

ECSA Partners with Investec to host a Women in Leadership Breakfast

Society has for the longest time held onto the narrative that women are not able to exist in the same room let alone, collaborate, and empower each other professionally.

Over the years however, this narrative has shifted as females have partnered to transform the corporate space and advocate for female representation in boardrooms, and this was evident at the Women in Leadership Breakfast where four formidable women in the built environment industry shared their journeys to success and highlighted the challenges encountered.

The Women in Leadership Breakfast was hosted by the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) in partnership with Investec to celebrate women's month under the theme "***Courage to Change***".

The stories told by the panel members resembled triumph, perseverance, diligence but more importantly identifying and creating opportunities that would lead one to their desired existence within the professional space.

The common denominator with the panel members was their ability to institute change in their places of work and advocate for the development and progression of women, not because of their gender but their competence and qualifications to perform a function their male counterparts can.

The four-member panel including ECSA President Refilwe Buthelezi Pr Eng, Innocentia Mahlangu Pr Eng; a Specialist Project Manager in the mining, metals and infrastructure sector, Ms Nana Mhlongo: Chief Operations Officer for the Built Environment Council (CBE) and Ms Prudence Mashalane Head of Client Acquisition Banking at Investec was facilitated by Ms Latisha Maharaj: Head of Commodities and Engineering at Investec.

Speaking at the Breakfast, Engineer Buthelezi narrated her story of breaking barriers, opting for the unconventional route of moving from a Head Office environment to working at a Power Station and exercising her power to lobby support and negotiate in the boardroom. She added to say, to transform the engineering sector, she has and continues to play an instrumental role in ensuring female representation on boards, councils as well as key positions of influence.

To give context to her career progression she said, "I am uncomfortable with being comfortable" and this has been her driving force accelerating her to success, growth, and professional development.

To close off the intimate gathering, delegates were afforded the opportunity to seek insight from panel members on matters such as their leadership styles, whether there is room for servant leadership in the current corporate environment as well as how female leaders show their intent to progress the next female leader.