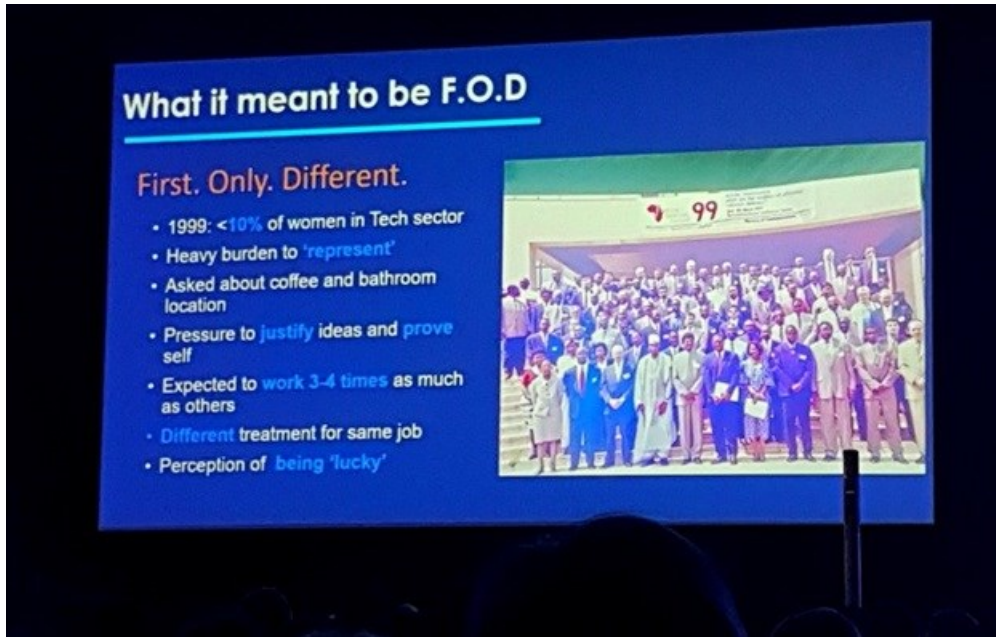


12 Badass lessons on winning as the First, Only or Different

By Leigh Andrews

25 Mar 2019

I attended last week's #WinTechAfrica or Women in Tech Africa conference held at the Century City Convention Centre and walked away buzzing with motivation to do more and be more, especially if it means being the First, Only or Different (FOD). Here's what you missed.



One of Ampah's slides from her Women in Tech Africa presentation.

Women in Tech is a global event series that started in London three years ago and has since grown across the world, aimed at increasing diversity across industries beyond the gender diversity vertical to include race, ethnicity, ability and invisible diseases, especially as 20 million people are expected to enter the workforce in the next decade.



#WinTechAfrica: Diversity isn't nice. It's crucial

Doug Woolley 13 Mar 2019



Headline speaker Haidi Nossair, currently marketing director for the Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Dell shared her experience growing up in Egypt and said diversity is no longer a nice to have, it's a business must.

Unfortunately, many businesses still have blind spots when it comes to gender diversity, and we can't solve the problems that we don't see or understand clearly, so we need to speak about the problem.



#WinTechAfrica: Tech attracts women, but more are needed at the top

Haidi Nossair 15 Mar 2019



Mavis Ampah, whose career highlights include working with the World Bank to privatise Ghana's telecommunications,

shared the sentiment, explaining her motivation as follows: “I got to Ghana and I was really tired of making expensive phone calls on dirty phones.” That’s spurred her to put in the hard work and follow her passion.



#FairnessFirst: How to handle being 'the only' in the boardroom

Leigh Andrews 10 Dec 2018



Ampah says while there are now up to 30% of women in the tech sector in sub-Saharan Africa, which beats the figures of Silicon Valley, unfortunately, experiences haven’t changed as much.

Drawing on her own experiences, she shared 12 ‘career lessons from a badass’ on upskilling fast to identify your path to seniority, especially if you’re the First, Only or Different (FOD).

1. Stop feeling lucky

Saying your role is based on luck implies you didn’t do anything to earn it.

Ampah echoes the thinking of Shonda Rhimes’ *Year of Yes* in this regard – acknowledge that you are smart and talented and bravely on this FOD path – it’s [not about luck](#).



One of Ampah's slides from her Women in Tech Africa presentation.



One of Ampah's slides from her Women in Tech Africa presentation.

2. Take advantage of opportunities that come your way

Start with your passion and realise that activity does not mean productivity. Don't just focus on the big projects as the small ones can be equally important. In balancing the big and small and working smarter not harder, you'll reap the benefits.

3. Strategic visibility matters

Especially when working on passion projects, there's a fine balance between being seen and being heard. Ampah says to learn to give great presentations and briefs, to volunteer for corporate events and raise your hand to contribute.

4. Be a repository of knowledge

Invest in yourself and your own learning and share what you've learned. There's no space for queen bee syndrome.



#FairnessFirst: Code-switching and dealing with queen bees in the workplace

Leigh Andrews 13 Aug 2018



5. Visibility doesn't mean saying 'Yes' all the time

Ampah loves the Warren Buffett quote that the difference between successful people and very successful people is that very successful people say 'no' to almost everything. Say it with justification and you will gain respect, similarly, if you ask for help with justification, you will be appreciated.

6. Claim and document your success

If you don't control the narrative in this regard, somebody else will.

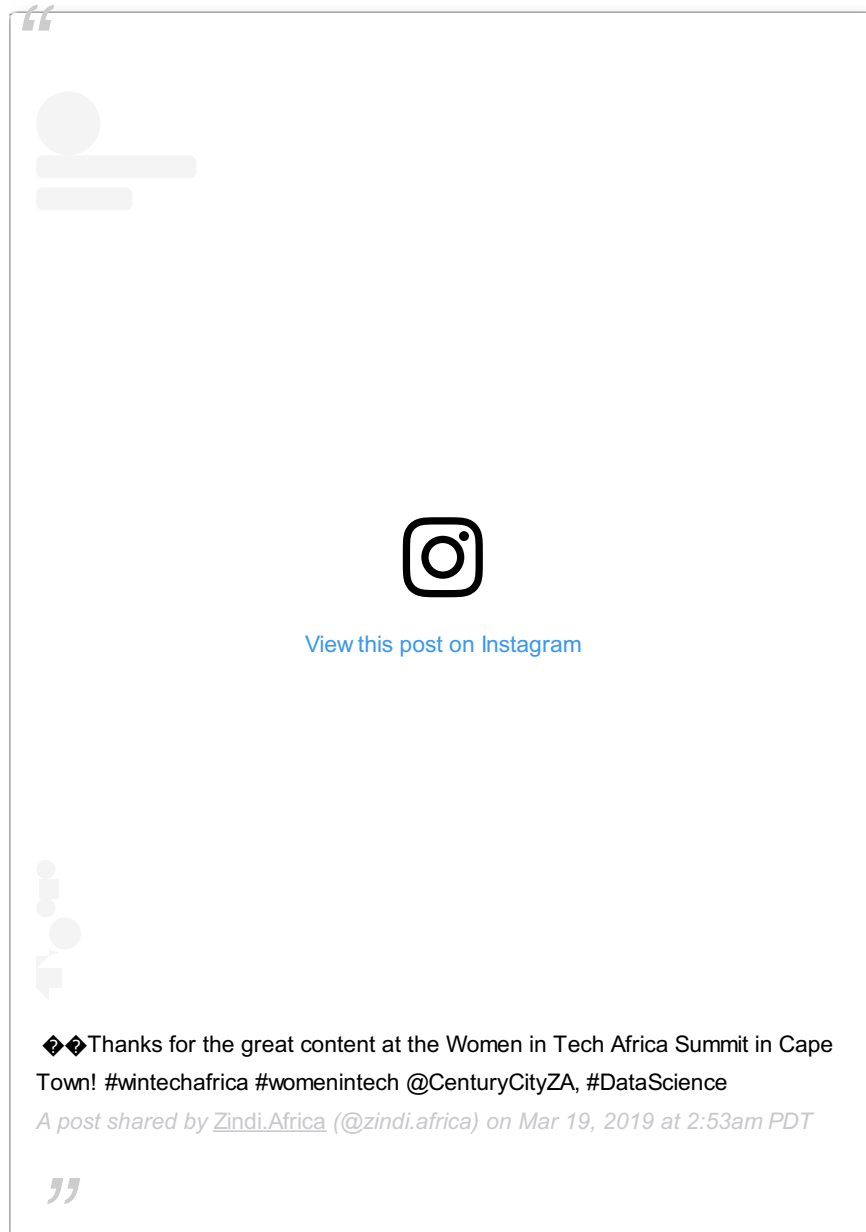
“ A prime message from the [#WinTechSeries](#) [#WinTechAfrica](#) in Cape Town is that while [#diversity](#) is imperative, women must not wait to be recognized. [@HaidiNossair](#) explains <https://t.co/KikTORfw4q> [pic.twitter.com/gSEIVoXYV2](https://t.co/gSEIVoXYV2)— TechSmart (@TechSmartZA) [March 20, 2019](#) ”

Ampah says to learn to use social media to share lessons you've learned – the good and the challenging alike – and to

share your success with management so they can advocate for you.

7. Hang around long enough and there will be failure...

But learn to embrace it with dignity to grow resilience, as failure or mistake is a perception.



Again, you need to control the narrative in this regard and learn not to over-apologise. Adapt, learn and draw lessons.

8. Be prepared for difficult conversations

These are usually around salaries, promotions and feedback.

Data is your best ally so prepare and do your research, provide solutions, raise your hand and negotiate.

9. Mentors and sponsors are critical

Hardly anyone rises fast without mentors and sponsors so, identify those who have been there before you and are willing to help.

10. Having mentees is even more important

Give back and bring along other women, as 'the FOD path' is lonely. Take mentoring and coaching classes and also volunteer to mentor others.



#Mandela100: The Madiba magic of mentoring

Leigh Andrews 5 Jul 2018



11. Networking can open doors

This is a good way to bring value to your career so sign up for those networking events and meet others on a similar path to your own.

12. Don't be afraid to take risks

Give yourself options and remember that best opportunities come when you demonstrate courage.

“ [#WinTechSeries](#) [#WinTechAfrica](#) Closing impressions from Fikile Mtsweni [@sanlam](#) - “The world like looks different now!” [@Justinsiljeur](#) [pic.twitter.com/Cyy4gmBNi0](#)— PétanqueInternational (@PetanqueConsult) [March 19, 2019](#) ”

Ampah's final words of encouragement?

“ *From one badass to another, don't settle. Light your own fire and work to light the spark in others.* ”

Follow the [#WinTechAfrica hashtag](#) for further inspiration.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at [@Leigh_Andrews](#).

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