Standard Bank's Simone Cooper asks, "How does your business grow?"

By Nicci Botha

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Simone Cooper, head of Business Clients, South Africa in Standard Bank's Business and Commercial Clients division, loves engaging with businesses and understanding how they have achieved and grown as they have.

Simone Cooper, head, Business Clients South Africa, Standard Bank

> *Business owners and entrepreneurs have achieved so much in an extremely challenging environment and I am always fascinated by their stories*

Cooper studied commerce at university and was not 100% sure of the career path that she wanted to take. "However, while I was studying one of my fellow classmates advised me that Standard Bank offered one of the best graduate programmes and as such applied for it. A bank offers many diverse opportunities with multiple career paths.
"I have obtained diverse exposure to retail banking, particularly business and commercial banking, having undertaken various roles within Standard Bank," she says.

How has the pandemic affected the way you work?

As far as possible I try and stick to the same routine I wake up at five and prior to covid-19 I would leave my house at six and get to the office about seven. For the first hour I would catch up on emails and preparation for the day. From eight until five or six in the evening my day is mostly filled with meetings, client engagements and planning / brainstorming with my team. In the evenings I usually catch up with work and planning for the following day after relaxing and eating dinner.

Since I have been working from home I wake up at the same time and as far as possible stick to the same routine, although some mornings I try and sneak a workout in for an hour.

However, inevitably I have ended up working longer hours and the lines between home and work have become increasingly blurred. In the beginning I was always trying to find different ways to switch off, however, I believe that this is one of the biggest issues that people around the world are facing and most of us are not able to do this successfully.

> *I read an article a few weeks ago explaining that we should not be trying to switch off, but rather need to find something to "switch over" too i.e. a hobby.*

What is the best advice anyone has given you?

The best advice I received was to obtain as much experience and exposure as possible, be patient and not to try and climb the corporate ladder too quickly.

> *Being a well-rounded executive is important in the financial services industry as the landscape is complex and the diversity and experience is needed once you take on more senior roles.*

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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