



**WE ARE  
SUPPORTING  
MORE WOMEN  
THAN WE HAVE  
HISTORICALLY**



**DR LESLEY LEE | EMPLOYER**



**Name of Company:**  
Volkswagen  
South Africa



**Sector:**  
Manufacturing



**Number of  
Employees:**  
3619



**Position in  
Company:**  
Division Head



**Location:**  
Cqeberha,  
Eastern Cape



**Percentage  
of Female  
Employees:**  
22%



**Company  
Size:**  
Large



## WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IS A STRONG FOCUS

In everything that we do at Volkswagen, transformation is top of mind. We are passionate about empowering all employees. At the Volkswagen Group, getting women into leadership positions is a really strong focus and we are working hard to achieve that at Volkswagen South Africa as well.

## MENTORING AND COACHING TO SUPPORT OUR WOMEN

The learning and development of all our employees is a key focus and we have a Learning Academy comprising five different academies: National Sales Organisation, Technical Area, Production, Leadership and Commercial. We have structured talent programmes for all employees and align with the Group on how we develop, attract, and retain talent.

Some of our programmes include business schools. Many of our programmes include mentors or coaches to support employees and we have processes to provide feedback to the line manager regarding their employee and the development.

We also have some compulsory programmes mandated from the Group. One example is our Diversity Lab series which encourages people to look at their biases and perceptions around diversity.

## INCREASE IN WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS

Although most of our technical expertise courses provide support for interested employees, regardless of gender, we have noticed an increase in women interested in participating in our programmes. We have also found that the provision of coaching, mentoring, and support to employees has resulted in an increase in managerial positions.

On a positive personal note, my experience in the industry has been that I am treated exactly the same as the men in the business. I don't feel intimidated in a male dominated environment, and I personally have not experienced challenges working my way up the ladder. It is rewarding to be involved in development, and as leaders we are given the opportunity to empower others.

Seeing the multiplier effect on team cohesion, performance driven results from the team, and seeing how people are valued, are their own rewards.

## ACCESSING EXTERNAL FUNDING

We receive additional funding from the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) for certain programmes, such as apprenticeships, learnerships and internships, but this funding is not only for women. Everyone on the programme, whether male or female benefits from the funding. We do not have any difficulties with accessing the funding as we ensure that the various milestones are met at each level of the project plan.

## ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO STUDY ENGINEERING

Exposing female students to engineering is important to encourage them to take an interest in the industry. This can start at high school with career expos and continue to tertiary education where the details of various engineering professions need to be explained. Companies can also assist to enhance women's representation and career growth in the sector by offering more programmes that give women the opportunity to spend time in the working environment.

It would be great to invite students to spend a few weeks during the holidays in the engineering professions and in production. This would give them a better idea of what is involved and provide them an opportunity to see if they would be comfortable in this career.

 <b>LEARNING ACADEMY COMPRISING FIVE DIFFERENT ACADEMIES:</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>NATIONAL SALES ORGANISATION</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>TECHNICAL AREA</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>PRODUCTION</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>LEADERSHIP</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>COMMERCIAL</b>



WE HAVE ALSO FOUND THAT **THE PROVISION OF COACHING, MENTORING, AND SUPPORT TO WOMEN HAS RESULTED IN AN INCREASE IN WOMEN IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS.**



It is also important to have crucial conversations like this one as it encourages us to talk about difficult topics, alerts us to challenges, and raises questions around the techniques we should be using to make a difference.

### ROLE MODELS

I think there are fewer challenges for women these days as equal opportunities are growing in a lot of companies, however, role models are still important. If women can find someone they look up to, who matches their aspirations, it gives them a blueprint to follow going forward. Women need other women in their lives to support each other.

### IT STARTS WITH YOU

I do think the most important aspect is the ability to reflect as a leader. Support from the communities where we work and live are important, along with mentorship to provide guidance where needed, but it starts with yourself. You need to understand who you are and what you stand for before you can get guidance from others. You need to be driven to achieve unity, passion, and professionalism in this industry.



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