

Woman in the Industry

Pam du Plessis, Invincible Valves

Under the invaluable leadership of the award-winning Pam du Plessis, Managing Director, the company has dedicated itself to skills training and empowering women within the industry. Invincible Valves has completed the work on its new training facility at its factory in Knights and it is now planning a grand opening with the Mayor of Ekurhuleni. In the interim, however, Du Plessis says they are utilising the facility, which is a fully-equipped centre that can seat up to 20 candidates behind desks.

“The centre is equipped with a Bluetooth overhead projector, boards, laptops and valve cut away samples. The training we provide is a wide variety of modules that cover the following: Basic Business Skills, Introduction to Valves, Working with Valves, Control Valves, Product Training, Sales Training, Emotional Intelligence, Health & Wellness Training, which covers HIV/ Aids, Tuberculosis and general wellness issues,” explains Du Plessis.

This year, Pam du Plessis won an award in the “Over \$5 million and up to \$10 million in annual revenues” category at the prestigious 2017 Enterprising Women of the Year Award held in Florida. The Enterprising Woman of the Year Awards is an annual tribute to the world’s top women entrepreneurs. It is widely considered one of the most prestigious recognition programmes for woman business owners.

In order to win, nominees must demonstrate that they have fast-growth businesses, mentor or actively support other women and girls involved in entrepreneurship and stand out as leaders in their communities. Award winners are recognised in seven categories and recipients of awards represent an amazing group of woman entrepreneurs from across the USA, Europe, UK, Canada and Africa.

This incredible accomplishment has meant a tremendous amount to Pam, both personally, as a woman in the engineering industry, and for the reputation of the company. “For me personally, with it being a lifetime achievement award, I was honoured and proud to receive it. For the business, it has shown the market that we, Invincible Valves, are honourable and committed to our staff, industry and community,” she says.

August may be women’s month, but Du Plessis and Invincible Valves are committed to women’s empowerment on a continuous basis.

“We don’t only focus on the month of August, instead we run our empowerment programme all year round,” she says, adding that they hold numerous mini-events throughout the year. This is absolutely crucial, as the industry still has much room for improvement in terms of its views on women in positions of leadership. “From my perspective, the industry is still not quite accepting of women in senior positions. With that said, I have noticed a slight positive change in the perception of the industry and would welcome even more,” adds Du Plessis.



As a woman, it can be quite a challenge to succeed in a primarily male-dominated industry, as Du Plessis has experienced. “The challenges are quite real as in you are not taken seriously, you can be isolated, as the assumption is that you won’t or don’t understand. Some find it rather amusing that you “think” you can survive, so they will put you through your paces to attempt to break you.

“The easiest way to overcome any of these issues is to apply emotional intelligence to all situations, educate yourself and deliver the facts. For me personally, the journey has been an absolute adventure and I have thoroughly enjoyed being challenged as it has encouraged me to learn more, to listen more, speak less and push my own boundaries,” she explains.

Pam du Plessis is an inspiration to young women, particularly those who aspire to positions of leadership and her advice is emphatic, yet powerful. “Simply be yourself. Understand that knowledge is power and there is absolutely no need to change who you are or the way you operate. Change triggers fear, consistency creates stability and attitude is your perspective,” she says.

In terms of leadership, Invincible Valves has a well-balanced structure that allows them to work smarter and with more input. Du Plessis explains that they have corporate governance within their business with a Board of Directors made up of Executive, Non-Executive and Independent Directors. “Leadership is all about guidance and direction. Most definitely not about domination, ruling or being the boss. We have a rather different way of leading in our company as we don’t have the traditional hierarchy. Instead, we have the leader with a number of team leaders.

These team leaders have teams of five or less giving us a greater opportunity to identify the individual needs of all team members as well as complete tasks more efficiently. “This works for us because of our traditional family value system. Leadership allows for an open door policy, it allows the business to discuss and debate issues, it enables us to respect one another’s opinions and, most of all, it creates the Invincible Valves Family,” she concludes.

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