

# from the Paddock to the Boardroom

By Lydia Bundred

Yolanda Sing is an equine leadership coach who has created a unique programme to cater for the leadership and development needs of organisations worldwide. Her company, Chloe Consultants, offers an experiential-learning course that uses interaction between horses and people to create awareness and provide a platform for positive feedback right from 'the horse's mouth'. This one-of-a kind learning programme has shown tremendous results in the business world, with her clients returning year after year.

**Y**olanda Sing is a seasoned senior human resources executive who has operated in 15 different countries worldwide. Her international views and global experience bring a well-rounded understanding to her role as a development coach. She holds degrees in people development, business administration, leadership development and psychology, and she has travelled to Spain, the United States of America (USA) and Europe to qualify as an equine-assisted learning facilitator. She has returned to South Africa "with a dream and a passion to uplift our country," says the leadership coach. Her goal is to make organisations healthier and more authentic through the use of equine leadership coaching. "Humanity today is searching for a purpose-driven life and we want our corporate

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Her company, Chloe Consultants, offers a two-day programme where individuals interact with horses on ground level, but with no horse-riding required. In their interaction, she addresses leadership skills, self-awareness, problem solving and conflict resolution on an individual and organisational level. She links what you learn in the paddock to how you can apply it in the office. The focus is on emotional intelligence, values and sustainability for a long-lasting impact.

Horses are intuitive animals that are highly attuned to the signals that humans send, unconsciously and consciously. This attribute makes them excellent partners in assessing human behaviour and ‘herd’ dynamics. Horses often mirror the feelings of their human counterparts and provide honest and personal feedback with no judgement. “Magic happens when people experience unconditional acceptance, and that’s what happens in the paddock,” says the equine coach.

Her programme has catered for some of South Africa’s business giants. Members of organisations such as Coca-Cola, the McCarthy group, Virgin Active and FNB have participated in the horse-to-human coaching. Outside South Africa, she has done sessions with the Dubai government. The divisional manager of McCarthy testifies to the success they have seen in their team after attending the equine programme with Yolanda, saying that he “saw the change from within their team and how it affected every individual”.

After completing the programme, Virgin Active commented: “Our managers learn so much about themselves in such a unique and memorable way that it has become the highlight of our Management Development Programme.” The equine expert and her ‘herd’ received the United Kingdom Human Resources Award for Best in Learning and Development in 2011.

The award-winning programme is offered in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth. The course is for businesses that want their employees “to get more out of work than an income”. Her goal with the programme is to “help people to see their greatness”. There are no PowerPoints, no motivational speakers and no conference rooms. The uniqueness of the programme is equally matched by the setting: members are seated on bales of hay and interact with horses in the paddock. The experience is very hands-on and provides participants with a different perspective on their roles and current positioning in the organisation, both as a leader and an individual.



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While Yolanda was living in Singapore, she was diagnosed with a brain tumour which made her evaluate her professional happiness. During her ordeal, she found solace and healing in the presence of her horse, Erika, which dramatically redirected her life. The two walked a path towards rebuilding Yolanda into the person she is today. Horses touched and changed her life and she knows they can do the same for others.

She went on to write her first book, *Power in the Paddock*, in which she shares her battle and the steps she took towards victory. Her immense strength and passion can be seen on every page, because hers is a story of hope and “the healing power of horses”. She challenges her readers and programme participants “to live a life of passion” just as she does. In her next book, she will be focusing on the successes within her programme and the dynamics of a functioning ‘herd’ and its application to the individual. □