



HEATHER SONN,
34, DEPUTY CEO OF AN
OPERATIONAL FINANCIAL-
SERVICES COMPANY

When, like Heather Sonn, you've been voted one of the top 100 people in SA to watch by the *Mail & Guardian*, you've probably done some awesome work in the big-business sector. And she has. She was CEO of Legae Securities (a subsidiary of Wiphold), the first black-owned, female-headed stockbroking firm in SA, before becoming Wiphold's deputy CEO in 2006.

WHICH WOMEN DO YOU ADMIRE AND WHY? My mother, who made huge sacrifices to keep us well adjusted and secure; my godmother, who battled many challenges but remained positive; and my cousin, who taught me that spirituality is an anchor.

WHAT MAKES A WOMAN AWESOME? The ability to conquer the ego and to address society's dualities. In business, for example, you have to be commercially viable yet socially responsible; manage the 'bottom line' but remember the people; and be a force in one field while caring for your family at home.

ZUKISWA MATAMO,
35, MOUNTAINEER

Zukiswa Matamo, a domestic worker, has climbed to the top of Mt Kilimanjaro and Mt Elbrus. In a project called Isicongo, she – with her friends Evelina Tshabalala and Nomawethu Nika – plans to summit the Seven Summits of the World. Her climbing career started when she tried to shed a few post-pregnancy kilograms by running regularly, and she ended up competing in marathons. In 2005 she completed her first climb up Table Mountain. A year later, she reached the top of Kilimanjaro. She and her two friends are aiming to be the first black women to summit Everest.

WHAT MAKES A WOMAN AWESOME? Confidence. A woman who believes in herself enough to do anything she wants, without letting self-doubt get in the way, will always shine.

WHAT DO YOU REGARD AS YOUR GREATEST CAREER ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR? Becoming a part of Isicongo has given me a chance to show SA women they can conquer anything, even the highest mountains in the world.

RAYANA AMEERODIEN,
28, KICK BOXER
AND TRAINER

Rayana Ameerodien owns a kick-boxing academy in Cape Town, where she teaches self-defence, life skills and Thai boxing. In 2001, she won the SA Thai Boxing Bantamweight Champion title. After meeting a world champion kick boxer, she decided to take the sport seriously, becoming the first female promoter in the Cape fight industry and in Thai boxing in SA. 'The progression from fighter to trainer, referee, judge and now promoter has been a natural and exciting one,' she says. She was a finalist in this year's Cape Town Extraordinary Women Awards.

WHAT'S THE MOST AWESOME THING YOU'VE DONE? Besides becoming a fighter, going bungee jumping and restoring a dying puppy to full health.

WHAT KEEPS YOU DOING WHAT YOU DO? The positive change that my sport-and-life-skills programme creates in people. To see the development of their self-esteem is truly inspiring.

LOUISE CARVER,
27, MUSICIAN

She's been writing music since the age of 11 and was signed to a record label at 15. Louise Carver has since become a respected name in the SA music industry for her self-penned, introspective lyrics and gently melodic pop-rock sounds.

Listen out for her album, *Silent Scream*, which she wrote, sang and co-produced. A classically trained pianist, Carver also has an honours degree in politics, philosophy and economics.

WHAT DO YOU REGARD AS YOUR GREATEST CAREER ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR? After working on my last album for three years, I was rewarded when the first single, *Empty Fantasy*, reached number one on 5FM. It wasn't only a great relief – I could also finally breathe easy and enjoy the ride.

WHAT COULDN'T YOU LIVE WITHOUT? Mainly the things I take for granted – my family, best friends, my piano, SA weather, love, sex, dark chocolate, animals, nature ... but most importantly, the freedom to choose what I can't live without! ▶