

SweepSouth's Aisha Pandor keeps on climbing

 By [Lauren Hartzenberg](#)

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Aisha Pandor, co-founder of online home cleaning service [SweepSouth](#), has been named one of the top 50 most [inspiring women in tech](#).



She adds the acknowledgement to an impressive line-up of accolades, including being named one of *Africa's Breakthrough Female Innovators of 2017* by the World Economic Forum and scooping both the *Female Tech/E-Commerce Entrepreneur* and *Best Black Tech/E-Commerce Entrepreneur* at the PriceCheck Tech & E-Commerce Awards last year.

Prior to the SweepSouth venture, Pandor spent her formal education in a lab, where she completed a PhD in Human Genetics before turning her attention to Business Management. In 2012 she was awarded the *South African Women in Science Award* for her research on hereditary diseases and was placed on the *Mail and Guardian's list of 200 Young South Africans*.

In the spirit of [Women's Month](#), Pandor shares the challenges, the responsibilities and the triumphs associated with being one of the country's foremost female business leaders.

■ ***Working in male-dominated industries like science and technology, what were some of the challenges you faced and how did you overcome them?***

I've been dismissed many times by potential partners, investors and even job applicants who assume after seeing me that I play a minor role in the company rather than being the CEO. Just a few days ago, at a meeting with a group of men, one of them introduced himself to me by lifting my hand to kiss it, which I found extremely patronising. My attitude is to be polite and friendly but unfailingly professional, and not to let things 'slide'. My team always points out that I am the CEO and questions should be addressed to me and not someone else.

■ ***SweepSouth has been praised for its contribution to job creation in South Africa, and for its role in ensuring domestic workers are compensated fairly for their work. What role do you think the private sector has to play in social upliftment?***

The private sector has as much of a role to play in social upliftment as the public sector, because social upliftment is key to a sustainably growing economy, which in turn facilitates private sector growth. Particularly in emerging economies like South Africa, it's so important to have a social upliftment element to your business model, even if your business isn't a social enterprise.



▀ ***What inspires you personally and professionally?***

I'm inspired personally by visionaries and risk-takers like Elon Musk, Richard Branson, and South Africa's own Vinny Lingham. Women in SA who are captains of industry like Phuti Mahanyele, Khanyi Dhlomo and Wendy Luhabe are big role models. Professionally, I'm inspired by my co-founder and our CTO Alen Ribic, who has an excellent sense for what the market wants and endless energy to try to build it.

▀ ***Considering the string of professional awards attached to your name, what has been the highlight of your career journey so far?***

It's been an honour to receive the various accolades, but the biggest gratification comes from seeing the fruits of our hard work and being able to build a functioning business that positively impacts people, from what was once just an idea. A big highlight has also been seeing the great impact that SweepSouth has had on creating work opportunities for South African women, many of whom are single moms and primary breadwinners.



Aisha Pandor *sweeps* up two titles at the PriceCheck Tech & E-Commerce Awards

Jessica Tennant 5 Oct 2016



▀ ***If you could travel back in time and give yourself one piece of business advice, what would it be?***

I would tell myself to get a business mentor sooner rather than later, and to take care of monitoring work/life balance so as not to burn out.

▀ ***Lastly, what is your message for Women's Month?***

My Women's Month message is one of hope that SA becomes a society where women and girls are respected and feel safe. We should also feel inspired and enabled to go out and achieve our professional dreams, whether they involve reaching new heights at work or starting out with new ventures. I also hope we are able to support and empower each other in the various important roles we play in society.

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