is no doubt that **women can do this!**

It is imperative for women to acquire exceptional knowledge of a wide range of topics because men, who have a head-start on this process, will only listen to women and respect them, if they express authoritative views, and if they reveal sound knowledge and insights.

Comprehensive knowledge and insights of any possible topic, is by far the best mechanism to break down all forms of prejudice which men harbour against women. Thus, when women speak authoritatively and with conviction on a subject, **people will listen!**

Women **can** reach that point, by reading..... reading..... and reading **widely**; by listening attentively to speakers; by becoming critical thinkers, by questioning and debating stand points; by analyzing facts; and by carefully formulating their statements.

Always remember, that women will **have to overcome the barriers of prejudice!** Hence, women will **have to work twice as hard** in order to attain excellence. They will have to speak twice as eloquent; they will have to be twice as intelligent; twice as informed; twice as authoritative; twice as smart in order to be counted!

Competence, efficiency, talent, quality of work, perseverance etc, are all special qualities with which women in particular, are endowed, and cannot forever be ignored and swept under the carpet.

However, in order to be a strong woman leader and an inspiration to others, women should be confident with themselves.

Dear fellow women: Did you know that God made you unique? Did you know that there is no person in this whole wide-world like you? You are special, because you are ONE OF A KIND! So, why would you ignore that?

You may ask the question today -***"but where can I start to develop a positive self-perception"?***

Let me give you my secret: Many times when I get up in the mornings not looking my very best, and when I feel that my energy is running low; and when I lack motivation - With sleepy eyes and with my hair standing in all directions, I defiantly look at myself in the mirror and I say to myself:

"You are beautiful";

"You are confident"

"You are successful"

"You are a Winner!"

"You are in control"

"I like you, because you will succeed!"

I assure you dear friends, that by just looking at yourself in the mirror; by smiling at yourself; by approving of yourself; by loving yourself; by believing in yourself; by believing in what you are repeating to yourself over and over again, you will soon feel the confidence flowing through your entire body - and the fruits that can be gained from this exercise, is simply amazing!

Dear ladies: There are numerous famous and successful businesswomen in the world out there, who have started their own businesses from scratch - but behind those successful businesses, there are very special women who possess similar qualities and personality traits.

But what are those characteristics which are the most common among successful businesswomen?

First of all - Believe in yourself:

The most important characteristic which is crucial for success is to **believe in yourself**. All successful women have this firm belief that they know exactly where they are going, and they know that they are destined for greater things in life! What others say about them does not matter; They never look for problem-solvers; they believe that **they are the problem-solvers** and **that belief** always worked for them.

Believing in yourself means moving ahead, even in the face of adversity! No one can build a successful business without Self-belief, because without it, you won't have the drive to press on, even when there's no sign of progress.

Be passionate:

If there's one thing that propels successful businesswomen to move forward, it is passion. Successful women entrepreneurs are passionate about what they do and that is the reason why they built a business around what they love to do best. Oprah Winfrey became the richest black woman in the world, with her passion for public speaking. So, if you have a passion, believe in it, strive to be the best in it, and I promise you today.....you will emerge a success!

Be humble and willing to learn:

Successful women keep on studying and are continuously hungry to learn. They read industrial **journals, books and magazines. They attend seminars and update themselves regularly with the latest industrial trends.** So they humble themselves and learn when they are availed the opportunity.

Take criticism graciously and for what it is:

Successful women entrepreneurs can achieve success if they refuse to be bogged down by negative comments. The most successful women in the world have all been criticised heavily, but they have miraculously overcome!

Why?... because they were willing to listen to **constructive criticism** but refused to be derailed by **destructive criticism**. If you can do this, you will be able to overcome all obstacles!

Be persistent and persevere:

Another characteristic of successful women, is Persistence! Starting a business is one thing; but sticking to the entrepreneurial process is another. Nothing good comes easy; So...give it a good fight and persist on what you want; if you are really serious about achieving success in the business world, be persistent and persevere!

Dream..... Dream.....and Dream.....!

If there is anything that keeps successful women entrepreneurs going, it is their dream to build a successful business and to achieve beyond the ordinary. Successful businesswomen usually envision a certain lifestyle; they envision a bright future for themselves..... and they GO FOR IT!

Go beyond your Comfort Zone:

Why did Oprah Winfrey emerge the richest black woman in the world? The reason is, because she went the extra mile, more than others. She emerged out of her Comfort Zone, because you can never become a successful entrepreneur by sitting within your Comfort Zone. You have to step out into the unknown and into your Challenging Zone - because **that** is what successful businesswomen do. They leave the comfort of their homes to face life squarely, and in so doing, they eventually taste the sweet price of success!!

Balance your Family and Business:

One of the key characteristics of successful women entrepreneurs is the ability to balance their **family and their business responsibilities**. This is really quite a challenge to **build a business alongside raising a family**. But in order to succeed, you have to overcome this challenge, **by mastering the art of “Delegating and Time Management”**.

Persist with a Strong sense of Purpose:

An important characteristic of successful women, is **“a strong sense of purpose.”** The irony is that successful women live as though they are serving a higher purpose..... and this sense of purpose usually reflects in their business mission. This is why their businesses and brands will stand the test of time even after they have passed on!

Just think of Business Icon, Harold Pupkewitz! All his businesses and brands will stand the test of time far beyond our imagination!

Having brought you some secrets of successful businesswomen, which are not necessarily unique truths - there is no doubt that **women can do this!** **Women are no doubt, here to stay....!** They will soon start making the difference, based on their useful inputs in the board room, in the classroom, in the Church, in the Judiciary, in Parliament – Yes, simply everywhere!

If women are to build a powerful presence and become leaders in their fields, it is imperative that they have the courage to express themselves authoritatively. They should firstly be informed! They should be able to think objectively and intelligently on their feet..... They should be proud of who they are! They should be bold, go-ahead, fearless and confident and be able to come forward with sound ideas and well-conceived alternatives. **That, dear ladies, is the name of the game!**

It is imperative that women should stand together; work together; They should support one another and be united! Yes, they should be proud of the achievements of one another; and have faith in one another's abilities.

Women should never undo the role which they can, and should fulfil in our communities, by undermining fellow-women, and pulling one another down! This is crucial, because it is the mothers who lay the educational foundation on which the family, the school, the church and the community, can further build on.

It is therefore, imperative that women should emerge as a united force, to take their future into their own hands.

The time is NOW for women to strengthen their aspirations, to think bigger, to broaden their horizons, to get into those decision-making positions of power, so as to contribute towards the economic status and well-being of the nation!

It should be remembered that millions of people across the world, struggle with establishing a positive self-esteem within themselves, because:

- We all want to experience a sense of personal worth.
- We all want to experience a feeling of significance.
- We all want to be accepted just for who and what we are, regardless of our social status in society.

If these needs are properly satisfied, the chances are excellent for us, to go far beyond that which we ever thought we could be!

Please remember, dear fellow-women: Your worth as a human being is a birthright. No one can take that away from you.

You are unconditionally a worthy individual. **You are the masterpiece of God's creation!**

Please bear in mind dear friends, that today's world of business is a competitive one - One in which you have to perform and in which you have to be equipped with knowledge in order to be counted.

I would therefore, advise you to think BIG, and not just to be satisfied with a little or the ordinary.

Motivate yourself daily to become a leading force in business, to be the Biggest..... the Greatest.....Yes - simply the Best!

This type of self-motivation not only fires you up to realise those big dreams, but it also helps a lot to build your self-esteem. When you look at the person in the mirror, say to her:

"Hello there - you beautiful, successful women"!

Smile at her; believe in her; learn to love her - that person looking back at you in the mirror.

Say good things about her. Tell her that she is beautiful! Tell her that she is determined to make a success of her career - and that she is about to achieve great things in life.

The time for change is NOW! Women should rise, as a united force, NOW, to take their future into their own hands! Women should stop sitting back to receive with thankfulness the little they have, even though it is less than what they deserve.

It is time for women to wake up! It is time for women to emerge from the kitchen - to the Board Room and Legislative Chambers! It is time for women to use their majority numbers to act like a **majority** and not like a minority who beg for favours.

Women are not invitees on this planet! **We belong here and we have a right to be here!**

Dear ladies - I wish to conclude with the message for you to be strong and courageous in everything you do. Be forthright and determined to fulfill the great task before you. I have often expressed my admiration for the **dynamism** of women. I will never be convinced otherwise.

But this all starts with a change of heart. It starts with your firm decision to bring about that positive change in your life..... forever!

May God bless **you** abundantly - our precious and most celebrated women!
May He guide you to step out of the shadows NOW!

May He guide you on the road to self-discovery, and may you enjoy that wonderful, and most inspiring journey.....

THE TIME IS NOW!!

Thank you!