

'If you feel like the tortoise in your life, don't give up'

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Slovakian by birth, [Andrea Gombalova Stevens](#) made South Africa her home many years ago and is currently the franchisee of Just Property Port Elizabeth. She is the epitome of inspirational leadership with a motivational morning regimen to match. Stevens leads by example through discipline and mindfulness as she strives for success for herself and her team.



Andrea Stevens, franchisee of Just Property Port Elizabeth

She expects (and gets) the very best from those around her. Want to learn how? Read on...

You're originally from Slovakia - how'd you find yourself a Just Property franchisee in PE?

Andrea Stevens: My story starts with humble beginnings as a young immigrant leaving a communist-run country, Czechoslovakia at that time, looking for what the world had to offer. Blessed by meeting the man of my dreams to whom I am married, had two beautiful children and started a business called Just Letting in 2000. Taking all the opportunities it had to offer us, the business grew at a rapid speed and in 2005 Just Commercial was born, followed by Just Property Group in 2009, then Just Residential in 2010, and finally to the one singular brand Just Property in 2016.

How did you get started in the property sector?

Moving to SA as a foreigner, I did not know what to expect in terms of work or business opportunities. My journey towards the property sector started as a result of my sense of duty, a need to contribute to my household. In my culture, women are expected to work. However, as I didn't have South African residency when I first arrived, finding employment was difficult. So, I worked in a business called Just Letting that was owned by my husband.

Having a limited grasp of the English language, I started off as a rental property inspector for our rental portfolio. I could have not asked for a better start because I had an opportunity to see many different types of properties and this job taught me the importance of paying attention to every detail, which is a crucial skill in this industry. As I gained confidence, I have grown with the business. First, I managed all the administration, then took over the sales office, then the full management of the rentals office, and I am now proudly a franchisee running offices in both Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work at all levels of the business because I can truly relate to all of my employees and understand what it is to take on that role.

Describe for us a typical day in your job?

My vision for Just Property Port Elizabeth is to build and maintain a team who are knowledgeable, professional, united and set apart from the rest. Through this, we will create experiences and client relationships that last a lifetime. Everything I do serves to bring that vision to life and I manage my routines tightly so that I can achieve all that I want to each day! Being a leader can be a very lonely place; I need to find ways to stay energised so that I can build people up constantly. So, I wake up every day at 4:30am to pray, reflect on the day ahead and enjoy at least 45 minutes of vigorous exercise.

My "power hour" is that quiet time before 8am that is dedicated to learning. I love podcasts as I can listen to them while I am on the move. It is my duty to ensure my daily growth as a leader so I can grow and get the best out of people around

me. I start each day focused on my own personal development, learning from business leaders around the world so that I can share best practice and grow my team. This is part of my morning ritual and is a non-negotiable part of every day.

I lead firmly by example and this is most rewarding when I see people around me adopting my work ethic, believing in the same vision and following me without any resistance. I invest heavily in my team and the majority of my time and energy each day is spent on motivating, teaching, guiding and empowering them. It's exhausting, if I am honest, but I have seen the benefits in my business. It's a better place to work, a better place to be, and it is more successful. Our Facebook feed is a good indicator of what happens in my franchise office and I am very proud of the passion and joy that is evident there.

Late afternoons are dedicated to my children, who are aged 18 and 13.



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■ *Is working in property a passion for you? If yes, why?*

It has been my privilege to be part of Just Property's evolution, from its birth to over 90 franchises nationwide today. As a franchisee, I can say with full honesty that I live, sleep and eat Just Property! Having a roof over one's head is a basic human need and we get to fulfil that need every day. Not only that, we have an opportunity to help people achieve their life goals; independence, financial wealth, legacy. What we do has the most profound impact on people's lives and serving such a high purpose demands passion.

■ *What do you think is the biggest issue facing women in the property industry today?*

The property industry is becoming more and more challenging due to so many new factors creeping into our industry from every direction. Trends in the online space is the latest conversation in our industry, however, the way I see it is that, if anyone, women are the best in adapting to changes. Change is an inevitable, the question is - do you want to change? More than ever, it is most important that we understand that we have to keep raising our own bars by being knowledgeable, being innovative, adding value to our clients, and it is not just the service we have to provide, but the world-class experience to stay in this game.

■ *What advice would you give to other women looking to pursue a career in property?*

Believe in your abilities to learn the complexities of this business. Be patient as this takes time but be relentless in your pursuit of knowledge and experience. Strive for perfection and you will be excellent. And trust that you have what it takes to influence people in your own, unique way.



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■ *Is there a female figure that has had a positive influence on your life?*

My mother has contributed more to who I am today than any other person. She supported her children as a single mom for much of my childhood, working multiple jobs to provide for us. Seeing how hard she worked has instilled in me a determined, never-sit-still approach to life. She's tough, and I have her to thank for that quality in me.

Mel Robbins is an American television host, author and motivational speaker that I relate well to. She is so grounded and pragmatic and pushes me out of my comfort zone! One of my favourite Mel Robbins quotes is, "You can't control how you

feel. But you can always choose how you act.”

📌 ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

I was reminded of a very powerful, yet so simple story the other day. It's the story of the tortoise and the hare. “Tortoise” was slow and not very talented. “Hare” was just the opposite. We all know the story. Somehow, I always felt that I was being a tortoise in my life with everything taking me twice as long as I wanted it to. I never felt that I had any special talents or skills and often did not see any hope for myself. Well, if you feel like you are the tortoise in your life, do not give up. Keep on going because success is really not about how fast you get somewhere or how quickly you achieve success. As long as you are moving forward, you're doing ok. Most of all, focus on being a positive role model, an influencer or just a great friend to other women who need to be reminded that the tortoise won the race in the end. We all get to where we need to be in the time it needs to take. Trust that.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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