

# LexisNexis lauded for gender empowerment and transformation

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Legal technology company LexisNexis South Africa has been named as one of South Africa's Top Gender Empowered Companies in the Business Support Services sector of the Standard Bank Top Women Awards programme.

Endorsed by Standard Bank, United Nations Women and supported by the Commission for Gender Equality, the programme recognises organisations in both the public and private sector for prioritising gender empowerment as an integral part of their business strategies.

CEO and chairperson of the board of LexisNexis South Africa, Videsha Proothveerajh, said: “We are delighted to be acknowledged by this prestigious platform for our transformation, diversity and inclusion – which we believe are critical to our success as an organisation.

“At LexisNexis South Africa, inclusion and diversity exceeds just compliance with legislation. It is about creating a fair and equitable work environment where everyone can be their authentic self and where they feel they are able to contribute their views,” she added.

The adjudicating criteria to determine if shortlisted organisations are top gender empowered companies included having 20% of female ownership, shareholding or partnership; 20% female executive directors; 30% female employees; 10% female senior management; female-empowerment company policies; and women focused skills development.

LexisNexis South Africa has 67% female representation on its board, 56% female representation in senior management, 43% in top management and employee surveys have shown that 83% of the workforce believes that the organisation is serious about diversity and inclusion.

Globally, women make up only 36% of senior private sectors managers and public sector officials, while only 18.2% of firms globally are led by a woman and, on average, 22.3% of board members in OECD countries are women<sup>1</sup>.

Since taking over the helm at LexisNexis in January 2020 as the first female CEO of the company, Proothveerajh has been on a mission to reduce the hierarchical nature of the company and embed a common culture, with a focus on strengthening inclusion and diversity to ensure a more effective and empathetic organisation.

“This largely entails becoming one LexisNexis South Africa – one team, one vision – where our differences and backgrounds are leveraged to bring new perspectives and offer alternative solutions for complex problems,” she says.

“It is not just about helping women advance but also about assisting individuals from all marginalised groups who don't always have a voice or who are not always recognised for the leadership attributes they possess, to claim their rightful



Videsha Proothveerajh

place in the work environment. We are making a very deliberate effort to hire women where opportunities exist and where we find the right skill sets, which supports a more collaborative leadership style, open communication and allowing everyone's voice to be heard. This, ultimately, enables more innovative decision-making.

"We are also creating opportunities and communities that will support our women colleagues to thrive and overcome barriers, including involving women at work in mentorship programmes and building a community that is a safe space for them to share and learn and overcome some of the ingrained prejudices against them," she added.

LexisNexis has also designed and launched a graduate programme targeting young women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and ensuring the company benchmarks roles and minimises or rectifies pay disparities."



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"I believe strongly that gender equality, diversity and inclusion are not concerns that only women and those directly impacted should fight for, but issues that society as a whole needs to work together to address. We cannot expect to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, grow our economies for greater shared prosperity or deliver on the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution for all of society, without inclusion of over half of the population," Proothveerajh adds.

According to the World Economic Global Gender Gap Report 2020, there is a growing urgency for action. At the present rate of change, we are looking at nearly a century to achieve gender parity.

In partnership with global parent company, RELX Group, LexisNexis South Africa recently launched its Employee Resource Group (ERG) Chapter in South Africa to drive its commitment to inclusion and diversity (I&D). Formed by employee volunteers, the purpose of the chapter is to engage and support employees with different backgrounds, experiences and ideas and to foster an inclusive environment in which employees are empowered to develop their full potential.

The RELX I&D policy recognises the importance of inclusion to the company's future by championing diversity, gender equality, equal pay and a company-wide women in technology mentoring programme, among numerous other initiatives.

During the last 12 months, LexisNexis South Africa has initiated the following events and activities:

- LNSA Women's Network – a peer support platform to empower women in the workplace and personally.
- LGBTQI+ – A step closer to fostering a gender-neutral workplace
- Advance-U – a learning and development initiative
- Policy review of the maternity and parental leave and work from home policies
- Unconscious bias workshops
- Grad. recruitment
- Women in Tech Conversations – a virtual forum of regular events featuring insights from leading women in the tech space

Plans for 2021 include the establishment of two additional ERGs: disability and sexual orientation groups.

"Companies with gender-balanced leadership perform better, both financially and otherwise. Gender diverse organisations outperform on profitability, value creation, productivity, innovation, decision-making and employee retention and satisfaction compared to their less diverse peers.

"At LexisNexis, our gender diversity ensures we're better equipped to deal more effectively with risk and are adept at

considering and juggling the varied interests of our customers, employees, shareholders, and the local community, while remaining laser focused on our long-term priorities,” concludes Proothveerajh.

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1. World Economic Forum 2020 report (2020:11)

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