

SOUTH AFRICAN

August 2012

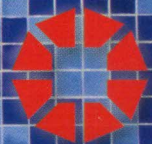
PROPERTY

REVIEW

**HIGH HEELS
& HIGH-RISES**
Women Build SA

**THE TALENTED
DR KAROL**

**Arts in
the Dust**
SOWETO'S OWN PERFORMER



S A P O A

THE VOICE OF COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

Durban



DURBAN PROPERTY PLAYERS, FROM LEFT:
Louise Gibson (seated), Raewyn Gowar, Jenny Pillay, Rekha
Sohun, Nazrana Premllall (seated).
VENUE SPONSOR: The Square Boutique Hotel & Spa



Raewyn Gowar
Evolution Architects



Rekha Sohun
The Square Boutique Hotel & Spa

Raewyn Gowar's first two jobs were for small practices in Durban, where she shouldered a lot of responsibility very early in her career. "This gave me the confidence to form a partnership, which ran its course after six successful years," she says. "The next step was Evolution Architects, finally achieving my goal of owning my own practice."

Gowar's journey started with an 11-storey hospital. "Looking back, had I known the level of responsibility involved I probably wouldn't have thought I could do it, but not knowing any better I got on with it and did what I needed to do." Although it was a far cry from Gowar's preconceptions about an architect's role, she loved every minute of it: she'd found her calling.

Today, her challenges in the architectural world range from problem-solving design to ensuring that the execution carries the concept through. But the industry is changing. "Things happen much faster today and there's a greater expectation of information flowing more quickly." Along with cell phones, 3D CAD modelling and email, architecture has evolved considerably.

But Gowar remains committed. "Every project becomes all consuming, and that's why Evolution Architects does so well." The practice has major projects like 24 Richefond Circle in Umhlanga and Ballito Lifestyle Centre under its belt. "We have a passion for what we do, constantly striving for excellence, always looking for new ways to improve the service we provide for our clients."

Rekha Sohun (34) remembers the day, as a trainee fresh out of hotel school, that she was asked to clean the public toilets. "I was all kitted out in full hotel school gear, blazer, neck ties and stockings," she says, and failed to see the relevance of the exercise. Her assessor, who was the dean of the hotel school, asked: "How can you manage staff if you don't know how to do something yourself?"

The lesson stuck and today, as general manager of the Square Boutique & Spa in KwaZulu-Natal, Sohun knows that a successful hotel manager is hands-on and willing to roll up their sleeves to get the job done.

Though this is her second time as general manager of a leisure destination, Sohun says that in the past her title was usually associated with "a man in a black suit and white shirt".

"All of that is changing," she says. "Women are becoming more empowered and the number of female general managers in the industry is rapidly increasing."

Her challenges in the hotel business include irate guests, supplier issues or securing business. Her greatest issue is time, however – and the lack of it. "I just wish there were more hours in a day, but I wake up excited to go work."

"I'm loving working at The Square Boutique & Hotel: its values are open, honest and accountable. What you put into life is what you get out, and to succeed you must be willing to try the things that others won't."



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