

# Chair aunty Suhana Gordhan on the mayhem and magic

By Leigh Andrews

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Suhana Gordhan does a lot in a day, from putting up with mansplaining to switching focus from her day job as creative director at FCB to meeting her responsibilities as Loeries chair. She lets us in on how Open Chair is set to inspire a new era in this industry, and what life was like for her over Loeries weekend 2017.

Loeries Creative Week Durban was a busy one for all who attended, with current 'chair aunty' Suhana Gordhan in the thick of things. She was a judge on the print and outdoor panel, MC at the DStv Seminar of Creativity and made herself available for numerous media interviews. She explains: "This meant always having my wits about me, a good lipstick on hand, enough stamina, plenty of coffee, and also a sense of gratitude for all this industry has afforded me, and the chance to give back, that the Loeries has created."



While such a jam-packed schedule made it hard for her to pick just one favourite moment this time around, what she loves about the Loeries is that it's a bit of mayhem and magic. It's the one time in the year that the entire industry converges in one place and it's always a good time to catch up with old friends.

Gordhan always enjoys the DStv Seminar, as it offers nuggets of insight and information to take back with you. Another highlight is being able to hand out Gold and Grand Prix statues, as: "it's so awesome to see the excitement on people's faces as they walk up on stage." And lastly, she lists the opportunity to address the Loeries audience on Saturday night – it's a privilege and an honour and one she's come to enjoy, despite the bag of nerves she carries in the lead-up to that moment.





All images: FCB graduates Papi Raborife and NJ Mnyuku followed Gordhan around during Loeries 2017 weekend to document the event.

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South Africa  
Zulu Kingdom. Exceptional





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Here, Gordhan lets us in on how the Open Chair initiative ties in with the rest of that Loeries mayhem and magic, as well as the constant challenge of juggling her Loeries duties with her day-to-day responsibilities at FCB and in other realms of life...

🔴 ***The launch of Open Chair is a huge part of the Loeries' success this year. Share some feedback on how the event was received and whether there are plans to hold similar events countrywide.***

Open Chair has been a dream and mission realised. It really is a baby that is going to grow into something that this industry can truly benefit from. I'm so grateful to Simoné Bosman and Jenny Glover – my fellow Loeries Committee members – who shared this vision and made Open Chair a reality. It was beautifully received and we have learned so much just from our very first event. The plan is to allow Open Chair to grow and to host many more of these events and in other cities, too. With the right sponsorship, we can really achieve this. The whole point of Open Chair is to create access and an illuminated space for young women to engage and have face time with senior leadership and so, Open Chair needs to reach as many young women as possible.



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🔴 ***The idea of a whole "village of advertising aunts" mentoring the next generation is definitely appealing. What other steps need to be taken for this to become a reality, and when do you predict we'll finally get there?***

We're hoping that Open Chair inspires a new era in this industry – one in which more and more leaders make space and time for the younger generation – our future leaders. And while Open Chair was launched by women for women, the plan is to include men in our journey. This cannot be a story achieved by women alone. Men have to be part of the plan to grow young female talent. A lot of us have had mentorship from good men in advertising and we need the conversation to include these men, who not only see the *need* to cast a light on the path of young women, but have the *desire* to do so.



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We need a crisp consciousness to be applied to daily life in the industry, where more women are deliberately invited to the table, have the space to be heard and are given the right tools to grow and strive for leadership roles. We'll know when we're there when we look around the boardroom table and see more women, and when we see more titles like ECD, MD and CEO after women's names.

🔴 ***Hear hear! How do you juggle your Loeries duties with your responsibilities at FCB and in other realms of life?***

It's a constant challenge. But I learned early in the year to accept that the two-year stint as Chair Aunty would require some meaningful sacrifice. The role has afforded me a platform, from which to affect good change and so the sacrifices become more acceptable.

It has meant missing out on special occasions and social get-togethers, it has meant not always investing as much as I would like to – including going onto Tinder just to people-watch instead of actually swiping right.



with... **Suhana Gordhan**

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I also train Capoeira, a Brazilian martial art that keeps me sane and offers me an outlet. I've surrounded myself with a very amazing and supportive structure in both family and friends, and my FCB leaders and colleagues. Family and friends are understanding and are always feeding me, and FCB has really played a massive role in providing me the space and resources I need. All this has made my road far less bumpy.

It means a lot to me that I have in my work life and personal life enough ever-ready ears, broad shoulders and long arms to walk this journey with me.

**🚩Something we all need. Let's end with some advice for that fresh, eager talent looking to step into your shoes.**

To the young women looking to step into my shoes, I would say this:

- Don't be afraid of your own voice. Wield it with power and confidence – you might be surprised at how many people are willing to listen.
- Our journeys may be a little tougher than those of men, but don't check out, even if it means repeating yourself, enduring 'mansplaining' and constantly reminding those around you of why your mission is so important.
- While others will be transfixed by how you dress, attitude and authenticity is truly the best attire you can choose every single day.
- Don't lament the hard work – roll up those sleeves and get in there, because there is no such thing as 'glamorous work'. It's all hard work and it all pays off.
- Surround yourself with people you love, people you can learn from, people who will have your back and tell you the truth while bringing you that much-needed coffee on a Sunday afternoon.
- Always find your gratitude because it is the sailboat on which to charter the next part of every new journey.

*Wise words from a truly inspirational leader. Click through to our [Loeries special section](#) for more, [click here](#) for FCB Africa's press office and follow Gordhan's updates on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*

## ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh\_Andrews.

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