

# Be part of the solution, not the problem



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Executive head of marketing for Vox Telecom, Vera Romano has been in the business for 20 years and says that meeting brilliant, crazy and inspirational people across all channels have contributed much to her knowledge and to the kind of leader she wants to be.

Here, she comments on female representation in the telecommunications industry, the obstacles women face in the workplace and the female role models that inspire her to dig deep and to reach for the stars...

## ■ Tell us more about yourself and what you do.

I am a mother, daughter and wife, and also the executive head of marketing for Vox.

## ■ What have been some of your highlights throughout your career?

Over the course of 20 years there have been many, namely:

- The explosion of online marketing and knowing that I was going to be part of something that was going to change the way in which we marketed to consumers.
- Meeting brilliant, crazy and inspirational people across all channels that have contributed so much to my knowledge and to the kind of leader I wanted to be.
- Launching my first corporate website. It was an incredible feeling of many minds coming together.
- Working for two successful startups and seeing how different those environments were versus the corporate one.



Executive head of marketing for Vox Telecom Vera Romano. Image supplied.

## ■ Who are some of the female role models or mentors you look up to?

Locally, Heidi Brauer (CMO for Hollard). I met Heidi many years ago at a conference and she agreed to mentor me during a key time in my career. She's an incredible, inspiring and highly experienced marketer that helped and guided me in a different and positive direction for my career, and to know that there were all kinds of different marketers in this world.

Internationally, Sheryl Sandberg (COO for Facebook).

*“When Sheryl lost her husband a few years ago, she wrote an open letter to him on Facebook. I remember reading the letter and tears streaming down my face and thinking, ‘How does she do it?’ Her strength, love and resilience in having to manage to the loss of a husband, carrying on as a mother whilst being the COO for Facebook showed me that women have so much strength and will continuously embrace their vulnerabilities. It allows us to be real.”*



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Leigh Andrews 14 Aug 2018



## ■ Comment on female representation in your industry.

Typically, telecommunications did tend to be more male than female dominated, and whilst I can't comment on representation on other corporates, I can say that at Vox there is a very strong commitment to giving everyone an equal chance to not only improve and upskill themselves but to grow within the company.

I am proud to be part of a business that does so much to empower women – from hosting breast cancer awareness campaigns to honouring women during women's month, as well as our learnership programmes that focus on empowering our young and rising women in the company who have shown the will and potential to learn and grow.

■ **What obstacles do you think women face in the workplace today and what can they do to overcome these?**

“ My philosophy has always been to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. It is easy to list all the things that aren't working, but we need to ask ourselves as women, 'What are we doing to overcome these as a united front?' ”

More needs to be done to come together, have open discussions and to come up with solutions that we can take back to our organisations and see how we can influence everyone (not only women) in the organisation for improvements. We need to speak for everyone that doesn't have a voice and push for changes that need to happen.

■ **This Women's Month, what is your word of encouragement to aspiring women in business?**

Being a working mom in business is tough. You miss out on so much of your children's lives and at times it is heart-wrenching, but a rule I try to stick to is that when I get home, even if it's for only one hour, that that hour is solely focused on my child and that she has my complete and full attention.

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## ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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