

FEATURE: Women in Private Equity: A Q&A with Madichaba Nhlumayo, Trinitas Private Equity

The million dollar question: Why are there so few women in leadership roles in private equity?

That is indeed the million dollar question. I think it forms part of the broader question of why there are so few women in leadership roles in business globally. Research papers and books have been written by women and men across the world trying to answer that question.

Is it a lack the ambition to rise to the top? Is it because we undersell ourselves relative to our male counterparts? Is it societal definitions of the roles of men and women in society?

Is it the guilt that suddenly engulfs us (but not our male counterparts) when we become parents? Is it because work environments do not sufficiently accommodate the flexibility required by parents?

There is no simple answer. The fact is that women have the intellectual capacity, the drive and capability to lead in private equity. More importantly, I think that increasingly, we are seeing women such as Gloria Mamba, Natalie Kolbe, Soula Proxenos, Maranga Denalane, Thiru Pather and Catherine Jenkins at the forefront in private equity.

This is testament to the fact that the tide is turning, albeit slowly.

Why is this an important issue for the industry?

In my opinion, it is important because we need to have diverse views in order to make good investment decisions. In a country where 51% of the population is female, having the insight of women around the table is critical.

How can private equity fund leaders address the gender imbalance in their own firms?

Our leaders can decide to prioritise hiring and mentoring women in their firms -- not because it's a requirement of the transformation agenda in this country but because it is critical to building good teams. Further, our leaders can decide to create enabling environments in which women who choose to have families can continue to thrive professionally and not have to make the choice between their career and personal life.

Can you tell us about the events that SAVCA hosts targeting women in private equity? How do events like these benefit women in the industry?

SAVCA hosts quarterly events for women in the industry. The genesis of these events was a discussion between Erika van der Merwe (CEO of SAVCA) and Gloria Mamba (Investment Professional) regarding the need for a networking platform for women in our industry. The events are a platform for women across the industry (LPs, GPs and Advisors) to meet with a view of developing relationships. We generally have a successful woman as a keynote speaker and thereafter a networking drinks session.