

In the pink, Q&A with Noelene Kotschan

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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During August, in honour of Women's Month, we'll be running a series of articles on South African women who are not only leaders in their field, but who are also a source of inspiration through their courage and commitment.

Breast cancer has an incredibly good prognosis if it is caught early. Yet thousands of economically-disadvantaged South African women don't have access to simple diagnostic tools such as mammograms which would significantly increase their chances of survival.



Noelene Kotschan, founder and CEO, PinkDrive

The answer was to take the service to the patients. So, in 2009, PinkDrive took to the road in a vivid pink truck, delivering breast screening to women at hospitals, clinics and community health centres in urban and semi-urban areas.

Today the organisation runs two mobile units and three educational cars which travel across the country. To date, PinkDrive has performed 8,087 mammograms and 118,652 clinical breast examinations, while educating 154,981 women on breast health.

Fundraiser and cause marketing whiz, Noelene Kotschan is the driving force behind PinkDrive. We asked her a few questions about what motivates her and keeps her going.

■ ***What is your background?***

Noelene Kotschan: I come from a strong marketing background in the IT industry. I love to push my boundaries and to take on new challenges. I reached a stage in my life where I wanted to see change in the cancer space - but the only way that I could achieve this was to be the change I wanted to see.

■ ***What did you want to be when you were a little girl?***

Kotschan: An explorer! Being a type-A personality and a risk taker, I wanted to learn about everything and how and why things worked. I 'discover' daily how generous corporates and individuals are.

■ ***How did PinkDrive come about?***

Kotschan: It was evident, from all the data available, that the only tangible solution was to take education and mammography services to the people of South Africa.

■ ***Describe a typical day in your life?***

Kotschan: The thing I love most is that each day holds new challenges and possibilities. I believe in a hands-on approach, so I attend nearly every meeting and virtually every event, while also securing funding and overseeing the overall operations. Together with my skilled team - which handles admin, medical and marketing - we keep PinkDrive moving.

■ ***What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?***

Kotschan: The fact that I know that PinkDrive is making a difference in people's lives. We might never meet all the people we touch, but I sleep soundly knowing that PinkDrive is helping someone somewhere in South Africa.



One of the PinkDrive trucks which includes a fully equipped radiography unit and examination and reception areas.

■ **What is important to you?**

Kotschan: It is always apparent that it takes a mother to raise a child and women to uplift a nation. All South African women must stand together and look to the future.

My key lessons in life play a role in the way I do business:

- Never give up
- Always look for the positive in a bad situation
- Accept the challenge of change and be willing to run with it
- Always be a good citizen
- Share the wealth; whether its money or knowledge

■ **What do you do in your personal time?**

Kotschan: Personal time - what's that?

When I do have spare time, I spend it with my loving, supportive husband, children and grandchildren. They give me the strength to get out of bed every morning.

My husband, Roy, is the one who listens to me at the end of a long day and encourages me to continue. When the chips are down and I feel that I can't go on, he'll say: "So if you don't do it, then who will?"

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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