

Rashmee Ragaven: Advancing manufacturing investment in SA

By [Chamdré Emma Kippie](#), issued by [Topco Media](#)

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South Africa's manufacturing industry is one that is filled with vibrancy and potential. Playing a key role in attracting investments into the country, is Rashmee Ragaven, senior manager for the DTI (Department of Trade and Industry), is committed to advanced manufacturing in Invest SA.



Rashmee Ragaven

Ragaven has been involved with the Department of Trade and Industry for almost 10 years now, starting as an economic policy coordinator, taking up the role of strategic partnerships and customer care three years later, and finally being appointed as the senior manager. A seasoned public sector leader, Ragaven exhibits exemplary leadership in terms of making sure investors and potential investors are provided with specialist advisory services, facilitating regulatory steps such as licensing, company registration and work permits and top-notch investor aftercare.

At present, South Africa offers a combination of developed first world economic infrastructure and a growing emerging market. Its investment potential lies in its diversity of sectors and industries. Ragaven is passionate about making valuable contributions to this growth through her work for the trade and industry sector.

Congratulations on winning the Standard Bank Top Woman Public Sector Leader Award! This is an amazing accolade. How has this recognition empowered you in your position, thus far?

I do think the award acknowledges the work that the public sector does and, more specifically, the role that women play in the sector. It has encouraged other women, including women in the private sector, to lend a hand in helping with further empowerment. I also believe that the award allows more people to be aware of the outstanding contributions that the public sector continues to play and has strengthened the relationships that one has with business and other institutions in the public sector.

Please could you tell us a little bit about your upbringing, and how you eventually decided that this would be the

right career choice for you?

I was brought up in a family with a very strong value and belief system. The constant was always to help others and work in an ethical and principled manner. This has continued to influence how I work. My first job was working for the government of India in the commercial section, where I dealt with business enquiries and investment. I loved the interaction and engagement with the businesses and this fuelled a passion that has led me through my various portfolios into advising and supporting foreign direct investment. It was the passion and love that I had for this type of work, and having the best of both worlds that led me to understanding businesses and advising them on how to optimise their investments in the country.

I then went onto a communication portfolio and joined a US-based multinational, in which I was negotiating with the government on support for the company wanting to expand in the country. It was at this point that I knew that Investment and attraction of investment is where I wanted to be. I am privileged that I am in the role of advising companies to place their manufacturing facilities in the country, and that I get to influence and advice companies and the public sector on the importance of such investments.

What does a typical day in your job position look like? What major tasks do you focus on?

A typical day is meeting with potential investors and providing support to companies that may be interested in placing their investments in the country, and engaging with companies that are having issues with manufacturing projects, in terms of implementation. Major tasks include developing a strategic engagement framework for the company, based on their business case for investment, creating an awareness of the services we offer in supporting the foreign direct investors along their investment lifecycle and journey and connecting and facilitating companies with different individuals and institutions that impact on their business.

What is the most rewarding part of your job at the DTI?

The most rewarding part is being able to convince an investor to invest in the country, and being able to resolve an issue that impacted on the implementation of a project. Also, being able to articulate a position or advocate a change that results in a more conducive and enabling environment for the investor, which allows for the optimisation of the investment, is something I enjoy being a part of.

What have been the major obstacles in your career and how did you overcome them?

Being in a manufacturing environment, which is male dominated, requires you to ensure that you are an expert in the subject matter of the field in which you operate. Accelerated learning and being able to demonstrate ability, competence and expertise, is what will earn trust and build your confidence. I was involved in the automotive sector and was given six months to understand the company business and industry, and represented the company at many forums. Whilst this posed a challenge initially, I learnt very quickly to understand the high level and detail of subject matter so that I could articulate arguments with confidence and authority. It was this that led to the opportunity for me to present at the IBSA Summit, in 2006, on behalf of the automotive sector, with less than a year experience within the sector.

What are you seeking to manifest this year, in terms of goals you've set for yourself as a senior manager?

I am going to build on my skills and further my studies. I also plan to spend more time building the capacity and capability of a stronger team to be able to execute tasks better. I'd also like to use my platform to empower other women to go after their dreams and aspirations.

Do you have any book recommendations for emerging women in the public sector?

Becoming by Michelle Obama and *The Leader Who Had No Title* by Robin Sharma.

What advice do you have for individuals who aspire to work within the trade and industry sector?

You have to have a passion for business and be focused on being customer-centric. You must also have good listening skills, as you are there to respond to enquiries and issues and, most importantly, you need to have a sense of urgency in resolving these issues. As you progress, learn the lessons that come your way and develop a mindset of being solutions-driven.

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