

The glass ceiling isn't shatterproof - Sanisha Packirisamy

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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There will be times when you are a lone female voice in a room of male counterparts, but it is important to trust your skills, express your point of view, stand firm and walk tall, says Sanisha Packirisamy, economist at Momentum Investments.



Sanisha Packirisamy, economist at Momentum Investments

"Be yourself and don't be afraid to play to your strengths as a female, including using effective communication and adding to the diversity of views. I also think it is important for women to help other women in the workplace. Sharing your journey with other women can help to overcome many gender-based challenges in the workplace," is her advice to young women looking to enter the financial services industry.

Packirisamy says the best advice she ever received was that no glass ceiling is shatterproof.

“ *Self-perception can perpetuate gender inequality if one truly believes the glass ceiling is unbreakable.* ”

Born in the friendly city of Port Elizabeth, Packirisamy says her parents' dream was for both her elder sister and herself to be exposed to opportunities that they never had and having a university education was part of that. She studied at the University of Cape Town on a scholarship for actuarial science, after which she landed a job in Johannesburg.

■ Describe a typical work day

A typical work day for an economist working in financial markets does not necessarily stick to the traditional nine to five workday hours. In a globalised economy, there is always a market open at any time of the day and fresh data is being released. Keeping abreast of global and local economic, political and financial market developments is a key part of an economist's career and helps one to predict the movement and pace of financial markets and economies in general. Financial market economists spend a large portion of their day analysing data and researching current trends in economic activity and aggregate human behaviour to predict economic scenarios for the future. Moreover, there are always opportunities to meet with government officials, academics and industry experts which broadens and challenges one's thinking.

■ What do you love most about your job?

This job is very rewarding for naturally curious thinkers who are open to lively debate from many different perspectives and

enjoy formulating structured thinking around those views. The beauty of economics lies in its ability to apply a structural framework to most real life situations that we can all identify with, ranging from issues dealing with consumer behaviour to those involving trade-offs.

■ ***If you could do any other job what would it be?***

I have been fortunate enough to find a job that perfectly complements my interests in such a way that a big part of my job does not feel like work.

■ ***What are the trends in your industry?***

Ongoing digital transformation, big data and disruptive innovation are constantly changing the competitive landscape in the financial services industry.

■ ***What are the challenges?***

While technological advances bring a number of opportunities with it, they also pose a significant business challenge as new competitors are entering the market and challenging legacy financial institutions of a larger size by addressing changing consumer expectations. Regulatory conditions pose an additional challenge to the industry, requiring firms to build systems and processes to comply with changing industry standards.

■ ***What would you say to your younger self?***

Cultural norms and economic realities may hinder your ability to be ambitious, but it is possible for you to write your own success story. Live your dreams and be the woman you look up to.

■ ***What do you do to relax?***

We live in a noisy and distracting world and it is important to take time out for yourself every once in a while. You cannot pour from an empty cup! In my spare time, I like to unwind with a book or spend time outdoors walking my dogs. Yoga is another way I enjoy spending my free time as it really helps to soothe my mind and keeps me present and focused.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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