

Business Leader Series



Allyson Lawless Saice

Leader of 8 000

Full name: Allyson Lawless
Position: President of the South African Institution of Civil Engineers (Saice)
Main activity of the company: The professional body for civil engineering professionals in South Africa and beyond – involved in the academic and professional development of members, and the development of the industry through networking and input into the country's national development agenda
Date and place of birth: Durban, October 1, 1952
Education: Matric, Maritzburg, 1969; BSc Civil Engineering, Natal University, 1973; MSc, Structural Engineering, Imperial College, London 1976
First job: Graduate-in-training at Ove Arup in 1974
Size of first pay package: R240
First job with present group: Served on the information technology committee in 1981 and held chair of the joint structural division in 1993 and 1994
Value of assets under your control: Not applicable
Number of people under your leadership: 8 000
Management style: Innovative, persuasive, with attention to detail
Personal best achievement: Winning two canoeing gold medals at the SA Games in 1969
Professional best achievement: Being the first female president of Saice
Person who has had the biggest influence on your life: Many, but mostly my mother, mother-in-law and my husband
Person who has had the biggest influence on your career: Resident philosopher, strategist and adviser, my husband, Mark
Person you would most like to meet: Björn Borg – 20 years ago!
Business person who has impressed you the most: Those with energy, creativity and passion, for example Harriet Amisshah-Arthur and Sylvia Asare, professional engineers who are the driving force behind a women-in-engineering initiative in Ghana, filled with the passion to develop their country's engineering capacity
Philosophy of life: In the words of Winston Churchill: "I like things to happen and, if they do not happen, I like to make them happen". Hence my presidential call to go MAD – go Make a Difference
Biggest ever opportunity: Starting my own business, Allyson Lawless, aged 27, to develop and supply engineering software
Biggest ever disappointment: Women were not selected for the Springbok canoeing teams in the 1960s and early 1970s
Hope for the future: That South Africans work together to deliver our Renaissance
Favourite reading: Technical journals and motivational material
Favourite TV programme: Waiting for God
Favourite food and drink: Seafood and sparkling wine
Favourite music: Beethoven
Favourite sport: Canoeing
Car: Mercedes-Benz
Pets: Border Collie, Jessie, and mutt, Maggie
Miscellaneous dislikes: Lazy people and those displaying no initiative
Favourite other South African company: Stellenbosch Farmers Winery for making stress-relieving bubbly
Favourite foreign company: Estée Lauder for creating the perfume that makes me feel special
Married: Mark Lawless, August 30, 1975
Children: Alistair, 12 and Kate, 5
Clubs: Crazy Mother's Club, Institution of Structural Engineers, London, and Institute of Municipal Engineers, South Africa



Björn Borg