

# Yolandi Strauss' passion lies in empowering women in tech



By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Yolandi Strauss is the Agile Head of Product Delivery for Basalt, an international tech solution provider. As Agile Product Delivery Head, she leads the Basalt team in agile and lean practices in order to keep a delivery and learning cadence that helps the team to remain focused on delivering value against the product vision.



Strauss has more than a decade of extensive project management experience in the Information Technology arena and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and Agile methodologies, Agile Certified Practitioner. As a leader, she ensures that the company performs as well internally as they do externally.

Trouble shooting, risk management and problem solving are other notable tasks that she attends to daily.

She was instrumental in Basalt's launch of their office in Dublin, Ireland and has managed many other several key projects which have put Basalt squarely on the international tech map.

She began her career at EMC Dell Technologies, where she cut her teeth in the tech industry and was nominated for the Leadership Development Program at EMC: Managing Success Now, held in Frankfurt Germany. Her core experience is in balancing client and business needs with the most suitable team and methodologies.

In addition, she works towards empowering women in the technology sector, along with NPOs, to focus energy into good causes. She runs Basalt's Women in Coding group and is passionate about initiatives to get more women in tech, including working with GirlCode and on the Basalt NPO initiative, Tech Relief.

We chat to Yolandi Strauss to find out how she got into the tech space, her advice to the future generation of women and also being nominated as one of the InspiringFiftySA top women...

▣ ***Could you describe a typical day in your job?***

A typical day starts with going through any urgent emails, prepping and planning for upcoming meetings and checking in with all team members to make sure all milestones and deadlines are on track. After prep and planning, 70% of my day will be about attending meetings with the team, clients and/or CEOs; providing mentorship and guidance to any high risks or issues that have been brought to my attention.

▣ ***What did you want to be when you grew up?***

All I knew was that I wanted to help people, and thankfully I find that I am doing this by providing mentorship and guidance to all.

▣ ***How did you get into the tech space?***

I took a leap of faith. I received a job opportunity in my late 20s to become an information technology project administrator. The company chose me even though I didn't have tech experience. I gained all of my tech experience in this particular role.

▣ ***What was the best advice anyone ever gave you?***

One needs to create a plan for your dreams. Set milestones every year and live life to the fullest to achieve them - it's about having the tenacity to never give up.

▣ ***What advice do you have for the future generation of women wanting to get into the tech space? Do not undervalue yourself and never think you aren't good enough. Women have a sixth sense which is an awesome and invaluable addition to the tech space.***

▣ ***Who or what is your biggest motivation?***

My internal drive is my biggest motivator. Being able to connect with people daily and to constantly solve problems is a massive driver.

▣ ***Are South African women getting enough of a chance to shine in the tech industry?***

Personally, I believe there is room to grow.

In the US they drive women in the tech space. I previously worked for Dell EMC and I was celebrated for being a woman.

South Africa doesn't have the same focus on women in tech as the US, but it's growing and I'm hopeful that with initiatives like 'Inspiring Fifty' will provide more exposure.

■ ***As a female business leader, what's the least and most exciting aspect of your workday?***

The most exciting is to see new portals being developed to solve problems, such as the work Basalt does with Tech Relief.

I love to also see new innovative ideas arising from team members. My workday is always exciting, I can't think of one boring item!

■ ***Women are considered to be natural problem solvers. Why do you think this is perfect for the tech industry?***

It is so essential to be able to solve problems in technology. I believe that women have a sixth sense and look at things from a different perspective - this makes for more innovative tech products and software developments.

■ ***Could you list a few, if any, specific challenges females face in this industry?***

Women are often perceived as being too soft. I was once told by my business unit manager that he didn't think I had the 'balls' to manage a certain project as he perceived me as being too soft. Needless to say, I excelled in this particular project management role for three years as the client kept on asking for me to be on the project.

■ ***What is your advice for overcoming these challenges?***

Never back down. When someone thinks you are lacking in a certain area, dig deep and prove them wrong. Take negative advice/criticism and turn it into your biggest accomplishment.

■ ***You were recently nominated as one of the InspiringFiftySA top women. How do you feel about being recognised for this?***

It's such an honour to stand next to women that are passionate about their careers in STEM. It opens doors for me to meet and get to know women in the field of technology, science and engineering. It also opens avenues for young women to get in touch with me, in order for me to further assist them in pursuing their passions and careers in the tech industry.

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