

'Doing good' should be an everyday mantra

 By [Leigh Andrews](#)

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With a decade's experience working across TV, radio, print and online media, Eleni Giokos was appointed last year as a business correspondent at CNN International. Here, she shares insights into the breaking news process and the importance of mentoring and motivating others in achieving personal business success.

Based in the CNN International network's Johannesburg bureau, Giokos reports on news and business success stories, and across CNN's African feature programmes, including *Marketplace Africa* and *African Voices*. Born in Greece and raised in South Africa, she's got a finger on the pulse of what makes local media tick and has covered breaking news tragedies such as the killing of Reeve Steenkamp by Oscar Pistorius, and Kenya's Westgate Mall attack in her time as anchor and correspondent.



Eleni Giokos, business correspondent at CNN International.

With such a paradox of highs and lows forming part of her daily news cycle, it's little wonder that she lists travelling and meeting incredible newsmakers across different sectors around the world as a highlight of her average workday, adding: "There's nothing like interviewing passionate people that are impacting society positively. As much as I enjoy spending time with leaders, speaking to people on the streets gives you an even better perspective. Shifting from the boardrooms to the streets is an exciting part of my work."

Adlibbing news, as it happens

It's a deadline-driven environment, so she hates it when interviews fall through, but quickly bounces back. When a story breaks, she says journalists in the newsroom work together to verify facts and create content; there's a shift in energy and adrenaline kicks in.

Covering the story in the studio or from the front lines is a big responsibility, as you need to sort through facts and treat sensitive information fairly. In those situations, you have to be very careful as you're reacting to constantly evolving stories and 'adlibbing news' as it happens. It tests your journalistic skills and ability to inform and analyse in a pressurised environment.

Then, with 'Mandela Day' synonymous with July media coverage in South Africa, I asked whether she feels too much emphasis is placed on this month of 'businesses doing good' or if it's not enough. She responded: "It's never enough. 'Doing good' should be an everyday mantra not just in the month of July, especially in a country that is plagued with high unemployment and inequality. It's so important to consider the people that can't integrate themselves in the economy. Everyone should help in any way possible, as often as they can."

The uplifting power of motivational speaking

Motivational speaking is another big topic for #MandelaMonth. Giokos is experienced in this regard, having chaired debates at the World Economic Forum, International Monetary Fund, African Finance Corporation and the Africa CEO Forum, as well as motivational speaking at local public schools, and has even trained aspiring journalism students.

She says that breaking the cycle of negative thinking is tough, especially when you come from a hard background. That's because, "Children exposed to financial strain and toxic relationships are less likely to believe they can be successful." And like parents, teachers have a profound impact on children – that's why there's nothing she enjoys more than telling children to dream big and work hard. "Your background might impact you and can even slow you down, but it doesn't define you. You are the master of your destiny and learning to create and grab opportunities is half the battle."

Giokos feels some people fail, because they lack the drive and ambition to succeed – so motivating youth can actually pull children out of that negative cycle. That's why she says the best thing you can do for youth is to constantly motivate them – through #MandelaMonth and beyond. Her tip is to tell inspiring stories and remind them that they can beat all odds.

Her own story is motivational. To follow in her business footsteps, Giokos says, "Don't take 'No' for an answer. I was relentless when I first started out, I'm sure I irritated many managers and HR directors, but 'No' didn't exist in my vocabulary. I hustled, begged and even struck deals to get my first break."

That said, Giokos recommends creating your own opportunities in a way that doesn't take those opportunities away from colleagues. She worked all day and night to learn about the trade, and says the right attitude can get you a long way. You have to ask yourself – what differentiates you from other journalists? Building a bank of information will definitely set you apart, as will finding a few mentors you can rely on and tap into every week, as talking things through with inspiring people is vital.

Consider me motivated! For more on Giokos, [click here](#) and follow her career highs on her [Twitter feed](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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