

Event management & conferencing

Celebrating women

by Abby Wintgens

August is Women's Month! Meetings SA is celebrating the driving force behind South Africa's meetings and events industry – women.

Making it happen

With her company Solutions Group being better known to the industry and her clients alike as Stephanie Moss Solutions – as she's very much of the brand – Stephanie Moss has been in the meetings and events business for almost 18 years. Moss' background lies in marketing and advertising and since starting her own company, she's avidly developed a forte for all that goes into organising B2B events. Moss has two young children with whom she spends a lot of time and manages to juggle doing family-orientated things, work admin and 'thinking stuff', all at the same time.



Stephanie Moss, managing director of Solutions Group

What have you done/are you doing in terms of breaking new ground in the industry?

One of our USPs would have to be the way that I am able to visualise things, from start to finish. This enables me to pay huge attention to details in all I do, which sets us apart from the rest. With having been around for so long, I've developed outstanding relationships with people and have become very well known in the industry (some may see me as a 'dragon lady', but that's fine by me because I know what I want for our clients and I want things done the right way). Suppliers know me for expecting extremely high standards in the delivery of their services, which only assists in getting those value-added services our clients so enjoy.

What are your biggest challenges as a PCO/events organiser?

The industry has become highly competitive and with it having such a low barrier to entry – as you don't need much financial backing and infrastructure to start an events company – this does certainly 'chip away at the pie'. For many in the hospitality and tourism industries, the staffing levels have become a huge challenge as it's very difficult finding people with the right amount of experience. The younger employees of today embody a different ethos, work ethic and level of productivity, making things completely different to even a decade ago.

Have you any plans to grow your business or advance your career?

With this year having been a phenomenal one so far, I'm certainly looking at increasing my

staff complement. I'm also always thinking laterally, in terms of growing our services through various service providers and, on the social media side of things, I'm looking at some very interesting prospects to increase our scope during the remainder of 2010 and 2011.

As an organiser, what is it that drives you?

Although it's a cliché, I truly have found my calling in life. I really love what I do, I love the attention to detail, I love the networking opportunities, I love the client liaison and I love doing deals.

I still get excited when clients call me wanting me to organise an exclusive day conference for their six executive board members, right through to doing a big dealer or franchise conference, or a family day for 6 000.

What contributions are you making in terms of skills development?

We pay our levies and when we can fit it in, we do go on small skills development courses. Frankly, we don't have time to go on week-long courses. No one is currently doing an MBA at Solutions, though I am very amenable to people wanting to further themselves.

If you change one thing about the industry, what would it be?

The expectations of clients with pitches and the way that they get between three and eight companies to pitch on jobs, on the same request for proposal, has really put a damper on us (and many others) trying to remain unique and attempting to get better pricing as the hotels know that they have to pitch eight times over.

This has become a gross waste of time – which is money – for hotels, PCOs and suppliers alike.