

Hitch your Wagon to the Stars: “Finding the Right Mentor”

Priscilla Pholotho

This chapter is dedicated to those who managed to rise against all odds; those who saw obstacles as opportunities to turn their situation around; those who had the courage to face resistance and walked through it; and those who persevered in the mist of doubt, fear, pain, and hardships.

If I could do it, why not you?! I know, this may sound easier said than done and maybe impossible to some of you. Some may even argue that I struck it lucky. As good as your arguments sound, I am going to challenge your mindset. Our society, particularly the black community needs people with a “can do” attitude – people who will stop wallowing in self-pity, who take accountability for their journey, and have a hunger to succeed. The world can only be a better place if all of us can acknowledge that hard work, determination, and perseverance surpass all the hardships. The mentors I’ve been fortunate to cross paths with, had all these traits.

Don’t get me wrong, the journey to success is not all rosy. It comes with its own challenges and sacrifices. There are many bumps that we will encounter as we travel through the various stages of our lives. There will be lots of mistakes that one makes, lessons and setbacks that one will encounter, and many difficult decisions to be made. However, without proper guidance from the right people who experienced life better than us, chances of wondering aimlessly are high. I’ll often refer to those right people as “destiny connectors” whom most of you famously call “mentors.”

Destiny connectors – people I regard as influential, have solid track records, resources, connections, and can link you to the next level of your life.

I’m a firm believer that in the search for success, a stepping-stone to a great future is the ability for one to be aware of and appreciate their own mistakes. I will share some insights from my personal experience with the hope that when you relate, you will find some of those lessons and successes more valuable to adopt.

My journey to date taught me that qualifications, experience, and capabilities alone are not enough for one to reach the stars. A key lesson that I learnt as a young adult is that pursuing lofty goals for oneself, often by partnering with someone that is already successful or revered, is imperative. I met Yvonne Mfola in 2009 on a business trip. I was a senior manager at a mining company and Yvonne was an executive manager at another business unit. The moment that our paths crossed, we connected. Even though our relationship started as a professional one, as we got to know each other better, it became easier to share challenges and successes in other aspects of our lives. Yvonne became a mentor, a sister, a friend, and ultimately a manager. In 2011, she was looking for a group stakeholder relations manager and approached me to join her, a position that I'm still grateful for, as it exposed me to unleash my potential and do things that I'm truly passionate about.

Even though I worked under her leadership, I never took our relationship for granted. I respected her as my leader, I respected my work, and in return, by showing appreciation to the opportunity given, I gave it my all. Yvonne ultimately left to another business unit and our relationship continued to grow even stronger. We shared the same values and similar hardships. Something that we both acknowledged and even today still share the same sentiments about, is that we knew we were both smart, hard-working, we love what we do, we excel in our jobs, we relate well with people, but are often overlooked as and when we attempt to move up the corporate ladder. We knew very well that we took networking for granted, we didn't invest any time in surrounding ourselves with destiny connectors, and were highly dependent on our capabilities and qualifications to pave the way. Sadly, life doesn't work that way, especially when one has the ambition to grow one's career further. We regarded people who networked as suck-ups, oblivious of the role that networking with people in higher and influential positions played in helping one to get ahead.

People make you.

I'm privileged and honoured to be one of the contributors to *This generation leads*, an opportunity that I never imagined or dreamed of as a young girl who witnessed the unkindness of the apartheid era of South Africa, under extremely challenging and impoverished conditions. Being the first grandchild, I grew up in a tiny four-room house that I shared with my mother, her parents and two siblings. My memories of the early stages of my childhood are that of having no role model in my family or neighbourhood. I had a routine schedule. I woke

up for school, after school go back home, knock door-to-door to sell packets of tomatoes that my grandmother nicely packaged the evening before, to make means for survival. At dinner time, I would eat whatever food was placed on my plate, sleep, and look forward to the next day. When I look back, I realise that this experience taught me a very important value that for one to succeed, hard-work, perseverance, and determination are key. As a young girl, I was relatively aware that if I don't sell all my stock, we would go to bed hungry.

Selling tomatoes was normal to me and everything looked normal in my neighbourhood. Our family's circumstances were no different, no one was better off, we were equal if not similar. My childhood friends and I were raised by uneducated single parents or grandparents. Our mothers were forced to leave home and worked far and their parents helped raise us. That for me was my frame of reference, I knew no better life than the one I was exposed to.

My adolescence stage was confronted by new environments and people that defined my ambitions. Despite my circumstances at home, as the first grandchild, the love and praises from my family groomed me to become an extremely assertive and proud child. My personality and unique stylish outfits that my late mom would bring whenever she visited home, attracted wealthy kids that I met during my high school days. My “so-called” normal life was no longer normal. I guess that peer pressure played a significant role to what I regarded as normal and acceptable. Our tiny four-room house that had an outside toilet bucket system challenged my normality in relation to my peer-group affiliation.

Every morning, I would feel even more ashamed whenever I went outside to empty dirty water from my bathtub into the outside drainage. This was a norm, and I continued with that ceremoniously, even during the rainy days and cold winter days, while my wealthy friends had access to luxurious indoor toilets and bathrooms. Added to these, they were dropped off at school, whilst I walked approximately 15km to school, and the same back home.

My upbringing bothered me. As an adolescent, I developed more complex cognitive skills and became envious of my friends' lifestyles. I questioned a lot of things that remained unanswered. In my childhood days, children were taught to never question the elders. I silently blamed my absent father in my upbringing and thought that my life would have probably been a lot better with him around. This stage of my life was a life-changing event and one that I believe has influenced my values and aspirations. I set ambitious goals for myself. I regarded education as a ticket to escape poverty and I knew I had to work hard, excel at school, and get good marks that would earn me an entrance to university. All of

these were self-motivated with no guidance. I knew I had a passion for numbers. I knew I excelled in Mathematics and Physical Sciences, but having attended public schools, I did not have any career guidance on what's next after Matric. All I wanted was to go to university, study hard, get a degree, get a job, and build a beautiful mansion with an *en-suite* bathroom for my folks. My bigger goal was that of buying myself a beautiful house and a convertible car. At that young age, that was my definition of success.

The definition of success can mean different things to different people.

Did I achieve all of that? Yes, absolutely! I think I even exceeded the goals that I considered ambitious and set for myself as a young girl. With two Master's degrees years later, I proudly built my late grandparents the mansion that I dreamt of, bought my beloved late mother a beautiful home in the suburbs, got myself that convertible car with a few properties, and landed senior management roles at various mining companies. As I grew further in my career, I realised that those early childhood goals and aspirations were no longer relevant. My perspective of what I regarded as success was no longer driven by those things that mattered most to me as a young girl. As I matured and developed in my career, I got exposed to influential people that inspired me to renew my ambitions and goals. I knew that I needed to re-evaluate my perception of success. I needed to repaint my life with a new set of brushes – and hitching my wagon to the stars was key to enable me to proceed to the next chapter of my growth.

I further learnt throughout my career development that the journey to reach the “stars” becomes even harder as one moves up the ladder. In her book *Lean in*, Sheryl Sandberg, former CEO of Facebook, stated that ladders are limiting – people can move up and down, or on and off. However, if one plans to grow one's career, it's important to be aware that careers are a jungle gym and not a ladder.

Closer to home, I can relate to Sheryl's analogy. My career journey to senior management was a lot easier than my progression to the next level. I spent more than half of my career life occupying various senior management roles. This stage, in my view is very critical in one's career development, where one's network and relevant destiny connectors tend to play a critical role. The lack of participation in something revered, or the absence of partnering with a right mentor to help shape the remaining stages of one's development can often lead to career stagnation and can be equally frustrating and demotivating for any ambitious individual.

During the early stages of my career, I was fortunate enough to cross paths with destiny connectors who were generous enough to polish my skills and share their wisdom and guidance. They influenced my life immensely as I advanced in my career. To name a few instrumental figures, Prof Otieno, my lecturer who also supervised my MSc (Eng.) dissertation, recommended me for a vacancy as a water scientist at Rand Water. In my early days as professional environmental practitioner, I was handpicked by the former power station manager at Eskom, Khumo Radebe, who at the time was appointed as the first black woman in Africa to oversee a power station. Khumo became very instrumental in my career and personal growth for more than 15 years. Her guidance and support in all aspects of my life continues to add value and challenges my level of thinking to this date.

My first corporate role as head of safety, health, environment, and sustainable development in one of the mining companies in South Africa and being the only black woman at senior management level, faced several challenges. It is then that I met the late Dolly Mokgatle, who was the chairperson of the safety and sustainable development board committee. Mining had just undergone transformation and the environment in which we operated was not conducive for a black woman in a senior management role. Coincidentally, Sis Dolly, just like all mentors I crossed paths with, noticed my perseverance, determination, and tenacity, believed in my potential and took it upon herself to invest her time to groom and nurture me. She helped me to navigate most of the challenges that I faced in my first corporate senior management role, which at the time was dominated largely by male counterparts. My role model, Yvonne Mfolo’s leadership style, and the role that she played in paving my way to secure a job that I’m passionate about, are equally noteworthy. In the 12 years that I’ve known Yvonne, she continues to unselfishly share her expertise and wisdom.

*Reaching the stars can only be possible
when one is surrounded by destiny connectors.*

During March 2018, I was fortunate to meet one of the most remarkable human beings, Mike Teke, my previous CEO and mentor. I’ve watched him closely, admired his way of thinking, followed his humble upbringing and secretly adopted him as my mentor. Mike as my CEO saw me in action and took interest in my growth by constantly challenging me to be the best version of myself. The one thing that I pride myself of is that I thrive on feedback and constructive criticism, particularly when that is meant to help me work on my developmental areas, personally or career wise, and Mike is that frank person.

One afternoon of November 2019 revealed my “aha moment”. While addressing some constructive criticism from Mike at one of the work events that I chaired, he suggested that I attend a session where he was invited as a guest speaker, and later during that day to join him to his mentorship year-end lunch session. It was on a Saturday which I had already planned a weekend away with my family, but I realised that this opportunity is one that I could not miss. Hours later, my name was included in what I regard as a generation with great minds and wisdom, a generation with ambitions to lead, influence, be movers and shakers, shape the economy, and instil a positive “can-do” mindset particularly to disadvantaged black communities. For a moment I thought, “Have I been that stagnant that I almost missed my boat? I almost gave up on my mojo!” That burning desire I had in my early childhood and adolescent stage was finally getting rekindled!

Finding the Right Mentor

As I reflect on my career journey to date, I notice a similar trend from the mentors that I mentioned above, that I was blessed to cross paths with – they all hand-picked me, and neither were they strangers to me. My observation which some of you may relate to or rather share different perspectives, is that mentors often select their protégés from people they know. These mentors have noticed their potential and saw it in their best interest to nurture such potential for their protégés to unleash it to the fullest. This connection, in my view is key to establish a long-term mentor-mentee relationship as both parties have a common goal, that is, to reach the stars.

When a mentee strives and succeeds in life, so is his/her mentor.

I further believe that the formula to finding the right mentor or be found by the right mentor is to give your utmost best in what you are doing, and deliver excellently, then your hard work and determination will speak for you. Destiny connectors always notice potential, they always have the hunger to give back by investing their time unselfishly to those that deserve it. Despite their busy schedule, they are always willing to share their wisdom, experience, and knowledge to shape and create future leaders of tomorrow. The success of their mentee is equally important to them, hence the choice of the right protégé is equally important.

*When a mentor is matched with the right mentee,
the relationship equally thrives.*

An interesting observation in my career so far is that surprisingly, my relationship with the mentors that I chose, or mentees who approached me to mentor them as a result of the employer’s compulsory development plan, never really worked. These relationships, in my view, was often a tick box exercise that formed part of mentors’/mentees’ key performance indicators, suggesting that forced relationships and connections between mentees and their mentors don’t really work and again, that’s my view based on personal experiences and observations. I further noticed that most mentees often came with an expectation that when they have a higher senior person supporting their career development, then career growth is guaranteed. When such expectations are not met, the mentee does not regard the relationship as beneficial. This experience, however, is not cast in stone and can differ from one individual to the other – again, it’s different strokes for different folks.

When you have the Right Mentor

It was Christmas eve of 2019 when I sat quietly in a waiting room at Unitas hospital, waiting for my late sick mother to wake up after being sedated with pain medication. I used my idling time to draft the unedited version of this chapter. Writing at the time helped me to de-stress from mom’s sudden traumatic illness. Days into the new year, mom’s oncologist broke the news that she was suffering from stage-4 cancer that was so aggressive that it affected both her kidneys. I felt my life reached a detour, I got scared and imagined the worst. My reason for being, my motivation to achieve more, to aim for the stars, was suddenly left with a few months if not days until her last breath. I stopped writing....

A day after the sad news was broken to the family, an e-mail with a deadline from Mike to submit our draft chapters followed. I knew I had a daunting task to complete but hated to use my personal predicament as an excuse to miss the deadline. That has always been my work ethic. As days passed and mom’s situation deteriorated, I realised that my chances of meeting the deadline were slim. I relied on my tenacity to push myself to submit my first draft, failure of which I would have missed an opportunity to be one of the authors of this inspirational book.

Mom sadly crossed over on 31 January 2020, and after her burial I struggled to pull myself together. I lost hope. I questioned my reason for being.

This traumatic life changing event really knocked me down. I suffered from depression shortly afterwards. As I battled with making that difficult decision on whether to continue writing or to stop, I reached out to my personal mentor, Themba Masondo for guidance. Themba was my chief operations officer at the time and always played a vital role in providing guidance whenever I needed it. Although Themba advised against me quitting, I still battled to continue and a few days later I decided to opt out. Themba understood and supported my decision. I also found courage to explain my situation to Mike who understood compassionately. For a moment I thought about giving up on this amazing opportunity of sharing my inspirational journey that could touch the lives and bring hope to many people who would probably relate. This opportunity knocked on my door when I least expected it. I knew I would regret my decision for a very long time, but I needed to recharge, refuel my mind, body, and soul, and seek a new meaning, a new sense of purpose for a new chapter in my life, a chapter I needed to face on my own without my beloved mother in it.

Even though I still maintained my position not to proceed, one of the wisest lessons I learnt from Mike was that life will always be cruel and as we are faced with such cruelty, we should never stop chasing our dreams. Mike and the team continued to progress writing their pieces, whilst I mourned and focused on my health. I had just finished off my day on 15 June 2020 when Mike shared a link titled Stop feeling sorry for yourself by Muzi Kuzwayo. This line in particular, “it is the people who can look up who win” spoke volumes. I felt as if it was directed to me. I knew that I was not a quitter and opting to quit really unsettled me. I contemplated on whether to take a chance and push myself harder and be on par with the team. I boldly took a chance!

Without a doubt, what I know for sure is that the presence of the right mentor will push you to achieve the impossible. All my mentors certainly played that role, and they still do. I further know that my mom, if given a second chance on earth, would have been very proud of me. I also know that all my mentors would feel equally proud.

*Great deals are achieved through
well-established and mutually beneficial relationships.*

Lessons Learned – Not playing my part enough to Hitch my Wagon to the Stars!

As I climbed the corporate ladder, I made many mistakes. I thought I knew better, I thought I had it all. Halfway through my senior management role, I neglected my networks and the people that shaped me. I used my hectic work-life as an excuse not to make time to meet with my destiny connectors. One of my values, “independent” dominated. I relied strongly on my beliefs that hard work, experience, capabilities, and qualifications would pave my way and help to advance my career. With that in mind, I neglected those key relationships that were essential to my growth, personally and career-wise. I was wrong. As much as I knew that the guidance of a right mentor is important if one aims to reach the stars, not only in a working environment, but in all aspects of life, I took that for granted. I lost my “mojo” completely. Subconsciously I was very much aware that I was becoming stagnant. I did not like that, but I did little if nothing to reach out to my mentors’ wisdom for further career and personal guidance. Little did I know that when one progresses and advances further in life, qualifications, experience, and personality traits are not enough to *hitch one’s wagon to the star*.

I made lots of mistakes along the way. I got equally frustrated when I could not secure new career growth opportunities. My career became stagnant and boring. That burning desire to reach the stars often came with self-doubts. I stopped dreaming big and aiming high. My ambitions were floating on thin ice. Surprisingly, I was much aware that the absence of setting ambitious goals and the lack of a right mentor to challenge, did not aid my growth and pushed me further, so reaching for the stars became utterly impossible.

I’m my own critique, and equally so my own enemy. I tend to believe that I did a lot better in my young adulthood days than currently. As a young girl, I had that burning fire to achieve my goals. Once I reached these goals, I redefined my goals and my aspirations to achieve more and greater things. I had dreams but those became just that, “dreams.” My right brain wanted to continue the drive to reach for the stars, but mediocrity would often find its way to pull me down and instil self-doubt. I became complacent, at times I got scared of learning further and set more ambitious goals. For the better part of my career as a senior manager, I knew I needed to step up, but I was reluctant to take that bold step of reaching out to my destiny connectors to help guide and shape my future.

Fortunately, the mentors that I had in my past life, whom I irresponsibly chose to neglect, and who could have played a much bigger role in fine-tuning and shaping my life, never gave up on me. They still believe in my potential but without my desire to step up and take control of my destiny, growth in all aspects of my life will be utterly impossible. I'm grateful for that second chance. I'm even more grateful for my mentors who unselfishly continue to invest their time and energy to walk this path with me. I'm grateful for this opportunity that enabled me to evaluate my career journey to date, be my own critique, and act and share my lessons with those in need. Personally, I regard this learning curve as a steppingstone in the right direction of my future.

I may not be now where I wanted myself to be 15 years ago, but I am liberated. I finally found the courage to re-prioritise my life and using every opportunity I get to tap into my mentors' wisdom as I enter this new chapter of my life. I boldly left my eight to five highly remunerating job in May 2021, after 23 years of serving various South African based industries, in search for my new purpose and reason for being. I made it a point to consult my destiny connectors prior to taking that bold scary step. I knew it was a risky decision, but it had to be done. During my mini break from the corporate environment, I decided to pursue my calling. I am now a proudly founder and CEO of Fabuloux Skin and Body Aesthetics, a journey that has been exciting and equally nerve wrecking. I continue to tap into the wisdom of my various mentors for guidance, encouragement, and teaching.

Getting it Right

Most of you will attest to the fact that identifying a perfect mentor can be challenging. Maybe you even formed part of mentorship programmes in your previous careers, where mentees, regarded as "high-flyers" get paired with mentors, with an expectation that mentors will influence their protégé's personal development and career growth. I've even crossed paths with some of my colleagues and peers that were fortunate enough to graduate and proceed to what we famously call "blue-eyed" boys or girls. I've watched the so-called "blue-eyed" people in action and wondered for a moment, "How did they get here?" There's nothing pretty much special about them. I could do better, had I been given the chance. In fact, I consider myself a lot smarter and more hardworking than most "blue-eyed" people, if I may say so and give myself some credit. But I noticed that all of them have one thing in common: They are pretty good with playing "corporate politics" and are well networked.

The “blue-eyed” girls and boys appear to have realised at an early stage of their careers that surrounding themselves with destiny connectors is key to opening doors that they would find difficult to open on their own.

I further had the opportunity to listen to my mentors’ stories on their journeys, how they made it, what it took to get them there and how they made use of their networks to expand their growths. All of them have mentioned names of influential people, some of which I’ve never heard, but interestingly all those people had a hand holding them in their journeys and influenced, if not shaped, their success. I would listen attentively, get inspired and fascinated by their stories. I would leave our sessions hyped up, ready to face the world and aim for the stars. Somehow that ambition would fall flat along the way and disappear with time.

I would often reflect to understand reasons why I haven’t utilised my networks and destiny connectors fully. I mean, I was truly blessed to have been hand-picked by the “big shots,” but I didn’t make use of that opportunity to my advantage. I certainly needed to do some soul searching. I realised that I did not know any better, although I considered myself smart. I somehow lacked the skills to exercise access to utilise my influential network circles. Even though I consciously made a decision not to fully rely on my mentors, and at times I ran away and shut those doors completely, the key question still remains, “Did I fully understand the role of destiny connectors? Could it be that my upbringing has dominating the lack thereof?” I bet you’ll say NO, and yes, you are right. I did not. I always had a perception that I’ll rely on my own strengths, experiences, and qualifications and regard those “blue-eyed” girls and boys as people who didn’t have that “I-can” attitude, but rather relied on other people to pave their way. I certainly didn’t want to be classified as such – a spoon-fed girl.

A big part of my upbringing largely influenced my thoughts and actions. Mind you, I learned from an early age to hunt for my prey. I learned to persevere by relying on my strengths to survive the unimaginable hardships. I rose from humble beginnings. I am the first grandchild to go to university. I secured decent jobs with attractive remunerations. I upgraded my family’s and my own poor lifestyle to a wealthy one envied by many. I am the first in my family to get a UK MBA qualification, and I am a role model to the young generation. I often get requests to mentor. My successes are noticed by strangers. All that I achieved on my own, I can still do that on my own – o boy, how wrong was I! As I look at my own history and circumstances that contributed to me being where I am at this point, I realise that on my own I could not have possibly succeeded to be where I am today.

As I reflect on my journey to date, I now know and am fully aware that my destiny connectors had an important role to play and continues to influence my personal and career growth. What is really key going forward, is how I change my mindset and perception that clinging on and constantly reaching out to suck my mentors' wisdom is not a bad idea, and that utilising my destiny connectors fully and effectively does not equate to "licking ass" either, but a key enabler for my reaching the stars.

Not everyone gets the opportunity to be hand-picked by the most influential people, but I blew my chances. I have now been granted a second chance to do it right, going forward. What I need to emphasise though, is that without personal reflection to acknowledge past mistakes and rectify them, without self-awareness, personal growth is impossible. I know I have what it takes to hitch my wagon to the stars. All the mentors whom I met in my professional life noticed that special gift. All I need to do now is to "stop holding back" and take advantage of the hand that they are extending to me.

It's never too late. That fire within me is still burning, stronger than before. I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason and when the time is right, I will take advantage of the opportunities presented to unleash my full potential. It was not by chance that Mike chose this specific topic for me to write and dedicate it to myself. As I mentioned previously, Mike has seen me in action. His choice of this topic was largely influenced by his interaction with me at my last corporate role. I feel more blessed that I had to reflect on my past, and that I could be critical and frank about how I have approached my life, personally and career-wise, to date. This process presents a new opportunity for me to challenge myself even further.

I hope that my personal experiences will help you to not make the same mistakes that I made, and further flag out some tips that will help you to search for or be chosen by the perfect mentor. What is key in this chapter, is that personal growth cannot happen unless one acknowledges their areas of improvement and past mistakes, learn from them, and address them by taking actions. It is not worth the effort to aim for the stars if you are not ready to challenge yourself and be challenged to aim high. Personal mastery is a process – it's a journey. It requires resilience, perseverance, determination, and the willingness to try and fail and try again. Master your own craft: People who master their own craft know that good is not good enough – they strive for greatness. If you match these traits with the right mentor, the world becomes your oyster.

A perfect mentor will push you to the limit. A perfect mentor will push you to set ambitious goals that you thought you would never achieve or never thought about. A perfect mentor will challenge you to clean up and get rid of those bad habits that interfere with your journey to success. A perfect mentor will inspire you with their greatness. Remember, the mentor’s role is to share their experiences and guide you to make informed decisions. Some may even help you to navigate certain doors that you were unable to open. However, the “doing” part remains your responsibility. Finally, credibility is key – always deliver what you promised. If you don’t have credibility, don’t bother to waste the precious time of destiny connectors – your aim to reach the stars will just remain a dream.

As from today, I will lead my life and not let life lead me. I have tried to achieve the next level of my career trajectory, not building internal networks and playing office politics, but have realised that it was not meant for me. I am now implementing a changed strategy because as the saying goes, stupidity is doing something the same way, over and over again, expecting different results.

I vowed and committed myself to do my utmost best, try different strategies and do well. I’m now on my re-defined journey to unleash my greatness, my potential, to transform myself and transform the life of others, to bring hope to the hopeless. That is my calling – my re-defined journey aimed to “hitch my own wagon to the stars!”

*As Isaac Newton proved from the third law of motion –
for every action, there’s an equal and opposite reaction.*



PRISCILLA KGAOGELO PHOLOTHO was born in Tlhabane Township, Rustenburg, North-West Province. She is the first grandchild, raised by her late single mother, Joyce Pholotho and grandparents. Growing up under humbling beginnings, this experience groomed Priscilla to be very modest about her hardships and successes. Her independent, result-oriented, determinant, assertive, self-starter, resilience and optimistic traits are to name a few some of the attributes behind her remarkable achievements.

Priscilla is the founder and CEO of Fabuloux Skin and Body Aesthetic Clinic, an opportunity she persuaded to fulfil her calling. She holds a BS.C (Hons) in Microbiology from the University of Limpopo, an M.Sc (Engineering) in Water and Environmental Management from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and an MBA Degree from Henley, UK. She has 23-years working experience in Environmental Management, Stakeholder Management, Sustainable Development, Transformation, Government Relations, Community Development, and Regulatory issues. She served in various Boards and Committees pertaining to her role in companies she worked for.

Being raised under unimaginable hardships, she strongly believes that by empowering the disadvantaged communities to be self-sufficient is key towards achieving an improved economy, particularly in the townships and rural areas. Community development matters are close to her heart, a passion she discovered during her M.Sc thesis when she initiated a recycling project to informal settlements residents of Kwa-Zulu Natal Province of South Africa. Given the high unemployment and poverty levels in the historical disadvantaged communities, Priscilla continues to support the disadvantaged local communities through a number of initiatives, mentors young professionals, with an emphasize on empowering young girls in particular. She hopes to grow her business further and open up more opportunities for aspiring young girls from disadvantaged communities.

She is passionate about capacitating small medium enterprises (SMEs) with the necessary skills and capabilities to market and grow their businesses, and strongly believes that part of the solution to address poverty and unemployment rates is through unleashing opportunities for SMEs and enabling them to participate in South Africa's mainstream economy.