

Finding the balance

The balance in the workplace, the balance in the family and the balance between the two.



Florbela Yates,
Head of Equilibrium

Florbela Yates is the head of Equilibrium in the Momentum Metropolitan group. Equilibrium is an independent discretionary fund manager that partners with financial advisors to help them enable their advice outcomes. Equilibrium brings balance to an advice practice by delivering services and investment solutions to help clients achieve their defined investment goals.

Looking back on my career over the past 25 years, I am amazed by the progress made to transform the financial services industry into one which recognises that our differences often result in better outcomes. Long gone are the days where I'd walk into a boardroom and be the youngest person or the only woman. However, I am still shocked whenever I see how few women are represented on boards both globally and locally. I also know how far we have come.

Looking at the South African financial services industry, I immediately think of Emrie Brown, the newly appointed CEO of RMB, Delphine Govender, CIO of Perpetua Investment Managers and Nerina Visser, director at etfSA Portfolio Management, to name just a few. Within our own group, we have Jeanette Marais, deputy CEO of Momentum Metropolitan Holdings and CEO of Momentum Investments, Nontokoza Madonsela, group chief marketing officer, Sonja Saunderson, CIO of Momentum Investments, and Hymne Landman, head of Momentum Wealth. These are all exceptional women who have worked hard to get to the top.

I do believe in the power of diverse thinking. Of all the businesses that I have been involved in, the ones that grew the fastest were the most innovative, had both happy staff and clients, were made up of strategic leaders who surrounded themselves with teams of individuals from different backgrounds, combined youth with experience and then shared their learnings but encouraged debate and were willing to explore new ways of doing things. Doing what you always did often results in you staying where you are, while competitors overtake you in the race that is life.

I often joke with my colleagues that because I am female, I can multitask. And while this is said in jest, it has some truth to it – women are used to balancing multiple balls. Research conducted by statista.com showed that in South Africa, 42% of households were headed

up by women and that 38% of all households rely on the income of females. Yet, on average, women earn 35% less than men for doing the same job. That hardly seems fair, especially if you add to that the responsibility that many South African women often play in supporting extended families. And the support isn't only financial, it's emotional as well.

But our family isn't complete without the male role models. My husband's perspective is insightful and valuable and he has the ability to see things through an entirely different lens, which brings calmness and clarity to so many situations. This is no different in the workplace – I am blessed to be surrounded by younger men and women, who teach me every day how to do things differently and often more efficiently.

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I am grateful to every person who takes the time to share a little bit of their wisdom with me, so that I can improve. They point out my blind spots and show me new points of view. Every person has a contribution to make and we are only as strong as our weakest link. So, it stands to reason that we need to appreciate and care for each other.

As the mother of two gorgeous girls, Julia (19) and Megan (17), I believe that as women, we need to be role models to younger women and show them that their opinions count, their learnings matter, that they can balance a family and a career and that like those before us, we have a duty to mentor the next generation. Just as it takes a village to raise a child, so it takes an entire (diverse) team to generate value. ■