

Sandra Orta helps provide healthtech innovations across Africa

By  Evan-Lee Courie

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With over 18 years of experience in strategic and operational marketing, sales and business development roles within big pharma, mid-sized pharma, biotech, startups and non-profit organisations, Sandra Orta is passionate about contributing to a better world.



Sandra Orta, general manager at Roche Diagnostics MCZA

Having built and managed high-performance teams across Europe and emerging markets, Sandra Orta is the current general manager at Roche Diagnostics MCZA, a healthcare company that specialises in innovative solutions.

■ **Can you tell us a bit about yourself?**

I believe in a healthy Africa and therefore, I am passionate about contributing towards it, in healthcare, in diagnostics and in life. Creativity, strategy, marketing and complexity are just some things I love. I always aim big - every single day I wake up determined to become a better and stronger leader, and to support and inspire my team to grow and of course to have fun.

■ **You're the GM at Roche Diagnostics MCZA. Tell us more about your role here**

Yes, as the general manager at Roche Diagnostics, I oversee the Roche Diagnostics business both here and across sub-Saharan Africa; but that's just a title. I see myself as a hardworking employee who is here to enable my team to reach its full potential while contributing to leading diagnostics in Africa. I really love my role and it is an honour to be leading the organisation across the continent during these very challenging times.

■ **What is the core function of Roche Diagnostics MCZA (Management Centre South Africa)?**

Roche Diagnostics has a proud tradition of innovation in healthcare around the globe. Locally we are committed to improving health and making a real difference in people's lives through the early diagnostics of key diseases – that's everything from HIV, TB, cancer and Covid-19, to heart disease, anaemia and Alzheimer's disease.

“ We also focus on women's health diagnostics, including areas such as HPV and cervical cancer, ovarian and breast

cancer, preeclampsia and fertility. ”

Through diagnostics, we are able to give people the power of knowing and to have improved control over their health and well-being and empowering health care professionals to make the right decisions for their patients at the right time.

■ ***Do you have any role models? If so, who?***

My mom because she's hardworking and loving – the two key ingredients for success in life. She encouraged me to follow my dreams. I don't think she would have imagined I would follow her advice so accurately: I have lived in three different continents, and one of my biggest dreams was to work in Africa.

My daughter is also a role model. She teaches me every day the importance of love and caring and patience and to find balance in life.

Lastly, the team that I work with is also very encouraging. The last months of 2020 haven't been easy and I am so impressed by their commitment, hard work and creativity.

■ ***The world has been severely hit by Covid-19. Roche Diagnostics has a tradition of innovation healthcare technology. How has Roche Diagnostics navigated through this pandemic?***

It has been and continues to be challenging. We remain focused as a team and remember our core purpose - to lead together for a healthy Africa.

■ ***You're a successful businesswoman. How do you keep a balance?***

As females, we are businesswomen, moms, daughters, friends and so much more. Keeping a balance is not easy but it is important to remain creative and to think long term as we plan. Not every day is perfect.

■ ***What advice do you have for the future females in the STEM sectors?***

Follow your dreams. Do not pay attention to stereotypes. A STEM career is a competitive environment but so rewarding if it is your passion.

■ ***How do you think South Africa can help in the fight against GBV (Gender Based Violence)?***

I think as females we need to speak up and we must provide a support system to protect women when who do not speak up. It requires brave women and we must support them.

■ ***As we celebrate Women's Month in South Africa. Do you have any words of encouragement for all the women out there?***

Follow your dreams, do not listen to those who say it is not possible, and never give up. The journey for women in leadership roles is a tough one, but success is possible if you are committed and hardworking. Remember to ask for help, ask for what you need and want. You are not alone.

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