

NEWS ARTICLE

EVENT: Women's Month Luncheon Event

DATE: Thursday 17 August 2017

**LEE DEN HOND INSPIRES BUSINESS WOMEN TO
CONQUER THEIR OWN "MT EVEREST"**

Lee den Hond, the third SA woman to ever summit Mt Everest, was guest speaker at the Cox Yeats women's luncheon held recently in celebration and recognition of Women's Month.

Cherese Thakur, an associate at Cox Yeats, welcomed the 60 plus top business women from various industries, saying "The purpose of this event is to show our appreciation to the women who are our business partners - women who have worked hard to get to where they are today. We salute you, and we celebrate you. As we know, from history, the business and professional world was not designed with women in mind. Through the years, dauntless women such as you have gone into those spaces, challenging norms and making your presence felt. In doing so, you have contributed to the success of your respective institutions, industries, the economy and the nation. As someone who has a long way to go in her career, I say, thank you for breaking barriers every day."

Cherese went on to say that while reading about the amazing journey of guest speaker, Lee den Hond, she was moved by two thoughts. "The first was that female strength does not know boundaries. Lee den Hond has exemplified strength on so many fronts. The physical strength to pull herself up mountains and across deserts. The mental fortitude to see a long and difficult task, through to the end. The strength of purpose and will that it took to do these demanding expeditions for the benefit of others", said Thakur.

"Not only is the strength of women boundless, it is also dynamic. In our daily lives, women show strength in so many ways – by being resilient to life's hardships, by being forceful and outspoken, by being kind, and by being unabashedly themselves – in whatever form that may take", she stated.

"The second idea that gave me pause for thought is that Lee den Hond is a woman of action. Each step she has taken is a translation of her ideals from an abstract concept to a lived reality. That, to me, is powerful. It is a lesson to all of us to be bold in whatever we do: if boldness does not come naturally, to practise, but if it does, to use that to bring out the boldness in other women. I have no doubt that after hearing about Lee's story, we will all be inspired – and emboldened – to be women of action" concluded Thakur.

The dynamism and energy Lee den Hond exuded, was palpable. She animatedly shared with guests how while sitting on her couch one Sunday afternoon after having met Lewis Pugh, the human polar bear, she came to the decision that her next adventure would be to climb “to the top of the world” Mt Everest, the year-long preparation for this goal, and the gruelling challenges of summiting Mt Everest.

With her main challenge being to conquer the cold and not to let the cold conquer her, her driving mantra became “Lee, manage the cold, don’t let the cold manage you”. She shared with guests how you have to want something so much that you will push through the darkness into the light, how no matter how bad your circumstances, how tough, **you can succeed and achieve if you don’t allow your circumstances to manage you**, have done your homework and are prepared. How with the support of loved ones, colleagues, the children of Schaumberg, the people of the country, she was continuously motivated and encouraged to succeed.

Sharing the lessons she had learnt through this gruelling adventure, Lee stressed the importance of the right mindset, determination, and that with the correct preparation, correct training, correct gear, choosing the right partners – in her instance the right organisation, together with the support of those who believe in you – every woman can achieve what she sets out to do. She went on to encourage each woman present, to conquer their own “Mt Everest”, as there is not one woman who is not facing a challenge or setting a goal.

Besides her personal goal to summit Mt Everest, a very important component of this was to raise funds for the orphans of the Schaumberg settlement and to give them a “field of dreams” (the name of the foundation she established for this community). Every step she took up that mountain – the children of Schaumberg took with her – this encouraged her to keep going when all her body wanted was sleep. Leaving guests with her key message : **“When your purpose is greater than your challenge in life, there is no finish line you cannot cross”** - Guests left feeling totally inspired to climb their own mountains and set goals for new challenges.

The Cox Yeats women professionals hosted their guests, where the ladies were treated to delicious, mouth-watering eats and desserts, champagne and a wonderful skin rejuvenating gift pack from Environ.

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