

Become the next global female ad-tech pioneer



By Leigh Andrews

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Ever wondered if your experiences in the mobile ad-tech space are markedly different from those of females from the other end of the globe? Wonder no more - Australia-based Nicole Liebmann, head of mobile for Exponential Interactive and SA's own Candice Goodman managing director of Mobitainment, share their thoughts, tips and techniques below.

I love it when a plan comes together – especially when it's one that's powered by connected females who want to share their experiences and celebrate women in media, and particularly those working in mobile across the globe. While it may seem disingenuous to focus on just the females here, there's no denying we face a specific set of challenges in terms of breaking biases, confronting stereotypes and proving their worth, especially in the realm of ad-tech, where you have to be clever, context-savvy and clued in to succeed.



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The below therefore serves as a friendly comparison on what motivates and inspires ad-tech females in their differing regions, as well as exposing the challenges they continue to face, or have overcome, to get to where they are today.

First up to bat is Goodman, providing the 'married South African mom' perspective. With Mobitainment described as a "mobile-first marketing technology enabler," she's one of SA's brightest lights in this regard. Last year alone she was announced as DMASA's direct marketer of the year as well as the SME of the year at its most recent Assegai Awards ceremony.



Goodman with her Direct Marketer of the Year award from DMASA's Assegais.

Little wonder as Mobitainment's focus for 2017 is on sharing, connecting and bettering the local ad-tech space, specifically through highlighting mobile innovation and localising global solutions for the South African market. She juggles motherhood and a career with the best of them thanks to her to-do list, which helps her stay organised, adding that being a mom is actually the reason she left the corporate world to start her own business.



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The turning point in her career was having a husband who believed in her, as that allowed her to build that self-confidence, and her business, knowing that she could do whatever the "big boys" could and in her own way!

Next up is Liebmann. Involved in the mobile industry for almost eight years, which she says is "since the very first year of mobile," Liebmann is a digital native involved in anything and everything to do with mobile advertising from strategy, through design, implementation and client management at Exponential, which delivers interactive advertising experiences with an aim to transform the way audiences interact with brands across desktop and mobile.

Profiled as one of [AdNews Australia's](#) Young Guns earlier this year as a result of her digital prowess and ability to make the space buzz, her personal motto is: "Fortune favours the brave" – definitely relevant to anyone involved in ad-tech.

While neither has experienced any overt bias due to their gender during their careers,



Nicole Liebmann, head of mobile for Exponential Interactive.

many aren't as lucky. Here, Liebmann and Goodman let us in on their specific career trajectories, the advice they would give to their younger selves before their first day of work and how to get around the barriers hindering women's success in the mobile/ad tech space.

■ **Let's kick off with a comment on the overall state of the mobile/adtech space in your specific region and how that compares with trends you've seen from the rest of the world.**



Candice Goodman, MD of Mbbtainment.

Goodman: I think that South Africans, because of our developing country, tend to look for solutions to our problems from countries like the US and Europe. We have to realise that we need to find African solutions for African problems.

“ Africa has led the way with world firsts in this industry like pre-paid airtime, USSD and the Please Call Me, and in Africa with mobile payments like the M-Pesa. ”

I believe that as Africans, we are leading the way in terms of marketing with a purpose, and know that “doing good, is good business” because our customers demand that we care about them, and their community.

Liebmann: When I first started in the digital industry, it was extremely common to look at larger markets such as the US or the UK to help develop an understanding

of where the AU market will be or how it will grow within the next year or so. Fast forward to today and we have not only caught up but we are making a big impact on our own. Regarding mobile specifically, from a user point of view – we love these devices! We have one of the highest smartphone penetrations per capita globally and advertisers are taking note. Advertisers have the ability to leverage these devices to make meaningful connections on a consistent basis with the vast majority of our population. Many companies such as eMarketer are predicting that 2017 will be the year that mobile ad spend in Australia surpasses TV ad spend and with this investment in mobile comes more innovation and opportunity from an ad tech point of view. Australia is definitely a market to keep an eye on!

■ **That's quite something. Do barriers exist that hinder women's success in your regional market in the mobile/ad tech space? How has the attitude towards women working in this space changed during your career to date?**

Goodman: Not exactly barriers that hinder women, because I believe we always find a way around, over, or through them, but I do find that women carry a bigger load: having to run a household and care for the children – they are expected to have shopping done, children fetched and dropped, food prepared, house cleaned and then, if she gets a phone call that her child is ill, she hears the inevitable comment as she rushes out the door: “Half-day, huh?” I never wanted to hear that again – and hence we have built Mbbtainment to have the caring spirit where women can be women, moms, wives and workers, too.

In the roughly 25 years since I entered the tech/digital and marketing industry, I see a lot more women in the boardrooms, and at industry conferences, not only in the audience, but also speaking at the podium.



Liebmann in action.

Liebmann: In Australia, there has been a real shift away from traditional gender barriers and biases and this shift continues today. Workplace diversity and equality have been highly considered topics for the last couple of years and it has been really great to see how businesses have responded positively.

One of the greatest things I've seen is the encouragement of more women to work in traditionally male dominated roles – such as developer and engineer roles. I remember back to when I did my IT degree at university, when observing the gender breakdown of students, I was definitely outnumbered! Today there is a much more nurturing foundation that brings to light the many different opportunities and careers that exist for girls in tech.

❏ ***What has been the biggest challenge in your career?***

Goodman: Knowing how to switch off: My laptop, my phone and my mind. Being in the technology business means that you are connected and “at work” 24/7... and being in your own business makes you want to put each of those 24/7 hours to work. Knowing when and how to “switch off” has been a huge challenge that I am still battling with, especially when you love what you do.

Liebmann: I would have to agree with Candice! I find it incredibly hard to switch off, especially as we are living in such a connected world. I was recently able to take some time for a holiday and whilst travelling, I really made a conscious effort to switch off. Although challenging at first, by the end of the trip I felt refreshed, rejuvenated and ready to tackle everything that lay ahead.

❏ ***What does it take to become a female leader in the mobile/adtech space?***

Goodman: We need to understand our strengths... Don't assume that as a woman, you have to lead in the same way we have seen many men do it. We can lead in a womanly fashion: with compassion, collaboration and care for others – and that also works – and better, might I add!

Liebmann: It's important to have confidence, resilience, the capability to think outside of the box and to be driven. Like any great leader, we really need to maintain a strong belief in something as this will ultimately help to not only develop our beliefs but also successfully demonstrate our values.

❏ ***What advice would you give to your younger self before your first day of work, and what advice would you thus give young women of today who are considering a career in your industry?***

Goodman: You can't choose how you were born into this world, but you can choose to use your God-given talents at every opportunity you are given. So take every opportunity that comes. It's all about “creating dots” along the way, and sooner or later you will connect them! But you need to listen and take note of everything:

- Always listen to your lecturers or teachers – absorb and assess.
- Always listen to your customer's needs and satisfy them and your business will grow.
- Always listen to your colleagues, as they may have experienced a point of view you haven't.

Digital is a great career for a woman – it allows us the mobility and flexibility of hours that will allow us to be successful working women, mothers and wives.

Liebmann: Don't be afraid to ask questions! The world of media is so fast paced that often there aren't the proper resources available to help fully train you when you start a new job. Questions are a great way to help you learn, and with knowledge comes power.

Be confident and let that confidence provide a platform for your voice to be heard. It's important to develop and voice your opinions – even if they differ from those around you. Varying perspective helps a business grow and develop in ways that perhaps it otherwise would not have.

Learn the difference between tasks that are urgent and tasks that are important. This will be key in helping to prioritise those continually growing to-do lists.

Always be resourceful and lastly, go for it! This industry is very supportive of women and on top of that, it is exciting and cutting edge and there is never a dull moment.

Lots to learn from. If you've followed a similar career path, share your experiences in the comment section below. You can also click through to the [Exponential](#) and [Mobitainment](#) press offices for more, and be sure to track all the latest additions to our [#WomensMonth](#) special section.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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